

WE ARE ALL ANTIFA NOW | Chris Hedges
MARTIAL LAW: ONE CITY AT A TIME | John & Nisha Whitehead
'HIS ARM SLID OFF LIKE A CHICKEN WING' | Greg Palast

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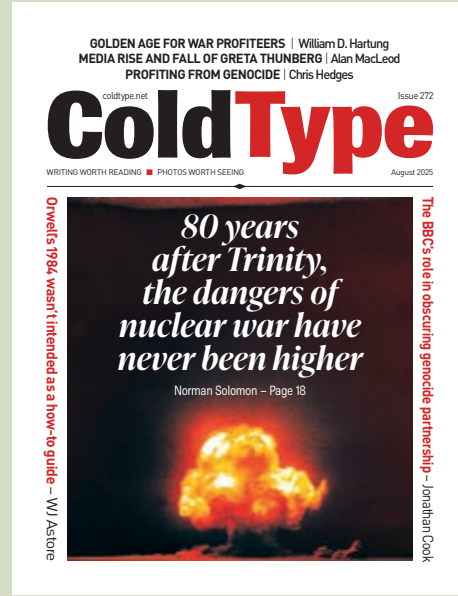
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October 2025



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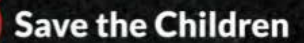


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Cover Photo: Peter Caton, from his new book, *Unyielding Floods*,
published by Dewi Lewis



STOP BOMBING CHILDREN

INSIGHTS

► GREG PALAST

‘His arm slid off like a chicken wing’

VILLA PARK, ILLINOIS – “No one locks their doors in Villa Park,” says Kevin Patrick, president of the 22,000 population Illinois village board.

Patrick sports a military haircut befitting his years in the Coast Guard and steel blue eyes that reflect military determination, compassion – and fear. Fear of what could happen to his town.

We filmed Patrick while he watched the videos of bodies floating face down in another small town, in Kerr County, Texas, where the death toll from a flood in July has reached 136 and counting.

Patrick was shaken. Because it’s a horror he knows all too well.

Twenty years ago, Coast Guardsman Patrick was one of the first responders sent in after Hurricane Katrina drowned Gulfport and New Orleans. He told me about recovering the bloated bodies of pregnant women – or pieces of pregnant women – out of the water. He tried



Coast Guard officer Kevin Patrick (left) serving his country as a first responder in the wake of Katrina (2005)

to pull one corpse from the flood, but the “arm slid off like a chicken wing.”

The horror still haunts him. Because he knows that drownings in Texas were not an act of God. They were an act of Donald Trump. Trump and his DOGE buddies had, just before the Texas flood, cut the heart out of Federal Emergency

Management Agency, FEMA.

The so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) slashed one out of three FEMA staff employees just before the Texas flood. The head of FEMA’s National Response Coordination Center, Jeremy Greenberg, whose job was to warn of such floods, was forced out just weeks before the Texas catas-

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trophe. And since the DOGE massacre of April, FEMA's San Antonio office has had no permanent Warning-Coordination Meteorologist.

Supervisor Patrick needs no reminder of the dangers Villa Park faces. In 2023, trains derailed in East Palestine, Ohio, spilling a deadly toxic cloud over the town. If the chemicals hit the fan in Villa Park, which has two rail lines running through it, who's he going to call? Trump has announced he's planning to close FEMA by December, leaving emergency response – and its costs – to states and local officials like Patrick.

In a prior work life, I was on the team that wrote an emergency evacuation plan for the very rich County of Suffolk, Long Island. That plan cost \$20 million, which the Richie Rich kids of the Hamptons could afford, but an impossible sum for a town of 22,000.

Trump's fantasy is, ultimately, to privatise emergency evacuation.

Been there. Done that. The privatisation of emergency evacuation resulted in more than a thousand Americans floating face down in New Orleans in 2005.

Patrick still has nightmares about those bodies coming apart in his hands after Katrina. That too, was not an act of God. It was an Act of George W. Bush, specifically, the privatisation of the New Orleans evacuation plan.

Back in 2006, I did an investigation of the drownings in New Orleans for Democracy Now! hosted

by Amy Goodman.

I'm asking you to watch the film of the investigation, *All Washed Away*, which I've just updated with an exposé of the Trump drownings of 2025 – out for free on YouTube and Substack.

Back in 2005, as I watched the mayhem of those trying to escape New Orleans, I called FEMA to get a copy of the evacuation plan for the city. FEMA, which Bush had just put under the Department of Homeland Security, said the plan was “classified,” a national security secret.

How the f – do you “classify” an evacuation plan and expect people to evacuate?

Our investigation uncovered the truth: there was no real plan because the Bush gang had privatised the evacuation planning, turning it over to a GOP crony who ran a company called Innovative Emergency Management (IEM).

When I went to IEM's offices in Baton Rouge, the company officers literally hid from me. They hid because they knew that I knew they had NO PLAN to evacuate 127,000 residents who did not have cars. They were left to drown.

In our film, I talk to Stephen Smith, who had no car, no way out and couldn't swim. Nevertheless, Smith floated on a mattress, pulling survivors from rooftops. He told me how Bush's helicopters flew over the bridge where black folk were stranded for days without food or water. Smith closed the eyes of a man who died after he gave his grandchildren his last bottle of water.

There was NO PLAN to evacuate the 127,000 residents who didn't

have cars. And the Bush crew knew it would happen because the Director of the Hurricane Center at Louisiana State University blew the whistle. Ivor van Heerden and his experts at LSU had an expert plan to save the city ready to go, but it was ignored so that the politically connected IEM could cash in.

Prof. Van Heerden, when I asked about the effect of rejecting the LSU plan said, “Well, 1,500 people drowned.”

The professor shouldn't have told me that. The university's response was to fire him. The pressure came from Chevron Oil Corporation, but that's a story you'll have to watch yourself when you watch the film.

IEM, as so many privateers, won its contract through flim-flam, claiming that its team included the Clinton administration's evacuation expert James Lee Witt. In fact, Mr. Witt had nothing to do with these scoundrels.

I bet you won't be surprised to learn that IEM has just received a contract with DOGE.

Patrice Gallagher contributed to this article. **CT**

Greg Palast (*Rolling Stone*, *Guardian*, *BBC*) is the author of *The New York Times* bestsellers, *Armed Madhouse*, *Billionaires & Ballot Bandits* and the book and documentary, *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy* his latest film is *Vigilantes Inc: America's New Vote Suppression Hitmen*. Palast is currently working on a new documentary *Long Knife*, exposing the Koch Brothers' theft of Osage oil, to be released later this year.

Watch *All Washed Away: Trump drowns FEMA – A Greg Palast Investigation*

at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6E9lqRSsr8> or at <https://gregpalastinvestigates.substack.com/p/all-washed-away>

INSIGHTS

► RAMZY BAROUD

History will not forget those who remained silent

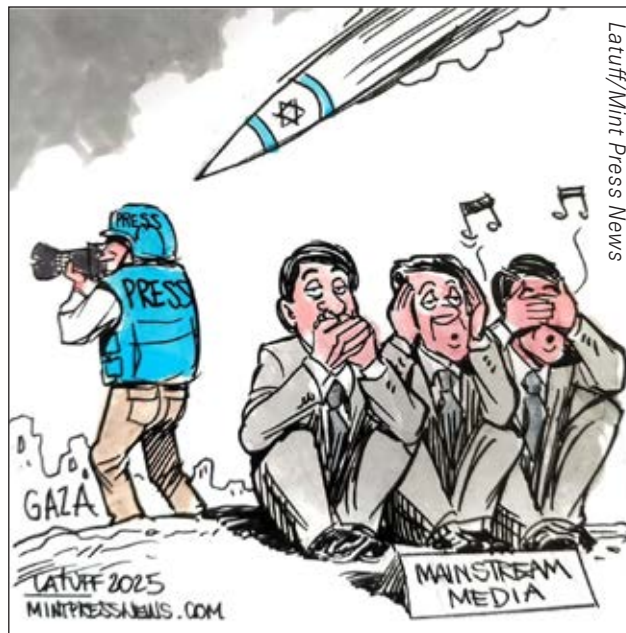
The consequences of the Israeli genocide in Gaza will be dire. An event of this degree of barbarity, sustained by an international conspiracy of moral inertia and silence, will not be relegated to history as just another “conflict” or a mere tragedy.

The Gaza genocide is a catalyst for major events to come. Israel and its benefactors are acutely aware of this historical reality. This is precisely why Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is in a race against time, desperately trying to ensure his country remains relevant, if not standing, in the coming era. He pursues this through territorial expansion in Syria, relentless aggression against Lebanon, and, of course, the desire to annex all occupied Palestinian territories.

But history cannot be controlled with such precision. However clever he may think he is, Netanyahu has already lost the ability to influence the outcome. He has been unable to set a clear agenda in Gaza, let alone achieve any strategic goals in a 365-square-kilometer expanse of destroyed concrete and ashes. Gazans have proven that collective sumud can defeat one of the most well-equipped modern armies.

Indeed, history itself has taught us that changes of great magnitude are inevitable. The true heartbreak is that this change is not happening fast enough to save a starving population, and the growing pro-Palestinian sentiment is not expanding at the rate needed to achieve a decisive political outcome.

Our confidence in this inevitable change is rooted in history. World



War I was not just a “Great War” but a cataclysmic event that fully shattered the geopolitical order of its time. Four empires were fundamentally reshuffled; some, like the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman, were erased from existence.

The new world order resulting from World War I was short-lived.

The modern international system we have today is a direct outcome of World War II. This includes the United Nations and all the new Western-centric economic, legal, and political institutions that were forged by the Bretton Woods Agreement in 1944. This includes the World Bank, the IMF, and ultimately NATO, thus sowing the seeds of yet more global conflicts.

The fall of the Berlin Wall was heralded as the singular, defining event that resolved the lingering conflicts of the post-WWII geopolitical struggle, supposedly ushering in a new, permanent global realignment, or, to some, the “end of history.”

History, however, had other plans. Not even the horrific September 11 attacks and the subsequent US-led wars could reinvent the global order in a way that was consistent with US-Western interests and priorities.

Gaza is infinitely small when judged by its geography, economic worth, or political import. Yet, it has proven to be the most significant global event defining this generation’s political consciousness.

The fact that the self-proclaimed guardians of the post-WWII order are the very entities that are violently and brazenly violating every international and humanitarian

law is enough to fundamentally alter our relationship with the West’s championed “rule-based order.”

This may not seem significant now, but it will have profound, long-term consequences. It has largely compromised and, in fact, delegitimised the moral authority imposed, often by violence, by the

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West over the rest of the world for decades, especially in the Global South.

This self-imposed delegitimisation will also impact the very idea of democracy, which has been under siege in many countries, including Western democracies. This is only natural, considering that most of the planet feels strongly that Israel must end its genocide and that its leaders must be held accountable. Yet, little to no action follows.

The shift in Western public opinion in favour of Palestinians is astounding when considered against the backdrop of total Western media dehumanisation of the Palestinian people and Western governments' blind allegiance to Israel. More shocking is that this shift is largely the result of the work of ordinary people on social media, activists mobilising in the streets, and independent journalists, mostly in Gaza, working under extreme duress and with minimal resources.

A central conclusion is the failure of Arab and Muslim nations to factor into this tragedy befalling their own brethren in Palestine. While some are engaged in empty rhetoric or self-flagellation, others subsist in a state of inertia, as if the genocide in Gaza were a foreign topic, like the wars in Ukraine or Congo.

This fact alone shall challenge our very collective self-definition – what it means to be an Arab or a Muslim, and whether such definitions carry supra-political identities. Time will tell.

The left, too, is problematic in its own way. While not a monolith, and while many on the left have championed the global protests against the genocide, others remain splintered and unable to form a unified front, even temporarily.

Some leftists are still chasing their own tales, crippled by the worry that being anti-Zionist would earn them the label of antisemitism. For this group, self-policing and self-censorship are preventing them from taking decisive action.

History does not take its cues from Israel or Western powers. Gaza will indeed result in the kind of global shifts that will affect us all, far beyond the Middle East. For now, however, it is most urgent that we use our collective will and action to influence one single historical event: ending the genocide and the famine in Gaza.

The rest will be left to history,

and to those who wish to be relevant when the world changes again. **CT**

Ramzy Baroud is a journalist, author and the editor of the Palestine Chronicle. He is the author of six books. His forthcoming book, Before the Flood, will be published by Seven Stories Press. His other books include Our Vision for Liberation, My Father was a Freedom Fighter, and The Last Earth. Baroud is a Non-resident Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA). His website is www.ramzybaroud.net

➤ **NORMAN SOLOMON**

Jews and Israel are NOT the same

More than nine months after Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch issued reports that concluded Israel was committing genocide – and more than a month since key Israeli human rights groups asserted the same – the American political establishment remains in rigid denial while horrors continue non-stop in Gaza. Virtually all Republicans and most Democrats in Congress still support massive US arms shipments to Israel, so they certainly can't admit that the weaponry is making genocide possible.

Central to rationales for arming Israel is the claim that it is the nation of "the Jewish people."

When the US secretary of state, Marco Rubio, spoke via video to a conference in Jerusalem three months ago, he declared: "There can be no nuanced separation of hatred of Israel and hatred of the Jewish people." Rubio added: "Those who call for the destruction of Israel are calling for the destruction of the Jewish people." Last month, the House speaker, Mike Johnson, reinforced the same message while visiting Israel, where he reportedly said that the West Bank is "the rightful property of the Jewish people."

Such rhetoric – equating Israel with all Jews and Israel's future with theirs – is an effort to sanctify Israel and shield it from criticism by brandishing the charge of

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antisemitism.

Fusing Israel with “the Jewish people” is a key propaganda technique. The fact that it’s so ubiquitous makes it no less ridiculous, or dangerous. A comment attributed to Voltaire applies: “As long as people believe in absurdities they will continue to commit atrocities.”

And atrocities continue with no end in sight. Israel has persisted with methodical – and clearly intentional – killing of Palestinian civilians not only with bombs, missiles and bullets but also with starvation as a weapon of war. Blockage or extreme constriction of humanitarian aid has been the norm. All summer, Israel has ignored the United Nations warning issued in June that food intake in Gaza had dropped far below “survival” level. By then, the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross said conditions there had become worse than “hell on earth.”

Ironically, the country that we’re told is the ultimate target of antisemitism is now, in reality, the world’s most powerful cause of antisemitism. By insisting that it is the embodiment of Jews all over the world, the state of Israel seeks to associate Jews everywhere with its systematic war crimes and genocide in Gaza along with deadly ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in the West Bank.

The Israeli government, esteemed by a dwindling number of Americans, conflates itself with Judaism and “the Jewish people” in a marketing pattern so familiar that it blends into the wallpaper of media echo chambers. The crux of pro-Israel messaging is to promote a set of false equations: Israel = Jews. Support for Israel = support for Jews. Denunciations of Israel

= antisemitism. And a functional subtext of those equations is this one: Israeli government = impunity.

During the 1980s, when activists in the United States and elsewhere targeted apartheid South Africa with non-violent campaigns for boycotts, divestment and sanctions, those actions did not provoke charges of being anti-white. In this century, the nonviolent Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement has targeted Israel, a country condemned as an apartheid state by one human rights organisation after another after an-



Gage Skidmore

Marco Rubio: Shielding Israel

other – and BDS supporters, even if Jewish, routinely face accusations of antisemitism. In Congress, the accusers include many liberal Democrats. The American Jewish Committee is one of many sizable groups that have long been flatly declaring that “BDS is antisemitic.”

