

Letters from our readers

12 October 2007

The following is a selection of recent letters sent to the World Socialist Web Site.

On “Bush defends torture”

I’m really shocked by the declaration of the president of the US. I am French, and I am already against the death sentence, but torture is worse. Where does he stop? I think the people of the US should react against G.W. Bush. We do not play with the lives of human beings! Hey everyone, have you heard what he said? He is the president!

BB

France

7 October 2007

Thank you for stating the truth. Democrats knew about the illegal NSA spying, and now it seems they also knew about the torture of detainees after the Bush administration signed a bill declaring they would not torture. I am a registered Democrat, and I hate to see my party damaged, but our country needs all of the government officials regardless of party to be removed from office if we are to preserve the rule of law in our democratic republic. I am afraid that we are nearing or have already passed a point of no return because it is all too obvious that not even the most progressive voices in Washington are going to risk doing the right thing. Sadly, your voice will not be heard beyond this little corner of a cacophonous cyber opiate. Thank you for the effort nevertheless.

CB

7 October 2007

It has long been established that ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ as used in Guantánamo Bay and elsewhere constitute a war crime. In or about 1937 the Hitler regime devised the term ‘Verschärfte Vernehmung’ (“enhanced” or “sharpened” interrogation) to describe a type of torture that would leave no external marks on prisoners. At the time, Nazi officials were adamant that such techniques were tightly controlled, supervised by specially trained staff

and used only on certain categories of prisoners. It is notable that waterboarding was, at that time, prohibited.

Norway’s 1948 war-crimes trials found that using “enhanced interrogation techniques” against insurgent prisoners of war out of uniform constituted a war crime and was punishable by death.

EG

8 October 2007

On “Indian Supreme Court outlaws Tamil Nadu political protest”

I mostly agree with the contents of the article, but disagree that bandhs (general strikes) in India are a means of democratic expression of dissent. Even the decisions on bandhs are not taken in democratic fashion. They are only a show of brute power of the organising parties. Bandhs are forced at the threat of violence. Participants join out of fear. The masses are the losers. Daily wageworkers and small hawkers lose their livelihood for the bandh period. With the forced prevention of transportation and damaging of buses common people, including the seriously sick, cannot move or get medical attention. Public hospitals too get forcibly closed at times. Daily provisions, especially emergency purchases, are beyond reach of the poor who cannot afford stocking. Some vendors escalate prices in anticipation of a bandh. In such situation, terming a forced general strike as democratic is incorrect.

JP

Hyderabad, India

7 October 2007

On “Scandals, retirements decimate congressional Republicans”

This excellent article lays bare the corrupt and diseased state of the political system in the USA. Though its focus is mostly on the Republicans, it illustrates well how any hopes in the Democrats are guaranteed to be dashed. It definitely points to the need for a socialist party independent of the current rotten

duopoly.

LM

Long Beach, California, USA

8 October 2007

On “Australia’s High Court rules that voting rights can be abolished”

If it wasn’t such a serious matter, there would be something deliciously ironic about convicted criminals being denied the right to vote in a country that was largely populated by them in its early stage of colonisation!

To see how profoundly unfair this is, let’s take a hypothetical case. Let us suppose the country has a population of five, three of whom want the smoking of cannabis to be legalised. However, the remaining two constitute the current government. They need only imprison one of these three and strip him of his voting rights to ensure that there can never be a democratic majority vote to legalise the drug, despite what the majority of the population wants.

The enfranchisement of the mentally ill is more problematic, since their condition may deprive them of the ability to make a reasoned choice at the ballot box. However, in the present political climate, one cannot trust the government to define mental illness in a neutral way. We have seen past cases, in the Soviet Union for example, where mental illness was used as a pretext for locking up political dissidents.

RP

Hong Kong

9 October 2007

I will state what I said in Geneva at the June 2007 UN Human Rights Council meeting. Referring to Sri Lankan government violating the human rights of its citizens, I said,

“The citizens of a country should not rest their hopes too much on the Law, the Courts and the Constitution. Justice, fair-play, truth and conscience lie in the hearts of men and women. When that dies, no Law, no Court, and no Constitution, will save them.”

When I came here 30 years ago, I did not dream that a comment relevant to Sri Lanka would also apply equally well to Australia. How wrong I was. Australia is now with some of the more dreadful countries in the world, at least where democracy is concerned. Australia does not need to be there.

Brian Senewiratne, consultant physician

Brisbane, Australia

9 October 2007

On “US general fires a new propaganda salvo against Iran”

Hello, I do feel your article was significant and clear, but why is not the media relating more about what is actually happening in Iraq, especially about the American soldiers, the Iraq people, and the unbelievably big American Embassy being built? Do most Americans realize what is actually happening in Iraq? Thank you from someone who is quite frustrated with the lack of the American media leading with an open and honest coverage of Iraq.

TR

Bellingham, Washington, USA

9 October 2007



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