

The fascist atrocities in east Ukraine and the fraud of “humanitarian” war

Alex Lantier

14 August 2014

The siege of the Ukrainian cities of Donetsk and Luhansk, launched by the regime in Kiev and abetted by the US government and the European Union (EU), is a barbaric act of collective punishment.

The political gangsters in Kiev and their sponsors in Washington and the European capitals have unleashed fascist paramilitary units, such as Right Sector and the Azov Battalion, to wage war on the entire population of east Ukraine. They are shelling hospitals, maternity wards, and chemical factories, firing rocket salvos indiscriminately into city centers, and cutting off water, food, electricity, and medicine to cities with a combined population of over 1 million people. The slaughter has already claimed over 2,000 lives, including hundreds of civilians.

The hypocrisy of the NATO powers' howls of outrage that a Russian truck convoy bearing humanitarian aid might now enter into east Ukraine is sickening. Having attacked Yugoslavia, Libya and Iraq on the pretext that invasion was the only way to protect civilians, they are now turning 180 degrees and demanding that their puppet regime be allowed to murder east Ukrainians undisturbed.

At the Monday press briefing, State Department spokeswoman and former CIA Middle East analyst Marie Harf made clear that the atrocities in east Ukraine have the full support of the US government. A journalist began to ask a question, stating: “The separatists are saying there are 1,500 dead, they have no electricity in their areas, they are running low on supplies and so on. There are villages and towns that are populated by civilians.”

Interrupting the questioner, Harf snapped: “I don't have any sympathy for the separatists.”

Harf denounced the planned Russian truck convoy bearing food, water and power generators for east

Ukraine as a ruse: “We are concerned that Russia could try to use a humanitarian or peacekeeping operation as a pretense for inserting elements of military force into Ukraine. We do not believe that any actions, humanitarian or otherwise, should be taken in Ukraine without Kiev's direct permission.”

Even by the debased standards of US state propaganda, the hypocrisy of Harf's comment is astounding. Backhandedly acknowledging that Kiev has created a humanitarian catastrophe, it accuses Russia without proof of doing precisely what Washington and its allies have done for decades since the dissolution of the USSR in 1991: use the pretext of humanitarian intervention to invade countries. The Obama administration has used and continues to use precisely this phony tactic to package its wars to a hostile public.

As he launched the 2011 war in Libya (proven oil reserves: 76.4 billion barrels), Obama told the American people: “We cannot stand idly by when a tyrant tells his people that there will be no mercy, and his forces step up their assaults on cities like Benghazi and Misrata, where innocent men and women face brutality and death at the hands of their own government. So we must be clear: actions have consequences, and the writ of the international community must be enforced.”

Based only on this warning that repression of pro-US protesters in Libya might occur in the future, Obama launched a war that killed thousands of civilians and handed Libya over to a patchwork of tribal and Al Qaeda-linked militias. Change Benghazi and Misrata to Donetsk and Luhansk, however, and the Obama administration opposes any action that might interfere with atrocities carried out against Ukrainian civilians by pro-Kiev fascists working with Blackwater

mercenaries and the CIA.

This week, as he launched another unpopular US war in Iraq (proven oil reserves: 140 billion barrels), Obama peddled the tired lie that the war is dictated by humanitarian concern—in this case, over Yazidi refugees hiding on Mount Sinjar from Islamic State in Iraq and Syria forces. He said, “When many thousands of innocent civilians are faced with the danger of being wiped out, and we have the capacity to do something about it, we will take action. That is our responsibility as Americans. That’s a hallmark of American leadership. That’s who we are.”

Who does Obama think he is kidding? In a series of wars and bombings carried out in Iraq despite broad opposition in the American working class over nearly a quarter century since the 1990-1991 Gulf War, US imperialism has done its best to prove that mass murder is as American as apple pie.

Nearly two decades ago, in May 1996, CBS correspondent Leslie Stahl asked Clinton administration Secretary of State Madeleine Albright about the devastating sanctions Washington imposed on Iraq after the Gulf War, cutting it off from the world economy. Stahl said, “We have heard that a half a million children have died. That’s more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is this price worth it?”

Infamously, Albright replied: “I think this is a very hard choice, but the price we think is worth it.”

At that point, tragically, the worst still lay ahead for the Iraqi people, who would suffer further bombings, the 2003 invasion, and nine years of hellish US-UK occupation and civil war that claimed the lives of over 1 million Iraqis.

The barbarism unleashed by the United States and its European allies in Ukraine exposes not only their current wars, but the political framework developed over decades to provide a cynical veneer of moral rectitude for wars of plunder.

The Czech President, ex-dissident, and pro-imperialist scoundrel Vaclav Havel coined the Orwellian term “humanitarian bombing” in a 1999 *Le Monde* interview, as NATO bombs fell on the ex-Yugoslav republics of Kosovo and Serbia. According to Havel, such wars were noble, totally disinterested acts that reflected only the unswerving devotion of Washington and the European Union to human rights;

in that case, protecting Kosovar Albanians from the Serbian government in Belgrade.

Havel declared, “I believe that during the intervention of NATO in Kosovo, there is an element nobody can question: the air raids, the bombs, are not provoked by a material interest. Their character is exclusively humanitarian: what is at stake here are the principles, human rights which are accorded priority that surpasses even state sovereignty. This makes attacking the Yugoslav Federation legitimate, even without the United Nations mandate.”

Such reactionary rationalizations for war were embraced by the corporate media, leading academics, and corrupt pseudo-left groups, such as the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the United States or the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) in France, who applauded the Libyan and Syrian wars. The main target, if unstated, of their propaganda was Marxism—in particular, its claim that such wars are provoked by the pursuit of material interests by the capitalist classes of the imperialist powers.

Class forces will out, and this petty-bourgeois fraternity has found fitting partners in Ukraine. They embraced the right-wing, pro-EU protests on the Maidan in Kiev that culminated in the February 22 putsch and the installation of a far-right government. Now, they find themselves aligned with the white supremacist snipers, ex-convicts, and admirers of Ukrainian Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera inside Right Sector who are serving as imperialism’s foot soldiers, massacring civilians in east Ukraine.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)