Six decades ago, as a child going to Hebrew school, I couldn’t have imagined that the Jewish faith and reverence for Israel would become so manipulated. When I asked neighbours to put coins into a blue-and-white can so more trees could be planted in Israel, little did I know that the Israeli government would relentlessly kill, maim and terrorise Palestinian civilians in the name of protecting Jews. Nor

did I have any inkling that the dignity and spirituality of Judaism would be twisted and desecrated by Israel with policies of genocide.

One of Israel’s Basic Laws, enacted in 1982, says: “the State of Israel is the national home of the Jewish people,” adding: “the right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people.” This is codification of standard assertions from the Israeli government and its ardent boosters doing all they can to hijack Judaism – claiming to speak for the world’s Jews, whether they like it or not.

Increasingly, they don’t. Polling shows major opposition to core Israeli policies among Jewish people in the US.

All too often, US government officials amplify the senseless trope that Israel is the guarantor of safety for Jews worldwide. Speaking at a Hanukkah party at the White House in December 2023, former president Joe Biden said: “Were there no Israel, there wouldn’t be a Jew in the world that is safe.” The remarkable assertion, which met with loud applause and cheers, was hardly a one-off. Three months earlier, Biden had said: “Were there no Israel, no Jew in the world would be ultimately safe. It’s the only ultimate guarantee.”

The US Senate’s top Democrat, Chuck Schumer, writes in his new book *Antisemitism in America*: “There is a special and almost indescribable pride that comes from knowing, despite all the horrors, that after two millennia of wandering the desert, the Jewish people would finally return home.” It’s a classic conceit of claiming to speak for “the Jewish people” and insisting that Israel is their actual home-

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land – no matter where they live on the planet.

The biggest Jewish organisations in the US automatically extol the Israeli government, regardless of what it does. And, as Peter Beinart wrote this year: “American Jewish leaders don’t just insist on Israel’s right to exist. They insist on its right to exist as a Jewish state. They cling to the idea that it can be both Jewish and democratic despite the basic contradiction between legal supremacy for one ethno-religious group and the democratic principle of equality under the law.”

More insidious is the unspoken assumption that, after all is said and done, Jewish lives are intrinsically much more valuable than other lives in general and Palestinian lives in particular, while Israel’s destiny is transcendent. It’s a mindset that Beinart decries in his new book *Being Jewish After the Destruction of Gaza*: “No matter how many Palestinians

die, they do not tip the scales, because the value of a Palestinian is finite and the value of a Jewish state is infinite ... Worshipping a country that elevates Jews over Palestinians replaces Judaism’s universal God – who makes special demands on Jews but cherishes all people – with a tribal deity that considers Jewish life precious and Palestinian life cheap.”

Such worshipping of Israel fuels the pernicious concept that “the Jewish people” are synonymous with Israel. Any such claim can only be destructive, especially with Israel shamelessly engaged in ethnic cleansing, mass murder and genocide. **CT**

Norman Solomon is the director of RootsAction and executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. His latest book is War Made Invisible: How America Hides the Human Toll of Its Military Machine

prompted, to a large degree, by, “The Israeli government’s relentless and increasing bombardment of Gaza, the offensive of recent weeks” and continued starvation and devastation.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney had high hopes for his country’s gesture. “Canada recognises the State of Palestine and offers our partnership in building the promise of a peaceful future for both the State of Palestine and the State of Israel.”

A joint statement from Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Foreign Minister Penny Wong reiterated the country’s “longstanding commitment to a two-state solution, which has always been the only path to enduring peace and security for the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.”

While most countries in Africa, Asia and South America recognise a Palestinian state, Western states, for the most part, have gone slow on the issue, holding to the long-standing assumption that Palestinians should patiently wait their turn once Israel gave consent.

The attacks of October 7, 2023 by Hamas on Israel, and the retributive, vengeful war of annihilation being waged in Gaza, turned matters. Recognising Palestine became a matter of considered calculation, a potential incentive to convince Israel about the merits of a ceasefire and a return to talks that would lead to conditions of tolerable co-existence. But conditions would also be imposed on Palestinian statehood. The habits of former colonial powers resurfaced: a Palestinian state would be declared, but only on their terms.

Central to the new rollcall of states recognising Palestine are

➤ **BINOY KAMPMARK**

UN’s recognition of Palestine is symbolic

“**T** rue to the historic commitment of my country to the Middle East, to peace between the Israelis and Palestinians, this is why I declare today, France recognises the state of Palestine.”

So stated President Emmanuel Macron to more than 140 leaders in attendance at the United Nations General Assembly on September 22. He further declared that “we must

do everything in our power to preserve the possibility of a two-state solution”.

On September 21, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and Portugal had similarly recognised Palestinian statehood. The intention was clear: to resuscitate the moribund two-state solution, long confined to diplomacy’s morticians. For UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, the decision had been

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various undertakings, some of them more realistic than others. The Palestinian Authority, for instance, has given assurances that elections will be held in a timely fashion, and reforms made to a worn and corrupt administration in the West Bank.

The assurance given by the Palestinian Authority leader, Mahmoud Abbas, on ensuring the disarming of the militants and the demilitarisation of the Gaza Strip is something he is in no position to give, seeing that any such decision will lie with Hamas.

Abbas, in his video address (his travel visa to the US had been revoked), again performed the necessary rites of sorrow and condemnation involving the “killing and detention of civilians, including Hamas’ actions on October 7, 2023.”

He warned that “peaceful, popular resistance of this brutal occupation” would continue till it was defeated. He advertised the fact that local elections and elections for institutions, federations and unions had been conducted, with tepid acknowledgement of “a specialised committee to develop the justice sector in Palestine.”

As for holding “democratic general elections,” that was a matter for Israel, blamed for obstructing and preventing them from taking place in East Jerusalem.

The antics of recognition have done nothing to halt the methodical destruction of Gaza City, nor restore regular channels of humanitarian aid. In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu holds to the idea that Palestinian statehood must never be allowed to eventuate. “It will not happen,” he thundered, arguing that recognising such an entity was a gift to terrorism. “A Palestinian state will not be



Benjamin Netanyahu: No to statehood

established west of the Jordan River.”

In keeping with previous isolated

states in history – apartheid South Africa, Nazi Germany and fascist Italy – he hopes that Israel can develop an economy with “autarkic characteristics” and become a “super Sparta.”

Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid is less sure. While condemning unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state as undue reward for terroristic acts, he is convinced that sober and sensible diplomacy could have averted the issue. “The government that brought upon us the worst security disaster in our history is now also bringing upon us the most severe diplomatic crisis,” he opined in a seething post on X.

Unfortunately for the Palestinian cause, what is left in Gaza City is being levelled even as the diplomats and politicians congratulate

➤ GREED AT A GLANCE

WWW.INEQUALITY.ORG



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themselves in New York. Israel's odious ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon, is partially right in calling the recent clutch of declarations "empty" in character. Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich captures the sneering mood: "The days when Britain and other countries would determine our future are over; the mandate is over, and the only answer to the

anti-Israeli move is sovereignty over the homeland in Judea and Samaria and removing the foolish idea of a Palestinian state from the agenda forever."

Binoy Kampmark was a Commonwealth Scholar at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He currently lectures at RMIT University in Australia.

► JEFF COHEN

Donald Trump + corporate media control = censorship

As corporate media accelerate their censorship of comedians and journalists, we must realise that we got to this dire situation because of old-fashioned, bipartisan corruption in Washington. The problem didn't begin with Donald Trump. It began long ago, especially in the 1980s and '90s when presidents of both parties and Congress decided to put the nation's media system in the hands of a small number of ever-larger corporations.

And, of course, those corporations were big political donors to both parties. Enormous mergers were approved. Anti-trust laws were ignored. Federal Communications Commission rules were changed, and caps on mega-ownership relaxed or eliminated.

Today, a handful of amoral conglomerates control our information and media system – conglomerates that care a lot about profit-maximisation and very little about free expression and the right to dissent,



Wikimedia

Jimmy Kimmel: Suspended by ABC

especially when expression and dissent interfere with their profits. There was nothing natural or inevitable about the process of conglomeration. It was sheer corruption – and Trumpian censorship is the result.

September's month's suspension of comedian and Trump critic Jimmy Kimmel by ABC/Disney over remarks about right-wing exploitation of Charlie Kirk's murder might seem abrupt.

It wasn't. It came after an unprecedented threat from Trump FCC Chair Brendan Carr to go after ABC stations and, perhaps more importantly, because of two powerful companies that blossomed over the years thanks to political decisions made in Washington. Those two companies – Nexstar Media and Sinclair Broadcast Group – each own or operate roughly 200 TV stations across the country, including many ABC affiliates, and they acted before Disney by saying they'd be removing Kimmel's programme from their ABC stations.

This is why President Bill Clinton is so important to the story. Working hand-in-hand with Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich, Clinton pushed into law the 1996 Telecommunications Act – a major, corrupt piece of legislation largely written by corporate lobbyists and hardly debated in Congress. It passed the US Senate 81 to 18. (With little media coverage of this corporate-friendly bill, a consumer group approached CNN to try to buy ad time to warn the public, but CNN refused.)

Prior to the 1996 law, a company could own only 12 TV stations nationwide. Not 200. Besides helping today's TV giants Nexstar and Sinclair, the law helped Rupert Murdoch grow his media company. A conservative Texas-based company, Clear Channel, owned about 50 radio stations before the law – and quickly grew to more than 1,000 radio stations after caps were loosened.

Sinclair is as Trumpian as any media company around. You may remember when Sinclair in 2018 ordered its local TV anchors across the country to read the same pro-

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Trump script about “one-sided news” and “fake stories.” Sinclair had intervened in the 2004 election in favour of President Bush by running a “documentary” bashing the Democratic nominee John Kerry. Sinclair has now demanded that Jimmy Kimmel apologise to Kirk’s family and donate to Kirk’s political organisation.

As for Nexstar, it currently needs approval from Trump’s FCC to acquire the media company Tegna in a \$6 billion deal that would create our country’s largest TV company by far. As *Washington Post* television critic Lili Loofbourow explained, the merged Nexstar-Tegna corporation would reach 80 percent of all US households, way beyond the current FCC limit of 39 percent: “So Nexstar doesn’t just need the FCC’s approval; it also needs the FCC to change that rule or the deal can’t go through.”

Remember what another media conglomerate, Paramount, did to secure the FCC’s merger approval: It tried to muzzle the most profitable TV news show in history, CBS’s *60 Minutes*, then paid Trump a thinly-disguised \$16 million bribe to settle a totally frivolous lawsuit against *60 Minutes*, and then announced the termination of Trump-critic Stephen Colbert, set for next May . . . if he lasts that long.

Suspending Jimmy Kimmel is not Disney’s first action aimed at currying Trump’s favour. Last December, the conglomerate – which has its own merger deal in need of federal approval – made a bribe-like payment of \$15 million to Trump to settle a frivolous defamation lawsuit against ABC News that Disney could not have lost in court.

When the settlement negotiations between Paramount/CBS and

Trump were stalled, even after the executive producer of “60 Minutes” and the head of CBS News had resigned, it seemed clear to me that Team Trump wanted a bigger head on the platter. That’s when I started saying that Colbert may be in jeopardy.

In July, after Paramount announced Colbert’s termination, I appeared on Democracy Now! and host Amy Goodman ended the programme by asking me for “another prediction” since I’d been right about Colbert.

I responded: “Yeah, I’m sad that I believe that Jon Stewart’s in trouble. And, you know, Jimmy Kimmel, his employer is Disney. He could be in trouble. You learn more from a 10-minute monologue from these comedians than you do from a month of watching the news on those channels.”

TV’s comedic voices have helped many of us survive psychologically amid the craziness of the Trump era. But their own survival is un-

certain in the hands of media conglomerates intent on pleasing a wannabe dictator.

As we defend voices like Kimmel and resist Trumpian authoritarianism, we must recognize the need to also resist corporate conglomeration and greed in every sector of society from healthcare to housing to media and Internet.

Note: After Jimmy Kimmel’s “indefinite” suspension sparked online and real-world protests against Disney, consumer boycotts, and an ACLU-organized open letter signed by some of Hollywood’s most famous figures, Disney returned Kimmel to the airwaves after missing just three nights. CT

Jeff Cohen is co-founder of *RootsAction.org*, a retired journalism professor at Ithaca College and author of *Cable News Confidential: My Misadventures in Corporate Media*. In 1986, he founded the media watch group *FAIR*.



► HURWITT'S EYE

MARK HURWITT

We are all antifa now!

The designation of the amorphous group antifa as a terrorist organisation allows the state to brand all dissidents as supporters and prosecute them as terrorists

Trump's designation of the amorphous group antifa, which has no formal organisation or structure, as a terrorist organisation permits the state to charge us all as terrorists.

The point is not to go after members of antifa, short for anti-fascist. It is to go after the last vestiges of dissent. When Barack Obama oversaw the coordinated national campaign to shut down the Occupy encampments, antifa – so named because they dress in black, obscure their faces, move as a unified mass and seek physical confrontations with police – was the excuse.

"I am pleased to inform our many USA Patriots that I am designating ANTIFA, A SICK, DANGEROUS, RADICAL LEFT DISASTER, AS A MAJOR TERRORIST ORGANIZATION," the president wrote in a Truth Social post. "I will also be strongly recommending that those funding ANTIFA be thoroughly investigated in accordance with the highest legal standards and practices. Thank you for your attention to this matter!"

I have no love for antifa. The feeling is mutual. I was a fierce opponent of the Black Bloc anarchists who identified with antifa. They embedded themselves in Occupy encampments and refused to take part in the collective decision making. They carried out property destruction and initiated clashes with

the police. Occupy activists were antifa's human shields. I wrote that antifa was "a gift from heaven to the security and surveillance state."

David Graeber, whose work I respect, wrote an open letter criticising my position.

I was doxed. My lectures and events, which received phone threats forcing venues to hire private security, including bodyguards, were picketed by men dressed in black, their faces were covered by black bandanas. They all carried the same sign, no matter which city I was in, that read: "Fuck You Chris Hedges." During a debate with an anarchist supporter of antifa in New York City, several dozen black-clad men in the audience jeered and interrupted me, often yelling out sarcastically "amen."

The state effectively used antifa – I am certain antifa was heavily infiltrated with agents provocateurs – to shut all of us down. The corporate state feared the broad appeal of the Occupy movement, including to those within the systems of power. The movement was targeted because it articulated a truth about our economic and political system that cut across political and cultural lines.

Antifa, let me be clear, is not a terrorist organisation. It may confuse acts of petty vandalism and a repellent cynicism with revolution, but its designation as a terrorist organisation has no legal justification.

Antifa sees any group that seeks

to rebuild social structures, especially through nonviolent acts of civil disobedience, as the enemy. They oppose all organised movements, which only ensures their own powerlessness. They are not only obstructionist, but obstructionist to those of us who are also trying to resist. They dismiss anyone who lacks their ideological purity. It does not matter if individuals are part of union organising, workers' and populist movements or radical intellectuals and environmental activists. These anarchists are an example of what Theodore Roszak in *The Making of a Counter Culture* called the "progressive adolescentisation" of the American left.

John Zerzan, one of the principal ideologues of the Black Bloc movement in the United States, defended *Industrial Society and Its Future*, the rambling manifesto by Theodore Kaczynski, known as the Unabomber, although he did not endorse Kaczynski's bombings. Zerzan dismisses a long list of supposed "sellouts" starting with Noam Chomsky and including myself.

Black Bloc activists in cities such as Oakland smashed the windows of stores and looted them. It was not a strategic, moral or tactical act. It was done for the sake of destruction. Random acts of violence, looting and vandalism are justified, in the jargon of the movement, as components of "feral" or "spontaneous insurrection."

These acts, the movement argues, can never be organised. Organisation, in the thinking of the movement, implies hierarchy, which must always be opposed. There can be no restraints on “feral” or “spontaneous” acts of insurrection. Whoever gets hurt gets hurt. Whatever gets destroyed gets destroyed.

“The Black Bloc movement is infected with a deeply disturbing hypermasculinity,” I wrote. “This hypermasculinity, I expect, is its primary appeal. It taps into the lust that lurks within us to destroy, not only things but human beings. It offers the godlike power that comes with mob violence.

Marching as a uniformed mass, all dressed in black to become part of an anonymous bloc, faces covered, temporarily overcomes alienation, feelings of inadequacy, powerlessness and loneliness.

It imparts to those in the mob a sense of comradeship. It permits an inchoate rage to be unleashed on any target. Pity, compassion and tenderness are banished for the intoxication of power. It is the same sickness that fuels the swarms of police who pepper-spray and beat peaceful demonstrators. It is the sickness of soldiers in war. It turns human beings into beasts.”

But while I oppose antifa, I do not blame them for the state’s response. If it was not antifa it would be some other group. Our rapidly consolidating police state will use any mechanism to silence us. It actually welcomes violence. Confrontational tactics and destruction of property justify draconian forms of control and frighten the wider population, driving them away from any resist-



Antifa faces off against the far-right in Portsmouth, England, 2024

ance movement. It needs antifa or a group like it.

Once a resistance movement is successfully smeared as a flag-burning, rock-throwing, angry mob – which those in the Trump administration are working hard to do – we are finished. If we become isolated, we can be crushed.

“Nonviolent movements, on some level, embrace police brutality,” I wrote. “The continuing attempt by the state to crush peaceful protesters who call for simple acts of justice delegitimises the power elite. It prompts a passive population to respond. It brings some within the structures of power to our side and creates internal divisions that will lead to paralysis within the network of authority. Martin Luther King kept holding marches in Birmingham because he knew Public Safety Commissioner ‘Bull’ Connor was a thug who would overreact.

“The explosive rise of the Occupy Wall Street movement came when a few women, trapped behind or-

ange mesh netting, were pepper-sprayed by NYPD Deputy Inspector Anthony Bologna,” I went on.

“The violence and cruelty of the state were exposed. And the Occupy movement, through its steadfast refusal to respond to police provocation, resonated across the country. Losing this moral authority, this ability to show through nonviolent protest the corruption and decadence of the corporate state, would be crippling to the movement. It would reduce us to the moral degradation of our oppressors. And that is what our oppressors want.”

I saw how antifa was weaponised to break

the Occupy movement. Now it is being weaponised to throttle any resistance, no matter how tepid and benign.

This justification for widespread repression is absurdist theatre, characterised by fictions, including the supposed “Red-Green” alliance of Islamists and the “radical left.” Stephen Miller, Trump’s top policy adviser, insists there was an “organised campaign” behind the assassination of Charlie Kirk, whose martyrdom has turbocharged state repression. Any Trump opponent, including billionaire financier George Soros and his Open Society Foundations, will soon be caught in the net.

We are all antifa now.

CT

Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who was a foreign correspondent for 15 years for the New York Times. He is the host of the Chris Hedges Report podcast at www.chrishedges.substack.com

► DAVID CROMWELL

'Israel says ...' is not journalism

How long will British journalists treat Israeli claims with minimal scepticism, while repeating and amplifying Israeli lies and deceptions?

A targeted Israeli attack killed prominent Al Jazeera journalist Anas al-Sharif alongside several colleagues on Sunday, August 10. They were in a tent outside the main gate of Gaza City's al-Shifa hospital. Also killed were Al Jazeera correspondent Mohammed Qreiqeh and camera operators Ibrahim Zaher and Mohammed Noufal, together with freelance cameraman Momen Aliwa and freelance journalist Mohammed al-Khalidi. Al-Sharif was previously part of a Reuters team that won a Pulitzer Prize in 2024.

Western mainstream news outlets prominently featured Israel's claim that Anas al-Sharif was a Hamas operative. This televised BBC News segment was typical:

"Israel says Anas Al-Sharif was a member of Hamas, a claim long rejected by the news network, his family, and the Committee to Protect Journalists."

Although scepticism was indicated, the Israeli propaganda claim skewed reporting by disrupting the reality that Israel had just deliberately murdered several journalists and media workers. This was exactly as Israel wished, diverting attention from its killings to addressing the presented 'evidence' of one victim being an active Hamas opera-

tive. This is part of a longstanding Israeli pattern of lies and deception since the genocide began in October 2023.

Kenneth Roth, former executive director of Human Rights Watch, said: "Israel keeps killing journalists, usually accusing them of being part of Hamas's military, rarely offering any proof beyond its own worthless assertions."

Irene Khan, the United Nations special rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, said: "This is a pattern the Israelis have used over the last 20 months...to assassinate and silence independent reporting on Gaza...they are running a carefully planned program of assassination."

The *Financial Times* had a straightforward headline: "Israel kills famous Al Jazeera reporter in Gaza."

By contrast, the *Daily Telegraph* headlined: 'Israel kills Al Jazeera journalist it accused of leading Hamas terror cell'.

There was a follow-up piece by the paper's Jerusalem correspondent, Henry Bodkin: "Why Israel believes Al Jazeera reporter killed in Gaza was a terrorist."

How does a journalist without mind-reading powers know what Israel 'believes,' rather than what it claims or asserts?



The *Daily Mail* included the Israeli claim in its headline: "Five Al Jazeera journalists are killed in Israeli strike on tent in Gaza: IDF says it was targeting and struck 'Hamas cell leader posing as correspondent.'"

When not actually featured in newspaper headlines, Israel's claim that Anas al-Sharif was active in a Hamas cell was prominent in reporting. The second line of a *Sun* news article was typical: "Anas al-Sharif, 28, was hit in the strike after the IDF claimed he was the 'head of a terrorist cell in Hamas.'"

The UK-based Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM) noted of media coverage: "Unlike the FT, many major outlets have centred Israeli propaganda that Al Jazeera's Anas



MURDERED BY ISRAEL: Anas al-Sharif, Ibrahim Zaher, Mohammed Noufal, Moamen Aliwa and Mohammed Qreiqeh

al-Sharif was working for Hamas. Here's how the media should be reporting things, beginning with the fact that Israel just killed four Al Jazeera journalists in a targeted strike."

CfMM then pointed out that media outlets should have provided basic context in their reporting, including:

- The timing of this attack (on the eve of its latest expected assault on Gaza)

- Targeting of journalists not a one-off (some 240 killed by Israel so far – more than any other conflict)

- Israel doesn't allow foreign journalists into Gaza."

Responsible journalism should also: "Humanise the victims. These journalists had been pivotal in sharing stories out of Gaza. Share their families' and friends' pain."

CfMM also observed that reporting should have indicated prominently that Israel had already threatened al-Sharif, and that the Committee to Protect Journalists had warned that any attack on journalists is clearly unacceptable.

Finally, said CfMM, Israeli claims about al-Sharif needed to be put in proper perspective: that the claims are not supported by the 'evidence' presented.

In fact, responsible journalists

should go further and explain to audiences that Israel has a long history of lying, fabrication and deceit. Since the genocide began, there has been a litany of lies that the 'mainstream' media have propagated and, when exposed, ignored or downplayed. Mehdi Hasan, founder of independent outlet Zeteo, powerfully debunked ten of the most egregious Israeli lies in a clip lasting just three minutes:

In summary, 'Israel's top 10 lies about its Gaza genocide' presented by Hasan are:

1. Hamas systematically steals aid coming into Gaza.

2. It's all about the hostages, i.e. if

Hamas released the hostages, Israel would stop the genocide.

3. 40 beheaded babies, and babies in ovens or hung on clotheslines.

4. Mass rape on 7 October 2023 as a weapon of war.

5. Hamas 'command and control centre' under Al-Shifa hospital.

6. A schedule found for Hamas guards in Rantisi hospital (it was an Arabic calendar).

7. UNRWA, the UN relief agency for Palestinians, is a front for Hamas.

8. You cannot trust the 'Hamas-controlled' health ministry.

9. Israel didn't kill those 15 aid workers or 100 people waiting for flour.

10. Hamas uses human shields.

Following Israel's targeted killing of Al Jazeera's entire reporting team in Gaza City, Muhammad Shehada, a Gaza political analyst and Visiting Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, created this new brief summary of Israeli lies. Running at just over two minutes, Shehada observed that he kept going until he ran out of breath, but barely scratched the surface of Israeli deceit.

In his introduction, he said: "One thing that you need to keep in mind is that Israel has been lying incessantly since the beginning of the genocide. It's been the cornerstone of Israel's genocidal campaign to lie every single day about everything possible."

Other than the Israeli lies cited by Hasan above, examples given by Shehada included: Israeli use of white phosphorus weapons; deliberately starving Gazans; gassing Israeli hostages; killing women and children with white flags; mass rape of Palestinians; non-existent tunnels under graveyards; Israeli snipers targeting children in the head; breaking the ceasefire; blowing up Gazans fleeing south; blowing up and destroying Kamal Adwan hos-

Media activist Saul Staniforth noted: "The IDF assassinated Anas al Sharif. Now the BBC assassinates his character"

pital; claiming that dead Gazan children are fake plastic dolls; creating alleged safe zones that they push people into and then bomb; Red Crescent staff participated in the 7 October attacks; designating journalists as Hamas militants (such as al-Sharif); Hamas hid giant supplies of fuel under Rafah; and on and on.

In conclusion, said Shehada:

"You should attach as much value to Israel's allegations about Anas al-Sharif, as to the dust on the floor."

You might think that, with so much evidence of Israeli deception and outright lies, journalists would treat Israeli claims with extreme scepticism, while explaining to audiences why. This should especially apply to BBC News, the national broadcaster that is funded by a public licence fee and which is supposed to uphold the highest journalistic values as enshrined in the corporation's Editorial Guidelines, and promised by its Royal Charter.

Of course, as is widely known by now, the credibility of BBC News has nosedived since the genocide began and there has even been significant discontent within its own newsrooms.

How did the BBC treat Israel's targeted killing of Anas al-Sharif and his Al Jazeera colleagues in Gaza City? As we saw earlier, BBC news broadcasts prominently featured wording such as, "Israel says Anas al-Sharif was a member of Hamas."

When the BBC interviewed Mar-

tin Roux, head of the crisis desk at Reporters Without Borders, the BBC presenter inevitably began with, "Israel says..."

Here is another BBC example that was broadcast live: "Let's bring in our colleague Yolande Knell who is in Jerusalem. The accusation from Israel is that Anas al Sharif had a dual role, he was both in their words journalist and terrorist..."

There followed almost two minutes of bland, emotionless newspeak from Knell with only perfunctory scepticism about Israeli claims, and zero context about the longstanding Israeli pattern of denials, deceptions and deceptions.

As media activist Saul Staniforth noted: "The IDF assassinated him. Now the BBC assassinates his character."

The flagship BBC News at Ten actually broadcast a segment in which BBC correspondent Jon Donnison, reporting from Jerusalem, made this outrageous observation: "There's the question of proportionality. Is it justified to kill five journalists when you were only targeting one?"

As Jonathan Cook noted, the comment was 'obscene.' If you cannot grasp that, imagine that five well-known BBC journalists were killed in a targeted Russian strike inside Ukraine: perhaps Jeremy Bowen, Lyse Doucet, Yolande Knell, Lucy Williamson and Jon Donnison working together from a makeshift base in Ukraine. Imagine that one of them, Donnison perhaps, had allegedly been secretly working for Ukraine, passing on intelligence information about Russian troop movements. If all five had been killed in a Russian attack, would that have been framed in BBC reporting as: "There's the question of proportionality. Is it justified to kill five journalists when you were only targeting one?"

Of course not.

Consider also a press review segment on Sky News in which one of their journalists extensively recounted Israel's claims about Anas al-Sharif's active Hamas involvement "at the time of his elimination," followed by: "Sharif himself had denied it. Al Jazeera deny it too. So, you know, you're left with two sides here again."

As journalist Afshin Rattansi, *Going Underground* presenter, observed:

"The two sides:

"An ethno-state perpetrating genocide that lies as much as it kills

"A slain journalist who has shown the horrors of the genocide

"And there's 'journalists' seemingly still can't figure out that Israel had every motivation to kill a Palestinian journalist to stop him from showing the world the horror of the genocide they are perpetrating...

"Bear in mind these people are paid well to be this awful at their jobs"

Karishma Patel, a former BBC News journalist who resigned over the broadcaster's biased coverage of Gaza, said on X: "For nearly 2 years, I have been asking @BBCNews to critically engage with its sources over Gaza. Israel is a bad source. Uncritically repeating its claims, even with the caveat that they're denied, is not journalism. Do your job. Verify."

She continued, addressing the BBC: "You have put Palestinian lives at risk by legitimising Israeli claims that have laid the groundwork for its attacks. You have created the conditions under which Israel could kill AJ's entire team in Gaza City. All you have ever had to do was follow the evidence."

Journalist and documentary filmmaker Richard Sanders observed: "Israel last night murdered the entire Al Jazeera team in Gaza City.

"From correspondents to editors to producers ... You're an insult to journalism, and a stamp of disgrace for humanity"

Western media should long ago have united to bring serious pressure on the Israelis to end the slaughter of journalists. Their failure to do so makes them complicit."

Al Jazeera noted recently that Israel has killed nearly 270 journalists and media workers since 7 October 2023, listing all their names here.

Tanya Haj-Hassan, a Toronto-based paediatric intensive care and humanitarian doctor who has worked in Gaza, told the UN last November: "Incredible Palestinian journalists covering the genocide of their own people have been repeatedly targeted by Israel and discredited, while both their reporting and their murder[s] have been largely ignored by mainstream Western media."

She added: "Spend just five minutes in a hospital there [in Gaza] and it will become painfully clear that Palestinians are being intentionally massacred, starved and stripped of everything needed to sustain human life."

The public have been moved by such authoritative testimony from many doctors, as well as countless, extremely harrowing scenes of devastation and suffering from Gaza, and are well aware that mainstream media are protecting Israel. Reporting from a protest in Washington DC for Al Jazeera English, Shihab Rattansi said: "Several hundred demonstrators gathered outside the headquarters of various media organisations in this building: NBC, Fox News, ITN, the Guardian. They say that their coverage of the Gaza

genocide has given Israel the room to kill so many, and notably so many journalists."

Rattansi added of the protesters:

"They're trying to disrupt the narratives that are being told on these programmes. That message is, 'Look, you're no longer the gatekeepers. We know what's happening in Gaza. We know about the genocide, despite your best efforts.'"

Mariam Barghouti, a US-born Palestinian journalist and policy analyst, stated via X: "We are no longer waiting for international journalists to condemn Israeli practices against children, civilians, and their own peers.

"We condemn these journalists in their entirety. We condemn them for their journalistic malpractice, their ineptitude to fulfill their obligation to the world, and for engineering the narrative of victimhood for Israel."

Barghouti added: "From correspondents to editors to producers, across Sky news to CNN, BBC, NYT and others. You're an insult to journalism, and a stamp of disgrace for humanity.

"You have wielded so much power, and at every juncture chose to abuse it. And here we emphasize and remember, it was a choice, because real journalists- like those in Gaza,- did not acquiesce and chose to report the truth even as their body began to eat itself from hunger & the bombs rained on them."

Hind Khoudary, a Palestinian journalist based in Gaza, said: "I will not speak to foreign media about the killing of Palestinian journalists.

"I will not sit on your global channels to be part of a segment you'll forget by tomorrow.

"To you, we are just a headline – a tragedy to consume, not colleagues to defend.

"We are being hunted and killed in Gaza while you watch in silence. For two years, your fellow journalists here have been slaughtered.

What did you do?

“Nothing.

“Or maybe it’s because we are Palestinian journalists – we don’t count as ‘real’ colleagues in your eyes.’

Perhaps it is also because Palestinians are presented by western media as lesser humans than the rest of us.

Investigative journalist Matt Kennard has raised serious questions for well over a year about British complicity, indeed participation, in Israel’s Gaza genocide. Together with Palestine Deep Dive and Declassified UK, he has reported UK spy flights over Gaza: something the mainstream media, in part, has only recently addressed (although notably not the BBC, so far).

Kennard noted via X on 11 August: “Likely that UK had a mercenary spy plane in the sky over Gaza when Israel targeted and killed 5 Al Jazeera journalists, including Anas al-Sharif, last night. The intelligence gathered by this plane goes directly

How long will the British media broadcast Benjamin Netanyahu’s words, without pointing out that he is wanted by the ICC for war crimes ...

to Israeli military in real-time. How long will we tolerate this?”

Declassified UK noted that the Hind Rajab Foundation has now identified Israeli air force commander Tomer Bar as one of those responsible for killing the Al Jazeera team in Gaza. Earlier, Declassified UK revealed that Keir Starmer’s government had allowed Bar to visit Britain in July. He reportedly met with RAF commanders and attended the Royal International Air Tattoo event. Around the same time, air chief marshal Sir Rich Knighton, head of the RAF, was confronted by Phil Miller of Declassified UK: “Why are you still sharing intelli-

gence with Benjamin Netanyahu while he’s wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes in Gaza?”

Knighton refused to answer while his colleague, squadron leader Ryan Kerr, repeatedly tried to stop the interview by shoving Miller.

How long will mainstream British journalists treat Israeli claims with minimal scepticism, indeed repeat and amplify Israeli lies and deceptions?

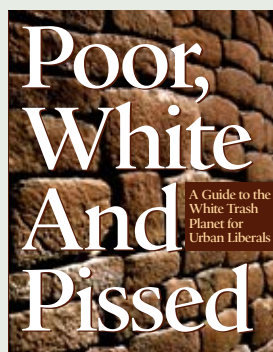
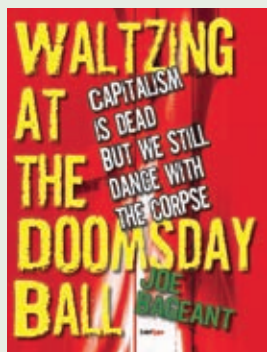
How long will the British media broadcast Benjamin Netanyahu’s words, without pointing out that he is wanted by the ICC for war crimes and crimes against humanity?

How long will UK media outlets soft-pedal challenges to Keir Starmer, David Lammy and other government ministers over their role in the Gaza genocide?

History will condemn them all. **CT**

David Cromwell is co-editor of the UK press watchdog Medialens. This article was first published at www.medialens.org

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RENEVA FOURIE

South Africa and the new face of empire

It showed that a country from the Global South could stand on principle and confront impunity

The pattern is familiar to anyone who has paid attention to the behaviour of powerful nations over the past century. It makes no difference which political party holds the White House. When a government anywhere in the world refuses to obey Washington's orders, accusations of human rights abuses suddenly become the weapon of choice. These claims are repeated with an air of moral authority, amplified through the global media and backed by diplomatic and economic pressure. The targets vary, yet the formula remains constant.

Cuba and Venezuela were singled out for daring to pursue economic systems that put public wel-

fare above corporate profit. Iran and China were smeared for achieving advances in science, technology and industry that rivalled or even outstripped Western powers. Now the focus has shifted to South Africa.

South Africa's offence is that it dared to challenge a close US ally at the highest level of international law. By taking Israel to the International Court of Justice and presenting evidence of genocidal acts in Gaza, South Africa broke an unspoken rule. It showed that a country from the Global South could stand on principle and confront impunity. That defiance was intolerable to the United States.

When quiet pressure failed to

sway the South African government, Washington deployed the same tools it has used against dozens of nations before. The latest step was a report claiming that human rights conditions in South Africa have worsened dramatically. This is no neutral assessment. It is a carefully crafted piece of propaganda designed to delegitimise the government and soften public opinion for more aggressive forms of interference.

In the past, millions took these official narratives at face value. They believed the claims, defended sanctions that strangled economies and justified actions that left ordinary people hungry and desperate. Those who questioned the line were

ridiculed as conspiracy theorists or apologists for dictators. Today South Africans are seeing the same process unfold in real time. Narratives are invented, polished and repeated until they acquire the appearance of truth. The repetition is not accidental. It is the deliberate product of a network that includes media outlets, think tanks and lobbying groups with long records of serving imperial interests.

This is not new. More than three decades ago, Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman documented the process in their book *Manufacturing Consent*. They showed how political and media elites shape public understanding in ways that align with the needs of empire. The machinery that targeted Latin America, the East and other parts of Africa, is now aimed at Pretoria.

The United States narrative is being built in collaboration with corporate media, conservative think tanks and NGOs with deep ties to the apartheid era. The goal is to portray South Africa as a failing state. Once that image is fixed in the public mind, calls for ‘humanitarian’ or ‘democratic’ intervention follow naturally. These interventions never have the welfare of the people at heart. They exist to impose a compliant government that will sign away economic sovereignty in exchange for foreign investment and elite approval.

The groundwork for this strategy was laid long before apartheid’s final collapse. As historian Dale McKinley’s *The ANC and the Liberation Struggle: A Critical Political Biography* has shown, Western powers understood that the end of apartheid was inevitable. They also understood that the social and economic legacy of white minority rule would force any democratic govern-

Corruption scandals, internal rivalries and the failure to meet basic service delivery expectations have eroded the ANC’s credibility

ment to adopt some form of redistribution and social protection. The response was to lock down the economy through privatisation, trade liberalisation and the concentration of wealth in corporate hands. Political sovereignty was conceded only on the condition that economic power remained largely untouched.

Three decades of governance have left the African National Congress battered. Corruption scandals, internal rivalries and the failure to meet basic service delivery expectations have eroded the party’s credibility. This has expanded the opening for the regime-change agenda. In the run-up to the 2024 elections, money poured into building a political coalition designed to topple the ANC. Plans were formalised at a meeting in Gdańsk in 2023, producing what was then known as the Moonshot Pact.

The return of the Trump administration to power in Washington added momentum. Backed strongly by the Zionist lobby, the new US leadership revived old relationships with apartheid-era figures and their allies. It embraced the false narratives spread by AfriForum and Solidarity about so-called state-sponsored genocide against white farmers, land seizures and restrictions on cultural rights. These lies are being weaponised to undermine the credibility of progressive forces inside South Africa’s government.

The US 2024 *Country Report on Human Rights Practices in South Africa* is a prime example of this approach. Disguised as objective

analysis, it is filled with distortions. It accuses the government of complicity in extra-judicial killings, repression of free expression and antisemitism. It claims officials guilty of human rights abuses face no consequences. It repeats allegations of inflammatory racial rhetoric and violence against minorities without evidence.

South Africa’s Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation rejected the report in its entirety. Officials described it as inaccurate, deeply flawed and blind to the reality of South Africa’s constitutional democracy. Yet Solidarity announced it would travel to the United States to ask Washington to ‘improve’ human rights in South Africa.

The irony is staggering. The US is a nation with mass incarceration rates higher than any country on earth, systemic racism embedded in its justice system and a long record of human rights violations abroad. Britain, America’s closest ally, shares this record. Both governments have backed wars that devastated Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Yemen. Both have enforced sanctions that starved civilians in countries from Cuba to Zimbabwe.

Solidarity’s behaviour is not patriotic dissent. It is a direct appeal for foreign intervention. Its leaders are aligning themselves with those who wish to restore a racial hierarchy in South Africa and guarantee the privileges of a small elite. They are not the masterminds of this agenda. They are its willing tools. The real aim is to install a government that will faithfully implement neoliberal policies and surrender control of the country’s mineral wealth and public services.

The United States has become increasingly brazen in its regime-

change operations. It is confident that the strategies used in Latin America, the Middle East and Eastern Europe can be replicated in Southern Africa. The intention is to weaken South Africa's ability to act independently, to strip away the policies that protect its resources and to shape its political direction in line with Washington's interests.

The answer cannot be denial or blind loyalty to any political party. It must begin with the recognition that the fight for sovereignty is a shared struggle across the Global South and even within the Global North. In both Britain and the United States, ordinary people have been misled into supporting foreign policies that enrich corporations while undermining democracy abroad. These same tactics have been used to break unions, privatise public services and criminalise dissent.

South Africa's National Dialogue process offers a way forward. It creates space for honest debate about the country's direction with-

The defeat of South African apartheid came from unity, sacrifice and the refusal to accept that oppression was inevitable

out allowing foreign actors to dictate terms. If that process can be strengthened, it can serve as a model for other nations resisting imperial control.

South Africa has faced powerful enemies before. The defeat of apartheid was not achieved through appeals to the goodwill of the powerful. It came from unity, sacrifice and the refusal to accept that oppression was inevitable, along with significant solidarity from anti-apartheid movements worldwide. The same determination is required now. Citizens in

the Global North who value justice must understand that solidarity is not about pity or charity. It is about recognising a common interest in resisting the domination of people and resources by imperial power.

The principle is simple. The people of South Africa, and only the people of South Africa, have the right to decide their future. If they stand firm on that principle and if allies abroad refuse to be deceived by the propaganda machine, the current campaign of manipulation will fail. History shows that when people organise with clarity and courage, even the mightiest empire cannot impose its will forever. **CT**

Reneva Fourie is a Central Committee and Politburo Member of the South African Communist Party. She is a writer, analyst and copyeditor at Amazwi Creatives and is author of a number of books, including Negotiating South Africa's Decentralisation Model: A Collection of Insiders' views

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Battling the floods in South Sudan

Photographs by **Peter Caton** highlight tragic impact of climate change on African villages

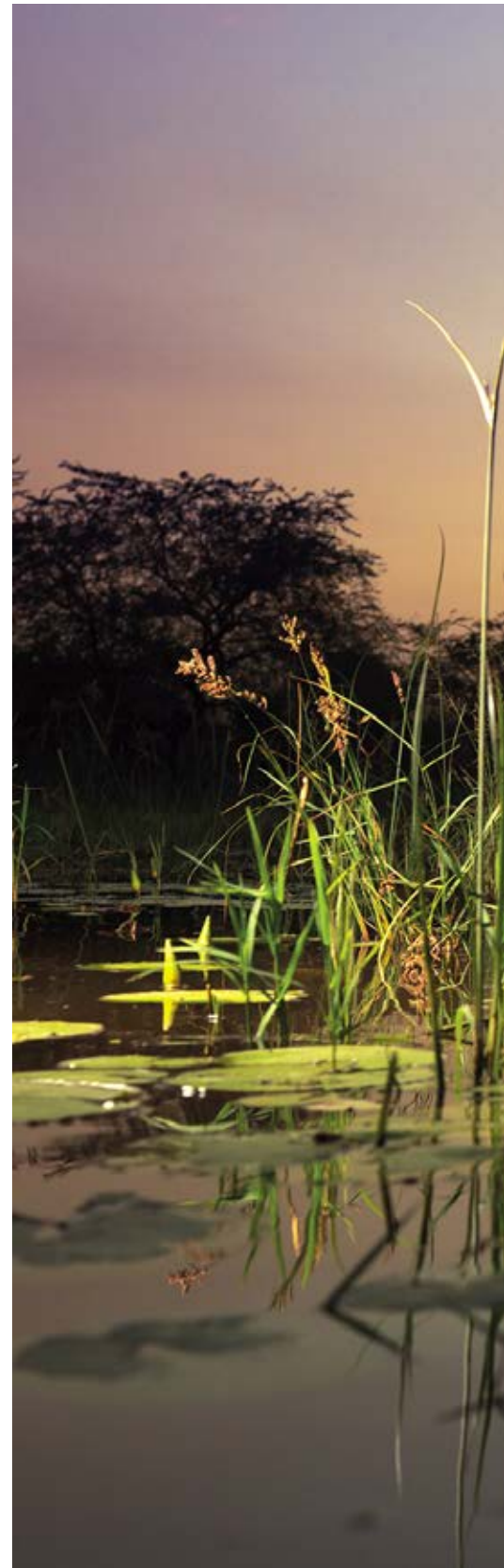


Award-winning photographer, Peter Caton, has dedicated his career to reporting on humanitarian causes and amplifying the voices of disadvantaged people. He has lived on the road for 19 years, the last ten in Africa, where he has documented climate-related crises throughout the continent.

In his latest photobook, *Unyielding Floods*, published by Dewi Lewis, he photographs villagers trying to protect their homes and livelihoods against catastrophic floods in South Sudan. Over four years, Peter returned to these historic floods, capturing the struggles of the villagers, their resilience and their heartache.

When the floods began in 2019, trapped villagers were unable to flee. Many villages were destroyed, creating massive displacement as refugee camps were also cut off by water. The economic damage of this climate crisis has been enormous. Crops failed as livestock perished, increasing widespread famine. Today, there is still no sign of the water receding. Towns resemble an everlasting sea with the roofs of homes protruding from the murky waters.

Caton's images capture a heartbreaking reality for the people of South Sudan, a heartbreaking reality that deserves greater public awareness. **CT**







THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Peter Caton's work has won several international awards and has featured in major news outlets worldwide, including *The Sunday Times*, *NPR*, *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, *De Morgen*, *Der Spiegel*, *GEO France*, *GEO Germany*, *VG*, *The Geographical*, *The Independent*, *El Pais*, and *Corriere Della Sera*. They have been exhibited in London, Berlin, Moscow, Paris, New York, Tokyo, and Istanbul.





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► LIZ EVANS

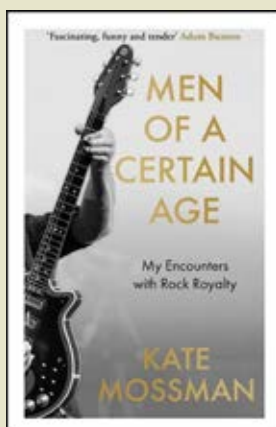
I loved being a rock writer, but sometimes it was a boys' club nightmare

New books provide a nostalgic look into the ways our lives are defined by music

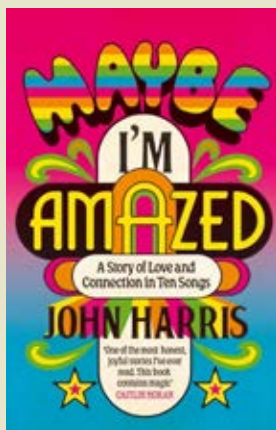
In the 1990s, I was a rock journalist striving to assert myself as a young woman, working at the heart of the United Kingdom's male-dominated music press. I loved my job. I met and interviewed all my favourite bands, and spent my twenties and early thirties in a whirl of parties, clubs, gigs and all-expenses trips to America and Europe.

I began my career through a combination of ignorance, bloody-mindedness, and good timing. With no idea about the protocol of editorial commissions, I was annoyed when a music paper failed to publish my unsolicited live review of a friend's band. Determined to succeed, I followed a tip-off from an artist who lived in a squat with a media contact (this was London in the 1980s), and soon found myself writing for a bi-monthly heavy metal magazine.

The editor, Chris Welch, was a softly spoken, conservatively-dressed man in his late forties whose office walls were lined with photos of himself hanging out with Marc Bolan, Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page and Eric Clapton, in his days as a young reporter. I rarely saw him during my year at the magazine, but I've never forgotten his gentle demeanour and the trust he placed in my inexperienced, 22-year-old self.



MEN OF A CERTAIN AGE: *My Encounters with Rock Royalty* by Kate Mossman



MAYBE I'M AMAZED: *A Story of Love and Connection in Ten Songs* By John Harris

Without his support, my life may have taken a very different turn.

Chris was one of a kind. Other than him, respectful, benevolent older men did not figure in my work for the music press.

By contrast, Kate Mossman is a British arts and music writer whose debut book is presented as “a meditation on the powerful archetype of the ageing rock star.” Her fixation with rock's fading old guard provides a compelling premise for *Men Of A Certain Age: My Encounters with Rock Royalty*, but the blurb is a little misleading. This is essentially a collection of republished interviews and personal reflections, rather than an in-depth analysis.

That said, Mossman has produced a thoughtful and entertaining retrospective. Her conversations with the likes of Wilko Johnson, Terence Trent D'Arby, Ray Davies (The Kinks), Jeff Beck and Kevin Ayers are humorous, perceptive and beautifully composed.

She describes the Happy Mondays' and Black Grape's Shaun Ryder as resembling “a Russian Mafia boss in the corner, whisky in hand, arms elevated by the pressure of a thick leather jacket.” She chats with Paul Stanley of KISS while he applies his makeup before a show.

“Here is my clown white,” he says



Liz Evans in Angeles to interview L7, with Dom Wills from *Melody Maker*

softly, picking up a pot of the thick, sweat-resistant foundation he discovered in the '70s. "And here are my puffs."

These encounters afford the reader a certain insight into Mossman's idiosyncratic predilection for wrinkly rock stars twice her age. Yet while the book affectionately probes her strange, decidedly gendered interest, it avoids the glaring issue of structural misogyny that contaminates the music industry.

It's not as if Mossman is unaware of the sexual politics at play. She positively delights in the "exciting father-daughter energy" of the older man-younger woman dynamic, intentionally exaggerating her youth and assumed innocence in the presence of ageing rockers. She knows men like Tom Jones and Gene Simmons will respond openly to her coltish, unthreatening persona, because what could be safer than "just a pretty lady"? It's a clever

and effective strategy.

I fully appreciate the quality of Mossman's profiles, but her attempts to lean into the patronising attitudes of rock's elders land uncomfortably with me. And having once had my own tender skin in the game, I can't help seeing the book's negation of sexism as a missed opportunity.

When I was a rock journalist, I never felt advantaged by my gender or energised by the older male rocker's entrenched misogyny. Quite the opposite. Twenty or so years before Mossman began pursuing her beloved senior rockers across the US, I was being reprimanded by my editor for my "unprofessional" rejection of the creepy advances of a famous middle-aged musician.

In 1989, I was a staff writer for a fortnightly rock magazine based

in London's Carnaby Street. We smoked and drank at our desks, played loud metal on the stereo, took half-day lunches on record company money and hosted a constant stream of visiting rock stars in all manner of altered states throughout the working day.

One of my regular jobs was to review the singles with a handful of guest musicians, depending on who was in town. This was often a riotous affair that occasionally descended into chaos. One time, a German drummer, old enough to be my dad, asked me to sit on his lap while we listened to the records. When I didn't see the funny side, he sniggered at my rebuttal and asked if I was having my period. So I walked out, leaving him with his embarrassed bandmate in a room shocked into silence.

A year or so later, the editor who scolded me would help bring about my eventual redundancy after I

started to retaliate against a toxic male colleague. This man, previously a friend who'd tried to date me, bullied and ostracised me for the entire duration of my employment. I put on a brave face, cried in the toilets and still managed to enjoy my work. But when I eventually reacted, I was blamed for aggravating the situation, and the magazine let me go.

I spent the next eight years escalating my freelance career and writing books. I waded in the ocean with The Verve's Richard Ashcroft, toasted a Chicago sunrise on tour with Alice in Chains, went snowboarding with a young British band in California, tripped over Jarvis Cocker at his own house party, and gratefully received a pair of secondhand John Fluevog sandals from the closet of Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon in New York. But my confidence remained dented until I published my first academic article in the early 2000s.

Forgive me then, for baulking when Mossman describes herself as "a small girl sitting on the knee of Father Rock" at her first job for the now-defunct UK music monthly, *The Word*.

While I'm sure she's attempting to describe a more supportive, paternalistic workplace environment than the one I endured, she is nevertheless referring to a situation in which she, too, was the only woman in a small team of men. In her case, a generational divide reinforced the sense of male authority which left her wondering "who I was without these men, and who I would be."

Years before Mossman met him, one of the men she mentions reportedly claimed women were unable to write effectively about music. I once encountered him, too, and found him to be smooth, charming and arrogant, with the ruthless attitude of a tabloid journalist.

Working with men like this produced some of the worst experi-

Watching Kurt Cobain develop from a shy, goofy kid into a cynical megastar persecuted by the press was heartbreaking

ences of my career. Luckily, such occasions were rare, but could be significant. Bands never saw the bigger picture, of manipulated stories and doctored headlines, but their lives were directly affected by decisions made by people they'd often never met.

I remember once having a conversation with Kurt Cobain about power and the media, and telling him journalists like me could only do so much. Ultimately, we were at the mercy of our editors, which is why I tried to pick mine wisely. Musicians don't have the choice. Under contract with record labels, they are legally obliged to engage with the media and must take what's on offer. I'd known Nirvana before they were famous, and watching Kurt develop from a shy, goofy kid into a cynical megastar persecuted by the press was heartbreaking.

Part of the reason Mossman's book sits uneasily with me is because it appears to ignore the hard-won heritage of female music journalists, and the struggles women like me had in the workplace. Deferring to big daddy editors and accommodating the fragile egos of doddery rock gods feels too much like turning the clock back.

Interestingly, at the back of her book, an intriguing detail lies almost buried in the acknowledgments. Here, Mossman says she recently learned her mother was responsible for introducing a bunch of records she thought had belonged to her dad

into the family home.

This untold chapter of Mossman's story speaks volumes about women and rock culture. Swinging like a loose thread, it threatens to unravel so much of what we have come to accept about the world of rock and the stories of its appointed gods.

Hence my other frustration with the book. While Mossman is a critically acclaimed journalist and former Mercury prize judge, nothing can fire my interest in men such as former Journey singer Steve Perry, or the insufferable Sting. I simply don't care about them. I'm much more interested in her.

Had Mossman developed the snippets of memoir she uses to contextualise her interviews, and foregrounded herself instead of her tired old giants, I believe her book would have been much more powerful. The strongest, most illuminating passages are when she interrogates her past and mines her personal experiences for clues to her adult obsession with the old guys.

Her teenage infatuation with Queen, her discomfort with the irreverence of 1990s pop culture, her desperate need for parental approval, the peculiar sense of shame she feels in writing about people she loves. The way she listens to music through her father's "imaginary ears," the energy writing affords her. All of this outshines the perpetually recycled male rock-star myths, no matter how well Mossman interprets them.

Perhaps in trying to convince the reader to share her love for middle-of-the-road musicians, Bruce Hornsby and Glen Campbell, both of whom had their heyday before she was born, Mossman is still trapped in her teenage cycle of needing her parents to approve of Queen. If so, I hope she manages to shake this off and step more fully into her own story with conviction and faith. With her talent, a full-blown mem-



Liz Evans in a shaving cream fight with Martin McCarrick from Therapy?

oir would be a runaway bestseller.

In many ways, Mossman's book highlights the limits of music journalism as a genre. Her long-form profiles are detailed sketches rather than complex studies, reflecting the fleeting nature of the interview format. Ultimately, even with a fascinating subject, this type of interaction will always be a superficial exercise and therefore something of a game.

For Mossman, with her obsessive fan tendencies, this may be hard to accept, but faced with Sting's smooth professionalism, she has no choice. "There is a desire for connection that drives every interview," she writes, "and with Sting, it was a connection I never got."

For me, ten years of music jour-

nalism was enough. By 1998, I'd met everyone I wanted to meet and there were only five or six bands I still wanted to hang out with. I was ready to expand my writing skills and deepen my understanding of the human psyche. Funnily enough, given Mossman's interest in Jungian theory, I retrained as a Jungian psychotherapist.

I wasn't the only one to quit music journalism after the 1990s. With magazines folding left, right and centre, many writers moved onto other careers. One of them was John Harris, now a political and arts columnist for *The Guardian*. We met briefly at the *NME* during my six-month stint

as its rock correspondent, and occasionally ran into each other at Britpop gigs with mutual friends.

Now, *NME* is an online platform full of celebrity gossip and brimming with ads. But in the early 1990s it still held currency, for emerging bands and music fans alike. So when the editor invited me to interview Alice in Chains and Screaming Trees on tour in America, I was excited.

I arrived at the *NME* office fresh from the friendly clamour of *Kerrang!* magazine, and the first thing that struck me was the silence. Everywhere I looked, studious-looking guys with neat haircuts sat typing furiously away at their desks. There was no music, no talking – and, apart from the secretary, no women.

I soon discovered the few female writers who managed to find a way in were either resented (like me), or given "special dispensation," whatever that meant.

It all seemed so weirdly petty, like an elitist boys' club. I hated it.

On one occasion, I refused to disclose the location of a secret Hole gig – at the band's request. I was punished for my disloyalty to the paper by not being allowed to review it. Another time, a couple of journalists offered to "help" me with a two-part feature on the Riot Grrrl movement, even though I'd single-handedly managed to gain the trust of some of the key women on the scene, all of whom despised the male-dominated music press.

The final straw came in the form of a commission to interview Aerosmith. Asked to "get the drug stories," I argued for a more original angle: by then, the band was clean. But I was shut down and told to be "more humble."

Needless to say, after spending a lovely afternoon laughing about outlandish but predictable druggy adventures with Aerosmith band members Joe Perry and Steven Tyler (who tried to steal my fake fur

coat), I filed my copy and walked away from the *NME* with my head held as high as it would go.

After freelancing for the *NME*, Harris went on to work for monthly music titles *Q* and *Select*. Now, he's an award-winning journalist with a string of books to his name. His latest one, *Maybe I'm Amazed: A Story of Love and Connection in Ten Songs*, is his fifth, and arguably his most important work to date.

Harris' memoir is a beautiful, heartwarming, enlightening and uplifting book that chronicles the profound impact of music on the life of an autistic child. It captures the grief and frustration of two loving parents as they struggle with the UK's broken education system and underfunded health services, on behalf of their son. And it details the individual nature of autism and the multiple, miraculous ways an autistic person can flourish when given the right support.

As first-time parents, Harris and his partner Ginny, a former press officer with Parlophone Records, are not aware of any issues with their baby, James. He's a little slow to speak and has some cute, characterful quirks, but nothing seems out of the ordinary until their daughter Rosa is born and the family moves from Wales to Somerset.

Slow to adapt to the new changes in his life, James begins to exhibit ritualistic behaviours that concern Harris. Three weeks after James starts attending his new nursery, Ginny is told her son might be autistic. Suddenly, she and Harris are plunged into a brutal spin of fear, anxiety, guilt, denial and fundamental uncertainty.

Together, the family embarks on a punitive round of tests and assessments as the tyranny of diagnosis takes hold. At first, supportive frameworks carry the weight of a heavy sentence. But Harris and Ginny immerse themselves in research

As a lifelong music lover, Harris becomes increasingly aware of the profound relationships his son is developing with certain songs

and fact-finding missions to educate themselves about autism. After investing a significant amount of time and money, they manage to establish a viable routine to help James thrive.

It's not an easy journey. Setbacks, personnel changes and bureaucratic complications are ever-present, but with a small team of specially trained, caring individuals, James makes progress. Meanwhile, as a lifelong music lover, Harris becomes increasingly aware of the profound relationships his son is developing with certain songs by particular bands. Kraftwerk, The Beatles and Mott the Hoople all exert a steadying influence on James, enabling him to communicate in ways he cannot through verbal language.

A visit from musician Billy Bragg, with whom Harris organises an annual talks tent for Glastonbury Festival, results in James actually making music himself. This leads to keyboard lessons and a slot at the school concert. By the time he enters his teens, James is playing bass, and looking every inch the rock star.

Structurally, Harris has produced a masterclass in memoir, seamlessly blending the past with the present. Cleverly shifting between his own life in music and his son's, he charts his teenage years as a mod, his ill-fated band's only performance and his forays into music journalism – all of which he now values anew in

the context of parenting James.

He describes how the pair share their joy in gigs and experience the deep bond of making music together, sometimes with Rosa on drums. Watching his child come alive through rhythm and melody, Harris finds himself re-enchanted by music and uncovers the wonder of parenting through unexpected and creative channels.

The book delivers a wealth of information about the vast and complicated spectrum of autism, taking a deep dive into medical theories and the world of neurology. By weaving this complex material into his personal experience of huge emotional and practical challenges, Harris keeps it relatable. In many ways, he has forged a map, complete with a beacon of hope: albeit an individualised one. Informative, enriching and engaging, his story of love, persistence and hard-won daily miracles is music writing at its absolute best.

Wildly disparate in content, both Harris' and Mossman's books show how music can define us. In this way, their narratives speak to us all.

They remind me of a time when I couldn't leave home without a Walkman and a spare set of batteries. They take me back to when I was a teenager, when music shaped my social life, determined my image and gave me the courage to withstand an emotionally abusive upbringing. And they return me to my twenties, when music powered my glamorous first career and launched me into a lifelong creative practice.

Ultimately, they remind me the pulse beneath my writing still belongs to music. Who knows? Maybe I'll expand on that one day. **CT**

Liz Evans is Adjunct Researcher, English and Writing at the University of Tasmania. This article was first published by The Conversation at www.theconversation.com

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How ‘blood libel’ paradox keeps West silent on Israel

The more depraved Israel's actions, the more antisemitic it is to point out the truth. The painful reality is that, through Israel, the West can dress up boilerplate colonialism as a ‘Jewish’ project

There's a dangerous paradox that helps to dissuade people, especially public figures, from speaking up even as Israel's genocide in Gaza grows more horrifying by the day. Let us call it the “blood libel” paradox.

It works like this. In Medieval times, Jews were accused of murdering non-Jews, particularly children, to use their blood in the performance of religious rituals. Every time a Jew is accused of murdering a non-Jew, so the thinking goes, this endangers Jews by fuelling the very kind of antisemitism that ultimately led to the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

Responsible people, or at least those with a reputation to protect, therefore avoid making any statements that might contribute to the impression that Jews – or in this case, the soldiers of the Jewish state of Israel – are killing non-Jews.

If such criticisms are made, they must be carefully couched by western politicians, the media and public figures in language that makes the killing of non-Jews – in this case, Muslim and Christian Palestinians – appear reasonable.

Israel is simply “defending itself” in killing and maiming 100,000s of civilians in Gaza after Hamas’ one-day attack on 7 October 2023.

The enclave's masses of dead innocents are just the unfortunate price paid to secure the “return of Israeli hostages” held by Hamas.

Israel's active, months-long starvation of Gaza's children is a “humanitarian crisis”, not a crime against humanity.

Anyone who dissents from this narrative is denounced as an antisemite, whether they be millions of ordinary people; every respected human rights organisation in the world, including the Israeli group B'Tselem; the World Health Organisation; the International Criminal Court; genocide scholars like Omer Bartov, himself an Israeli; and so on.

It is the perfect, self-reinforcing loop, one entirely divorced from the reality being live-streamed to us daily.

The outrageous consequences of the “blood libel” paradox were highlighted a year into Israel's genocide in Gaza by the Jewish writer Howard Jacobson.

Writing in the Observer newspaper, he accused the western media of a “blood libel” for reporting the fact that children were dying in enormous numbers in Gaza – even though that same media had been

keen to minimise the death toll; implicitly questioned its truthfulness by attributing the number to the “Hamas-run Gaza health ministry”; and constantly rationalised the killings as part of Israeli military operations to “defeat Hamas”.

Jacobson, like other fervent apologists for genocide, wanted more. He demanded the media avert its eyes from the slaughter entirely.

Since then, Israel's crimes against the people of Gaza have become ever more shocking, hard though that was to imagine nearly a year ago.

Israel has stopped food from reaching Gaza except through a mercenary force it has set up with the US, misnamed the “Gaza Humanitarian Foundation”.

Its job, as whistleblowing Israeli soldiers have told us, is to lure the ablest from among the starving masses – mainly young Palestinian men – into death traps with the promise of food. Once there, Israel carries out what Doctors without Borders calls “orchestrated killing” by shooting at them.

Israel has armed and hired as its Gaza goons a criminal gang under the leadership of ISIS supporter Yasser Abu Shabab. Their job has been to loot aid trucks that try to operate outside the GHF set-up and



steal aid from ordinary people, sowing further terror and chaos and allowing Israel to blame Hamas for Gaza's starvation.

Far-right Israelis – that is, the people who elected the Netanyahu government – have been filmed stopping aid trucks trying to transport from Jordan food supposed to reach Gaza's people, even as children are regularly dying from malnutrition.

And eminent western doctors such as Nick Maynard are returning from Gaza with the same horror stories: that they see Israeli soldiers using Palestinian children as target practice. One day the gunshot wounds in the children arriving at hospital are clustered in the head. The next day in the chest. The next day in the abdomen. The next day in the genitals.

The “blood libel” paradox means that Israel can act with ever more brazen depravity – of the kind documented above – and western leaders and media continue to ignore, or downplay, or rationalise these horrors. It is the ultimate “get out of jail” card.

There are several points to be made about why this is such a dangerous response to the Gaza genocide – but one, equally, that is all too useful for western capitals.

First, and most obviously. Israel is not “the Jews”. It is a state. Not just that, but it was founded as a very specific kind of state: one that is the last exemplar of a long and very ignoble tradition of western-spon-

sored settler-colonialism.

Settler-colonialism seeks to replace a native population with western-aligned immigrants through extreme ethnic-based violence. Think the United States, Canada, Australia and South Africa. They all committed appalling crimes against their indigenous populations.

Israel's genocide of the Palestinians is not unusual. It is the all-too-familiar, logical consequence of a racist colonial replacement ideology. We have been here many times before in modern history. If it wasn't a blood libel in those earlier cases – but rather an established historical fact – why should Israel's genocide be viewed any differently?

Second, this genocide is not Israel's. It is the West's. This is utterly a western co-production. Israel could

have done none of the destruction of Gaza, the mass slaughter, the starvation of the population, without western assistance every step of the way.

It has been US and German bombs dropped on Gaza. It is British spy flights over Gaza from RAF base Akrotiri on Cyprus that have been providing intelligence to Israel. It is western capitals that have been repressing protest and making it a terror offence to try to stop the genocide.

It is the US and Britain that have been sanctioning and threatening the International Criminal Court to force it to reverse its decision to seek Netanyahu's arrest for starving Gaza's population. It has been western capitals staying silent as their citizens have been taken hostage by Israel illegally in international waters for trying to bring aid to Gaza.

And it is the western media that first lamely accepted its exclusion from Gaza by Israel, then barely reported Israel's unprecedented mass murder of Gaza's local journalists, and now eagerly conscripts its exclusion as the excuse for failing to scrutinise Israel's actions amid a supposed "fog of war".

If noting that a genocide is taking place in Gaza amounts to a "blood libel", then every western government is implicated in that libel. Are they all to be let off the hook? They very much hope that you will think

Also revealing is who the state broadcaster looks to when deciding how to apply its editorial standards

that way. And third, it would be astonishing if Israel weren't committing a genocide in Gaza, given that its every crime against the Palestinians has been supported decade after decade by the West.

Israel has grown emboldened. The "blood libel" paradox has been its insurance policy against scrutiny and criticism.

The West has given Israel a permanent licence to brutalise the Palestinians, to ethnically cleanse them, to steal their land, and to kill them. The worse it behaves, the more the "blood libel" kicks in to shut down criticism. The more depraved Israel's actions are, the more antisemitic it becomes to point out the truth.

For more than century, generation after generation of western leaders have been backing Israel to the hilt. Why would Israel not conclude that there are no red lines, that it can do as it pleases and that the West will still arm it and still justify its crimes as "defence" and "counter-terrorism"?

The "blood libel" doesn't protect Jews from another genocide. It licences Israel to destroy the Pales-

tinian people, and to savagely bomb its neighbours, with utter impunity, while western leaders remain tight-lipped in a way they would never do were it Russia, China or Iran committing far less egregious atrocities.

Which, of course, is exactly what encourages antisemitism. Utterly baffled by this state of affairs, some observers are fooled into imagining that the only possible reason is that Israel controls the West; that it has special, unseen powers to intimidate the US, the strongest, most militarised state in history; and that behind all this, Jews and Jewish money are what pulls the levers in western capitals.

That assumption is a flight from a far more difficult, painful reality: that Israel is the bastard child of the West. It is nothing exceptional or extraordinary. It is white, western, colonial, genocidal racism, repackaged as a supposedly "Jewish" project.

Israel can carry out its crimes in the promotion of western control over the oil-rich Middle East, and the West knows that any criticism of its imperial control and pillage can be dismissed as antisemitism.

It's win-win for colonialism. It's lose-lose for our humanity. **CT**

Jonathan Cook's latest books are Israel and the Clash of Civilizations: Iraq, Iran, and the Plan to Remake the Middle East (Pluto Press) and Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human Despair (Zed Books). His website is www.jonathan-cook.net

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JULY 2025
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► MARIA STEWART

The magic touch of a children's illustrator

Quentin Blake's art inspires creativity, activity and reading



I'm greeted at the Lowry gallery in Manchester, England, by Roald Dahl's grinning Enormous Crocodile, who looks a bit too happy to see me and the toddler in a pushchair watching his father snapping his arms open and shut while making crocodile noises. We are both delighted by this, and eager, it seems, to see this new *Quentin Blake and Me* exhibition, a collection of original illustrations by Britain's best-known children's book illustrator.

Now aged 92, Quentin Blake has been illustrating and writing books for more than 70 years and has hundreds of titles under his belt.

So many of us have grown up with Blake's work, an important part of our formative years. His many books have seen him working with some of the greatest children's authors including Dahl, Joan Aiken, John Yeoman,

Elizabeth Bowen and Michael Rosen. He has also written books himself and animated versions of his work, bringing his storytelling to new generations.

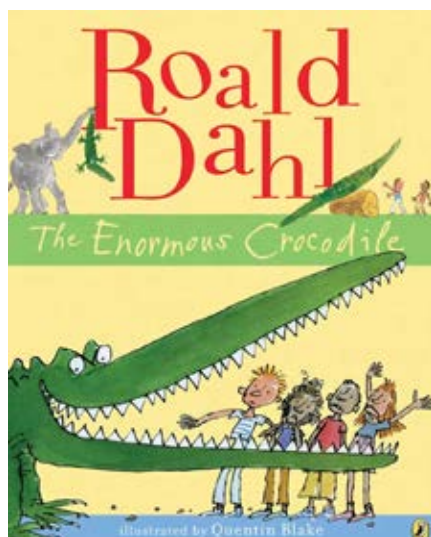
The Lowry exhibition extends an invitation to consider what Blake and his work means to each of us. This makes perfect sense as every visitor is a child or has been at some stage, and each feels connected to their own special memories of these wonderful books.

This is an important point to understand about the practice of illustrating picture books. As a lecturer working with children's book illus-

tration students, I encourage them to channel and engage with their four-year-old self.

By revisiting this part of ourselves we can understand not only how to capture the right tone, but recognise what makes children laugh, or what intrigues them, the discoveries and places they would enjoy, and who and what they might be scared by. This is evident in all of Blake's work, about which he once said: "It's not about knowing about children, but [that] you be them."

As Blake demonstrates, the picture book illustrator is not just making pictures of the text – an illus-



trator can bring everything vividly to life using their skills and imagination. I overheard a parent as she pondered Mr Magnolia and his one boot, saying: “He makes it look so easy.” And indeed Blake does.

There is a fluidity and immediacy to his illustrations that make them appear effortless; a rough draft is placed on a light box and Blake draws his final image using this as a guide. This process allows him to work with pen and ink as if drawing the picture for the first time, capturing the expressiveness of an initial idea.

He conjures scenarios on the page that are compelling – nothing is contrived, so it all feels authentic. Readers young and old will go on any journey that Blake wishes to take them because of his genuine warmth and humour, his delightful imagination captured in drawing and painting that is full of energy and charm. This is the magic of illustration.

The exhibition is just as joyful and playful as the work on display. Original illustrations from a range of Blake’s books that span his career are framed and exhibited low enough for children to be able to view them easily. Adults have to stoop a little, ensuring they are on the same level.

Early on in the exhibition some of the Mr Magnolia illustrations are squished into a little V-shaped corner, which made me think of reading a picture book as a child, sitting on the floor wedged between the wall and the side of my bed.

Blake’s books are so cleverly illustrated ensuring that even if you can’t read yet, you can still understand not only the narrative but all the little visual jokes and special surprises that he regularly deliv-

ers. Never talking down to children or over explaining things, these are books that help to cultivate a sophisticated and discerning young reader.

The characters of each of the books featured escape from the pages and charge around the walls of the exhibition, taking up every available space. Here the BFG (Big Friendly Giant) towers over children having their photograph taken, and there the fine feathered creatures from *Up With Birds* swing around the gallery ceiling along with their glorious balloons.

It is fascinating to see Blake’s development work in notebooks, early roughs of book spreads as well as thumbnail plans – all evidence of the hard work that goes in to creating his books.

There are opportunities for children to dress up with *The Boy In The Dress*, and peep-holes in a wall reveal Blake’s studio set-up. There are also activity sheets and prompts for children to write and draw their own stories. Materials are set up in front of the “Monsters” wall so that visitors can join in creating illustrations. I can’t resist and add my own.

This is a wonderful exhibition that reveals the power of imagination, inspiring creativity, activity and reading in little ones. And those who are no longer children can tap into a delightful sense of nostalgia and revisit distant days of carefree reading and the flamboyant adventures of Blake’s beautifully drawn characters.

Quentin Blake And Me is at the Lowry, Manchester, until January 4 2026. Admission is free. **CT**

Maria Stuart is Course leader, *Illustration & Children’s Book Illustration*, at the School of Arts and Media, University of Lancashire, England.

This article was first published at www.theconversation.com

Martial law hits the US, one city at a time

The police state will always need another manufactured crisis to increase its power over the people and society

“The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by an endless series of hobgoblins, most of them imaginary.”

– H.L. Mencken

Let's not mince words: every American should be alarmed by President Trump's Liberation Day tactics, theatrics and threats. What is unfolding in the nation's capital is a hostile takeover of our constitutional republic.

This is no longer about partisan politics, wag-the-dog distractions from the Epstein debacle, or even genuine national security concerns.

This is martial law disguised as law-and-order – the oldest trick in the authoritarian playbook.

We have been travelling this slippery slope toward a police state for some time, but under Trump 2.0, the descent towards outright tyranny is accelerating.

Building on the expanded emergency powers he has claimed to wage war on immigration, woke-ness and the economy, Trump is taking aim at yet another so-called “crisis” – this time, by waging war on crime in the nation's capital, despite the fact that crime is at a 30-year low.

Under the guise of “restoring or-

der” and “cleaning up” the streets, Trump has called in the National Guard, dispatched the FBI, and federalised the local police in order to take control of Washington, DC.

This is how the Emergency State operates in the open.

A real but manageable problem – crime, homelessness, public disorder – is inflated into an existential threat.

Fear is manufactured, then exploited to seize more power. (In many cases, the “facts” fueling these crackdowns come directly from the president's own disinformation machine – manufacturing the perception of danger to justify the expansion of control.)

Whether the trigger is terrorism, civil unrest, economic instability, or public health, the aim remains the same: expand the reach of federal authority, justify more militarised policing, and condition the public to accept the suspension of rights in the name of national security.

Once these powers are taken, they are never willingly relinquished.

Each time, Trump pushes the envelope a little, relying on military optics meant to intimidate.

For instance, on April 28, 2025, Trump signed an Executive Order

authorising mass round-ups of “violent criminals” and “gang members,” empowering federal agencies and military support for domestic law enforcement.

In June, Trump deployed the National Guard to California to quell protests over mass immigration arrests, treating political dissent as a security threat. A bench trial is currently underway to determine if Trump's actions violated the Posse Comitatus Act, which prohibits the military from being used as a domestic police force.

By midsummer, a mental health detention directive allowed involuntary commitments of the homeless under “public health” grounds.

By August, Trump was deploying FBI agents and the National Guard into the nation's capital in order to clear homeless encampments because the president says the city is “dirty” and “dangerous.”

At each stage, the scope of who could be targeted by these executive orders and emergency power operations grows wider. These are not isolated decisions; they are part of a coordinated playbook for bringing local jurisdictions under direct federal control, one crisis at a time.

This is mission creep in action – by breaking the police state's hostile takeover of the country and our



WHERE ARE THE CRIMINALS? The US National Guard patrols the National Mall in Washington in early August

Constitution into a series of incremental moves, the administration sidesteps the broad public backlash that a single, sweeping declaration of martial law would provoke.

Once the federal government claims the authority to override local control, put boots on the ground, and target a designated “dangerous class,” that authority inevitably broadens to sweep in new targets. What begins by targeting violent criminals quickly expands to hard-working immigrants, then the homeless. Tomorrow those targeted could be protesters, journalists, or anyone deemed undesirable.

These executive orders constitute a war on the American people without a formal declaration of war. Once the definitions of “criminal,” “threat,” and “danger” are used interchangeably to advance political needs, there is no limit to who can be targeted next.

What begins with a narrow claim of emergency power is quickly normalised and made permanent.

We have seen this pattern before. After 9/11, the Patriot Act’s surveillance powers – initially aimed at foreign terrorists – expanded to include mass monitoring of American citizens. The Transportation Security Administration began as an airport screening agency and now conducts random searches at train stations and sporting events. Predictive policing was sold as a way to stop violent crime, but it is now used to flag political activists and monitor protests.

In each case, a temporary, targeted security measure grew into a permanent tool of control.

The difference today is that the slope has become steeper and the

slide faster. What once took years to creep into everyday life now happens in a matter of months.

Four months is all it took for the police state to pivot from “rounding up violent criminals” to patrolling the streets of the capital and forcibly removing the unhoused.

Today, the slope runs from undocumented immigrant sweeps to homeless sweeps.

Tomorrow, it could run from “restoring order” to suppressing lawful dissent in the same span of time.

This is the logical outcome of a formula that has been refined over decades: identify or invent a threat, stoke public fear, expand executive power to “solve” it, normalise the new level of control, then repeat with a broader definition of “threat.”

Each time the public accepts an expansion of authority in the name of security, the next expansion comes faster and goes further.

The dictatorial hunger for power, as Harvard's Laurence Tribe has observed, is insatiable.

Every crisis becomes a test: of our willingness to let the government sidestep the Constitution, of our tolerance for militarised "solutions" to social problems, of whether the public will resist or comply, of whether those in authority can get away with moving the line yet again.

For decades – from Pearl Harbor to the Red Scare, from 9/11 to the pandemic lockdowns – we have failed that test. Each time, the line moves a little further, the slope gets a little slicker, and the public grows more accustomed to life under occupation.

The players change – Bush, Obama, Trump, Biden, and now Trump again – but the game remains the same: permanent crisis management, permanent power grabs, permanent erosion of liberty.

This is how constitutional limits die – not in one dramatic coup, but in a series of incremental "emergencies" that accustom us to living under permanent federal occupation. By that measure, the takeover of Washington, DC, is a chilling case study.

The issue is not whether Trump can seize control of DC. Under section 740 of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, the president may do so for 48 hours without congressional approval and up to 30 days with notice to Congress.

It's worth noting that this provision has never been invoked before, and certainly not for the purpose of cleaning up squalor. The law was envisioned for truly extraordinary crises – natural disasters, large-scale riots – not as a political tool for executive housecleaning.

So the question we must ask as the symbolic heart of the republic

Trump has already hinted that he plans to target Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Oakland next

is transformed into a constitution-free zone is: Why? Why now – when crime is at its lowest level in three decades? And where do we go from here?

The federal takeover of Washington, DC, is not the end of that slippery slope. It is merely the latest drop, and nothing in our present political climate suggests it will be the last.

The police state will always need another manufactured crisis.

Terrorist attacks, mass shootings, "unforeseen economic collapse, loss of functioning political and legal order, purposeful domestic resistance or insurgency, pervasive public health emergencies, and catastrophic natural and human disasters": the government has been anticipating and preparing for such crises for years now.

As David C. Unger writes for the *New York Times*: "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness have given way to permanent crisis management: to policing the planet and fighting preventative wars of ideological containment, usually on terrain chosen by, and favourable to, our enemies. Limited government and constitutional accountability have been shouldered aside by the kind of imperial presidency our constitutional system was explicitly designed to prevent."

Given the rate at which the government keeps devising new ways to establish itself as the "solution" to all of our worldly problems at taxpayer expense, each subsequent crisis ushers in ever larger expansions

of government power and fewer individual liberties.

Once the government acquires authoritarian powers – to spy, surveil, militarise police, seize funds, wage endless wars, censor speech, detain without due process, etc. – it does not willingly relinquish them.

The lesson for the ages is this: once any government is allowed to overreach and expand its powers, it's almost impossible to put the genie back in the bottle.

History bears this out: as government expands, liberty contracts.

If the president can federalise the policing of the capital, override local control, and treat entire populations as security threats without meaningful resistance from Congress, the courts, or the public, then there is nothing to stop that same template from being applied to any city in America in the name of "security."

What is happening in Washington today will be the model for what happens nationwide tomorrow.

Case in point: at Trump's direction, the Pentagon – the military branch of the government – is looking to establish a "Domestic Civil Disturbance Quick Reaction Force," made up of National Guard troops kept on standby at all times, which could be rapidly deployed to American cities "facing protests or other unrest."

Indeed, Trump has already hinted that he plans to target Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Oakland next. This is straight out of the playbook used in that Pentagon training video created by the Army for US Special Operations Command.

According to *Megacities: Urban Future, the Emerging Complexity*, the US military plans to use armed forces to solve future domestic political and social problems. What they're really talking about is martial law, packaged as a well-meaning

and overriding concern for the nation's security.

The training video is only five minutes long, but it says a lot about the government's mindset, the way its views the citizenry, and the so-called "problems" that the government must be prepared to address in the near future through the use of martial law.

Even more troubling, however, is what this military video doesn't say about the Constitution, about the rights of the citizenry, and about the dangers of locking down the nation and using the military to address political and social problems.

For years, the government has been warning against the dangers of domestic terrorism, erecting surveillance systems to monitor its own citizens, creating classification systems to label any viewpoints that

This military video doesn't speak about the Constitution, about the rights of the citizenry, and about the dangers of locking down the nation

challenge the status quo as extremist, and training law enforcement agencies to equate anyone possessing anti-government views as a domestic terrorist.

What the government failed to explain was that the domestic terrorists would be of the government's own making, and that "we the people" would become enemy #1.

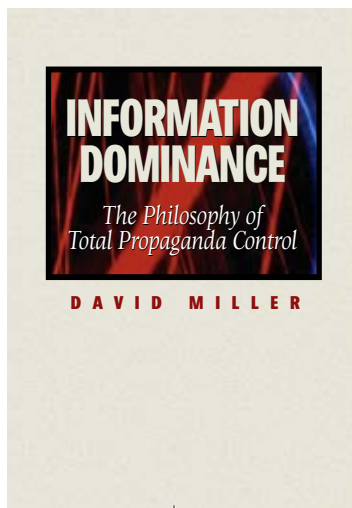
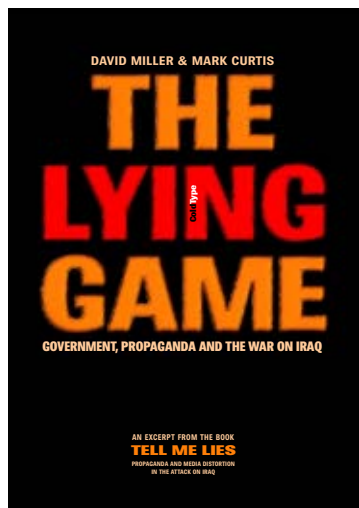
As I make clear in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* and in its fictional coun-

terpart *The Erik Blair Diaries*, "we the people" are already enemies of the state.

If we do not stop this dangerous trajectory now, the question will not be whether martial law comes to your city – it will be when, under what pretext, and whether we will have the courage and the wherewithal to resist. **CT**

Constitutional attorney and author John W. Whitehead is founder and president of the Rutherford Institute. His most recent books are Battlefield America: The War on the American People; A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State, and The Erik Blair Diaries. Nisha Whitehead is Executive Director of the Rutherford Institute – www.rutherford.org

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Trump's killer drones target Venezuela

President boasts of sinking more boats as Reaper drones and fighter jets are deployed to Southern Caribbean

Following the announcement on September 15 of a US military strike against a vessel in the Southern Caribbean allegedly killing three passengers accused of transporting drugs, US President Donald Trump told reporters that the US had hit a third boat without providing any details.

The first attack against small boats accused of “narco-terrorism” took place on September 2 allegedly killing 11 people.

The latest massacres of unidentified people on speedboats near Venezuela mark a dangerous escalation in US preparations to attack Venezuela and overthrow President Nicolas Maduro, whom the Trump administration has accused of leading the inexistent “Cartel of the Suns.”

The attacks, crassly celebrated by the White House on social media, constitute premeditated mass killings. According to a detailed analysis by Just Security, the deliberate killing of people aboard these vessels – without evidence of an imminent threat – violates Section 1111(b) of Title 18 of the US Code, which forbids “the unlawful killing of a human being with malice aforethought” on the high seas. The administration has failed to produce any credible evidence of drug

trafficking or self-defence claims, rendering these actions unlawful extrajudicial killings also under international law.

Trump further escalated the confrontation with a direct threat from the Oval Office that if Venezuelan military jets fly near US warships, they would be “shot down.” Standing beside a general, Trump told him he could “do anything you want” if the situation escalated, signalling a green light for potentially unchecked military aggression.

The claim that these military operations target drug cartels is preposterous. Ninety percent of drugs are trafficked through the Pacific. Venezuela is not a significant producer and accounts for barely five percent of cocaine transshipments.

The drug claims are further exposed as a pretext by the expanding deployment of military forces in the Southern Caribbean, including MQ-9 Reaper drones and a fleet of warships, submarines, and F-35 stealth fighter jets. The scale and speed of the military buildup signal preparations for full-scale attack aimed at regime change rather than mere narcotics interdiction.

The MQ-9 Reaper is a favourite tool for targeted assassinations or,

in the language of the Pentagon, “decapitation strikes.”

Following their deployment, a former Trump official Marshall Billingslea published what he claims is a satellite image of Maduro’s underground bunker beneath the Simon Bolivar International Airport.

Maduro has responded to these provocations warning of an imminent US invasion and deploying thousands of troops and militias to the border with Colombia and key energy infrastructure hubs such as the Paraguana refining complex and the oil-rich Zulia state. A major explosion at a fireworks factory near oil infrastructure at the Maracaibo Industrial Zone in Zulia took place on September 11 injuring 40 workers, with the causes yet to be determined.

On Friday, September 12, a Venezuelan vessel with nine tuna fishermen was intercepted by a US Navy destroyer within the Venezuelan Exclusive Economic Zone, according to the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry. Eighteen troops with long guns boarded and held the vessel for eight hours.

President Donald Trump has made numerous provocative remarks about removing Maduro as neither an “option or a non-option,” vowed to “hunt” anyone suspected of drug trafficking, and claimed that



Lt Col Leslie Pratt / US Air Force

MQ-9 Reaper drone, favourite tool for targeted assassinations or, in the language of the Pentagon, “decapitation strikes”

“300 million people died last year from drugs.”

For his closest allies in the region, there is no doubt that true goal is regime change. For instance, fascist Brazilian Congressman Eduardo Bolsonaro, the son of the former President, has explicitly said, “If the Brazilian regime consolidates and evolves like Venezuela, with elections lacking transparency, censorship, and political arrests, Brazil may well need F-35 fighter jets and warships in the future, as Venezuela currently does.”

This blunt admission reveals the strategic intent to use drug allegations as cover for aggressive military interventions aimed at toppling governments deemed hostile to US interests.

The tense regional atmosphere has also strained relations in Brazil. Brazilian Defence Minister José Múcio has expressed official “concern” that the US-Venezuela conflict could spill over Brazil’s borders. Brazil has already begun reinforcing its northern border with additional troops ahead of the upcoming COP30 Summit.

US aggression in the Southern Caribbean is part of a strategy involving economic and military coercion targeting Latin America more broadly. The White House has imposed 50 percent tariffs on Brazil and threatens to use its “economic and military might” in response to the conviction of Trump ally and ex-President Jair Bolsonaro for organising a fascist coup. Since day one of his second term, Trump has also threatened Mexico and Panama with military force.

Most recently, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio decertified Colombia from its war on drugs program following President Gustavo Petro’s opposition to the US deployment in the Caribbean and threats against Venezuela. The punitive move carries significant economic consequences for Colombia. Petro had warned that a US invasion risks turning Venezuela into a “new Syria,” underscoring the potential for a devastating conflict spreading across the region.

The US escalation against Venezuela serves a dual purpose. First, it advances efforts to recolonise Latin America and secure the region as a strategic base for any future con-

flict with China – aiming to reassert US imperial dominance across the Western Hemisphere.

About 85 percent of oil exports from Venezuela are destined for China, with the China Concord Resources Corp. installing a new offshore platform in Maracaibo Lake, Zulia last month.

Seizing control of Venezuela’s oil reserves, the largest on the planet, has remained a key goal for US imperialism. US-based Chevron has gradually increased its operations in the country following Trump’s decision to renew a license exempting the company from US sanctions.

Second, the militarisation and conflict narrative provide President Trump with a fabricated image as a “wartime president” against an external enemy, justifying the extraordinary powers he seeks in order to implement a fascist police-state dictatorship at home.

As explained by Mark Weisbrot of the Center for Economic and Policy Research for *Newsweek*: “A war, for instance in Venezuela, could be used to justify more repression at home. Trump has already tried to do just that, invoking a fictional ‘invasion’ of the US by a South American gang to deploy the Alien Enemies Act of 1798.”

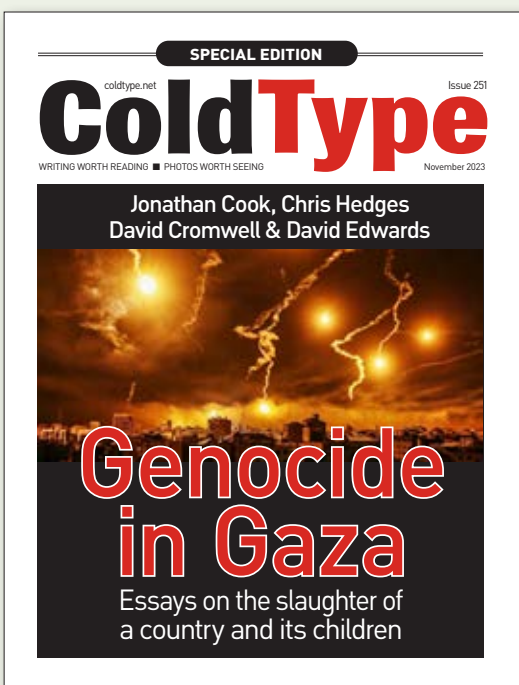
Far from strength, such recklessness is a symptom of a regime in profound crisis. The ongoing massacres and buildup in the Caribbean reveal an imperialism willing to risk regional stability and another disastrous war to secure global hegemony and dictatorial rule at home, where troops have already been deployed in Washington DC and Los Angeles, and plans have been announced to be send them into the streets of Memphis, Chicago and other cities. **CT**

Andrea Lobo wrote this article for the World Socialist Web Site – www.wsws.org

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► ERIC ROSS

The Pentagon never needed a licence to kill

The US Defense Department
has always been about war

At dusk, a US Army soldier from the 1st Infantry Division, Logistics Support Area Anaconda, Iraq, scans the area while conducting a patrol in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom

The renaming of the US government's Defense Department should have surprised no one. Donald Trump is an incipient fascist doing what such figures do. Surrounded by a coterie of illiberal ideologues and careerist sycophants, he and his top aides have dispensed with pretence and precedent, moving at breakneck speed to demolish what remains of the battered façade of American democracy.

In eight months, his second administration has unleashed a shock-and-awe assault on norms and institutions, civil liberties, human rights, and history itself. But fascism never

respects borders. Fascists don't recognise the rule of law. They consider themselves the law. Expansion and the glorification of war are their lifeblood. Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini put it all too bluntly: the fascist "believes neither in the possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace... war alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have courage to meet it."

Pete Hegseth is now equally blunt. From the Pentagon, he's boasting of restoring a "warrior ethos" to the armed forces, while forging an offensive military that prizes "maxi-

mum lethality, not tepid legality. Violent effect, not politically correct." The message couldn't be clearer: when the US loses wars, as it has done consistently despite commanding the most powerful military in history, it's not due to imperial overreach, political arrogance, or popular resistance. Rather, defeat stems from that military having gone "woke," a euphemism for failing to kill enough people.

The recent rechristening of the Department of Defense as the Department of War was certainly a culture-war stunt like Trump's demand that the Gulf of Mexico be renamed the Gulf of America. But it

also signalled something more insidious: a blunt escalation of the criminal logic that has long underwritten US militarism. That logic sustained both the Cold War of the last century and the War on Terror of this one, destroying millions of lives.

When Hegseth defended the recent summary executions of 11 alleged Venezuelan drug smugglers on a boat in the Caribbean, he boasted that Washington possesses “absolute and complete authority” to kill anywhere without Congressional approval or evidence of a wrong and in open defiance of international law. The next day, in responding on X to a user who called what had been done a war crime, Vance wrote, “I don’t give a shit what you call it.” It was the starkest admission since the Iraq War that Washington no longer pretends to operate internationally under the rule of law but under the rule of force, where might quite simply makes right.

While such an escalation of verbiage – the brazen confession of an imperial power that believes itself immune from accountability – should alarm us, it’s neither unprecedented nor unexpected. Peace, after all, has never been the profession of the US military. The Department of Defense has always been the Department of War.

The US has long denied being an empire. From its founding, imperialism was cast as the antithesis of American values. This nation, after all, was born in revolt against the tyranny of foreign rule. Yet for a country so insistent on not being an empire, Washington has followed a trajectory nearly indistinguishable from its imperial predecessors. Its history was defined by settler conquest, the violent elimination of Indigenous peoples, and a long record of covert and

For a country so insistent on not being an empire, Washington has followed a trajectory nearly indistinguishable from its imperial predecessors

overt interventions to topple governments unwilling to yield to American political or economic domination.

The record is unmistakable. As Noam Chomsky once put it, “Talking about American imperialism is like talking about triangular triangles.” And he was hardly the first to suggest such a thing. In the 1930s, General Smedley Butler, reflecting with searing candour on his years of military service in Latin America, described himself as “a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism... I helped make Mexico, especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests... I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street.”

Historically, imperialism and fascism went hand in hand. As Aimé Césaire argued in his 1950 *Discourse on Colonialism*, fascism is imperialism turned inward. The violence inherent in colonial domination can, in the end, never be confined to the colonies, which means that what we’re now witnessing in the Trumpian era is a reckoning. The chickens are indeed coming home to roost or, as Noura Erakat recently observed, “The boomerang comes back.”

In their insatiable projection of power and pursuit of profit, Washington and Wall Street ignored what European empires had long revealed: that colonisation “works to decivilise the coloniser, to brutalise him... to degrade him.” English nov-

elist Joseph Conrad recognised this in his classic nineteenth-century work of fiction, *Heart of Darkness*, concluding that it wasn’t the Congo River but the Thames River in Great Britain that “led into the heart of an immense darkness.”

Imperialism incubates fascism, a dynamic evident in the carnage of World War I, rooted, as W.E.B. DuBois observed at the time, in colonial competition that laid the foundations for World War II. In that conflict, Césaire argued, the Nazis applied to Europe the methods and attitudes that until then were reserved for colonised peoples, unleashing them on Europeans with similarly genocidal effect.

In the postwar years, the United States emerged from the ruins of Europe as the unrivalled global hegemon. With some six percent of the world’s population, it commanded nearly half of the global gross domestic product. Anchored by up to 2,000 military bases across the globe (still at 800 today), it became the new imperial power on which the sun never set. Yet Washington ignored the fundamental lesson inherent in Europe’s self-cannibalisation. Rather than dismantle the machinery of empire, it embraced renewed militarism. Rather than demobilise, it placed itself on a permanent global war footing, both anticipating and accelerating the Cold War with that other great power of the period, the Soviet Union.

The United States was, however, a superpower defined as much by paranoia and insecurity as by military and economic strength. It was in such a climate that American officials moved to abandon the title of the Department of War in 1947, rebranding it as the Department of Defense two years later. The renaming sought to reassure the world

that, despite every sign the US had assumed the mantle of European colonialism, its intentions were benign and defensive in nature.

That rhetorical shift would prove inseparable from a broader ideological transformation as the Cold War froze geopolitics into rigid Manichean camps. President Harry Truman's March 1947 address to Congress marked the start of a new global confrontation. In that speech, the president proclaimed the United States the guardian of freedom and democracy everywhere. Leftist movements were cast as Soviet proxies and struggles for national liberation in the former colonial world were framed not in the language of decolonisation and self-determination but as nefarious threats to American interests and international peace and security.

In Europe at the time, a civil war raged in Greece, while decisive elections loomed in Italy. Determined not to "lose" such countries to communism, Washington moved to undermine democracy under the guise of saving it. In Greece, it would channel \$300 million to right-wing forces, many staffed by former fascists and Nazi collaborators, in the name of defending freedom. In Western Europe, Washington used its position as the world's banker to manipulate electoral outcomes. In the wake of the 1947 National Security Act that created the Central Intelligence Agency, or CIA (the same bill that renamed the War Department), the agency launched its first large-scale covert operation. In 1948, the US would funnel millions of dollars into Italy and unleashed a torrent of propaganda to ensure that leftist parties would not prevail.

Across the Third World, the CIA perfected that template for covert interventions aimed at toppling democratic governments and installing pliant authoritarians. The overthrow of Iran's Mohammad

Determined not to "lose" such countries to communism, Washington moved to undermine democracy under the guise of saving it

Mossadegh in 1953 and Guatemala's Jacobo Árbenz in 1954 marked the beginning of a series of regime-change operations. More assassinations and coups followed, including of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo in 1961, Sukarno in Indonesia in 1965, and Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973. The utter contempt for democracy inherent in such actions was embodied in National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger's remark: "I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people."

In the aftermath of each intervention, Washington installed anti-communist dictators who had one thing in common: they murdered their own citizens, and often those of other countries as well, dismantled democratic institutions, and siphoned national wealth into personal fortunes and the coffers of multinational corporations.

By the 1980s, the CIA was bankrolling proxy wars spanning the globe. Billions of dollars were being funnelled to the Afghan mujahideen and Nicaraguan Contras. In both Afghanistan and Nicaragua, those US-backed "freedom fighters" (or, as President Ronald Reagan termed the Contras, the "moral equals of our founding fathers") deployed tactics that amounted to scaled-up terrorism. The mask occasionally slipped. As historian Greg Grandin has noted, one adviser to the Joint Chiefs of Staff

described the Contras as "the strangest national liberation organization in the world." In truth, he conceded, they were "just a bunch of killers."

As with the CIA, the not-so-aptly-renamed "Defense Department" would oversee a succession of catastrophic wars that did nothing to make Americans safer and had little to do with the protection of democratic values. Within a year of its renaming, the US was at war in Korea. When the North invaded the South in 1950, seeking to reunify a peninsula divided by foreign powers, Washington rushed to intervene, branding it a "police action," the first of many Orwellian linguistic manoeuvres to sidestep the constitutional authority of Congress to declare war.

The official narrative that the communists launched the war to topple a democratically elected government in the South obscured its deeper origins. After World War II, Washington installed Syngman Rhee, an exile who had spent decades in the United States, as South Korea's leader. He commanded little popular legitimacy but proved a staunch ally for American officials determined to secure an anticommunist foothold on the peninsula. Far from embodying liberal democracy, his regime presided over a repressive police state.

In 1948, two years before the war, an uprising against Rhee's corrupt rule broke out on Jeju Island. With Washington's blessing, his security forces launched a brutal counterinsurgency that left as many as 80,000 dead. Far from an aberration, Jeju epitomised Washington's emerging Cold War policy: not the cultivation of democracies responsive to their citizenry (with the uncertainty that entailed), but the defence of authoritarian regimes as reliable bulwarks against communism.

The Korean War also marked a growing reliance on air power. Car-

pet bombing and the widespread use of napalm would reduce the North to rubble, destroying some 85% of its infrastructure and killing two million civilians. As future Secretary of State Dean Rusk would later admit, the US bombed “everything that moved in North Korea.” The only “restraint” exercised was the decision not to deploy atomic bombs, despite the insistence of Air Force General Curtis LeMay who would reflect unapologetically, “Over a period of three years or so, we killed off... 20 percent of the population.”

A remarkably similar pattern unfolded in Vietnam. As revealed in the Pentagon Papers, the United States initially backed France in its attempt after World War II to reimpose colonial rule over Indochina. After the French forces were defeated in 1954, the partition of the country ensued. Elections to reunify Vietnam were scheduled for 1956, but US intelligence concluded that the North’s communist leader, Ho Chi Minh, would win in a landslide, so the elections were cancelled. Once again, Washington placed its support behind the unpopular, repressive South Vietnamese regime of Ngo Dinh Diem, chosen not for his legitimacy but for his reliability in the eyes of American policymakers.

The result was a futile slaughter. The US would kill well over three million people in Southeast Asia and drop more than three and a half times the tonnage of bombs on Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos as were

Washington reserves the right to intervene, violently and antidemocratically, in the affairs of other nations to secure what it considers its interests

used in all of World War II. That orgy of violence would lead Martin Luther King Jr., in 1967, to denounce the United States as “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today.” The same has held true for nearly the entire span of the past 80 years.

The human toll of the Cold War exceeded 20 million lives. As historian Paul Chamberlin calculated, that amounted to some 1,200 deaths every day for 45 years. To call such an era “cold” was not only misleading but obscene. It was, in truth, a period of relentless and bloody global conflict, much of it instigated, enabled, or prolonged by the United States. And its wars also produced the blowback that would later be rebranded as the “War on Terror.”

The names of America’s adversaries may have changed over the years from Hitler to Stalin, Kim Il-Sung to Ho Chi Minh, Saddam Hussein to Xi Jinping, but the principle has remained constant. Washington reserves for itself the unilateral right to intervene, violently and antidemocratically, in the affairs of other nations to secure what it considers its interests. The reversion of the Defense Department to the War Department should be seen less as a

rupture than a revelation. It strips away a euphemism to make far plainer what has long been the reality of our world.

We now face a choice. As historian Christian Appy has reminded us, “The institutions that sustain empire destroy democracy.” That truth is unfolding before our eyes. As the Pentagon budget tops one trillion dollars and the machinery of war only expands in Donald Trump’s America, the country also seems to be turning further inward. Only recently, President Trump threatened to use Chicago to demonstrate “why it is called the Department of War.” Meanwhile, US Customs and Immigration Enforcement, or ICE, is set to become among the most well-funded domestic “military” forces on the planet and potentially the private paramilitary of an aspiring autocrat.

If there is any hope of salvaging this country’s (not to speak of this planet’s) future, then this history has to be faced, and we must recover – or perhaps discover – our moral bearings. That will require not prolonging the death throes of American hegemony, but dismantling imperial America before it collapses on itself and takes us all with it.

CT

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Recognising the rubble of Palestine

UK, Canada and Australia: Never fear, Palestinians! We're here to save the day!

Palestinians: You're going to stop the genocide?

UK, Canada and Australia: HAHHAHA-HAHA! No! Oh god no. Haha! No, we are going to give a great big Thumbs Up to the idea of your eventual statehood!

Palestinians: Will you at least stop sending them weapons?

UK, Canada and Australia: LOL no.

In response to the UK, Canada and Australia announcing their recognition of a Palestinian state, Benjamin Netanyahu has proclaimed that Israel will never allow such a state to exist.

"It's not going to happen. There will be no Palestinian state to the west of the Jordan River," Netanyahu said, adding that Israel will continue expanding settlements in the West bank.

It's funny how Israel supporters will claim it's a genocidal hate crime to say "from the river to the sea Palestine will be free," but apparently it's fine to say from the river to the sea Palestine will not be free. Even if you say it while actually committing genocide.

Israeli officials coming out saying there will never be a Palestinian state are completely discrediting all the two-state solution western liberals who've spent two years condemning Hamas because they didn't pursue their liberation by going through the proper channels.

Reminds me of that Jon Stone quote you see going around sometimes, "One reason people insist that you use the proper channels to change things is because they have control of the proper channels and they're confident it won't work."

Westerner: I support a two-state solution.

Israel: There will never be a Palestinian state.

Westerner: Okay then I support a one-state solution where everyone has equal rights.

Israel: You're calling for an end to the Jewish state you monster.

Westerner: Alright then, I support the Palestinian resistance.

Israel: That's supporting terrorism. You are Hamas and we can legally murder you.

Westerner: Well can I at least support a permanent ceasefire to end the genocide?

Israel: [cocks pistol] What did I just tell you about supporting Hamas?

Westerner: Okay then, I support Palestinians living as a permanent underclass until they can be slowly salami sliced out of existence as a people.

Israel: Getting warmer.

Westerner: I support removing all Palestinians from their historic homeland via ethnic cleansing or extermination before the end of Donald Trump's presidential term.

Israel: [puts away gun] That's more like it.

I saw a video where two Australian doctors described how they had to deliver a baby via emergency c-section because the baby's mother had been decapitated by an Israeli airstrike. Information like this always reminds me of that period last year when all the western politicians and media outlets were telling us that the worst people in the entire world were the university students who were protesting against this genocide.

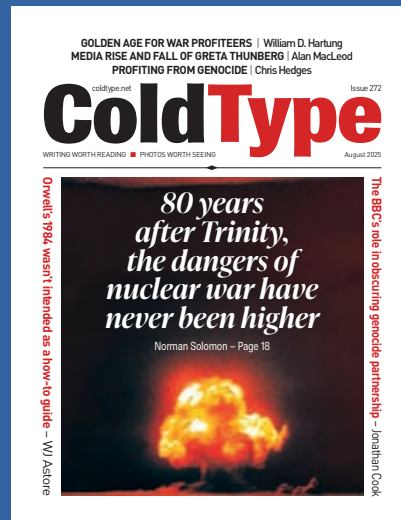
The Global Sumud Flotilla is saying they're seeing drones around their ships again just days out from their planned arrival to bring aid into Gaza. Last month drones repeatedly dropped incendiary firebombs on the boats.

This comes as Israel's Foreign Ministry declares that the flotilla is a Hamas ally, and as Google runs Israel-sponsored ads spinning the flotilla as a terrorist operation. I don't know if the Israelis are going to kill these courageous activists, but you can tell they really, really want to.

CT

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