

The terror bombings in Brussels

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The *World Socialist Web Site* condemns the bombings that took place Tuesday morning in Brussels, killing 30 people and wounding 230 at Zaventem Airport and the Maelbeek metro station. While Belgian authorities imposed a gag order on their investigation of the attacks, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) claimed responsibility in a statement posted by its Amaq news agency.

This horrific attack targeted innocent people in no way responsible for the imperialist wars that have devastated the Middle East. Fifteen years of wars, terror attacks, and escalating police state measures since the September 11, 2001 bombings in the United States have conclusively demonstrated that such bloodshed invariably plays into the hands of the most reactionary forces.

As the WSWWS stated the day after the September 11 attacks, “However it seeks to justify itself, the terrorist method is fundamentally reactionary. Far from dealing a powerful blow against imperialist militarism, terrorism plays into the hands of those elements within the US establishment who seize on such events to justify and legitimize the resort to war in pursuit of the geopolitical and economic interests of the ruling elite. The murder of innocent civilians enrages, disorients and confuses the public. It undermines the struggle for the international unity of the working class, and counteracts all efforts to educate the American people on the history and politics that form the background to contemporary events in the Middle East.”

This statement is again being confirmed, this time in Europe, as governments across the continent place their security forces on high alert. Last night, as Belgium closed its borders and army and police forces put Brussels on lock-down, Prime Minister Charles Michel declared, “For us, there will be a ‘before and after.’” He said the council of top ministers would meet this morning to “organize the period after the bombings.”

In France, where the Socialist Party (PS) has imposed an unpopular and anti-democratic state of emergency since the November 13 attacks in Paris, PS officials cited the attacks in Brussels to press the Senate to approve a PS amendment enshrining the state of emergency in the French Constitution.

US presidential candidates sought to stir up the anti-Muslim and pro-war moods seizing the political establishment on both sides of the Atlantic. Republican Donald Trump, who has advocated barring Muslims from entering the US, said Brussels was “a total disaster.” He added, “We have to be very careful in the United States, we have to be very vigilant as to who we allow in this country.”

Trump called for torturing Salah Abdeslam, who was captured in Brussels on Friday after four months on the run and charged with participating in the November 13 Paris attacks. “The waterboarding would be fine, and if they could expand the laws, I would do a lot more than waterboarding,” the Republican frontrunner said.

The leading contender for the Democratic nomination, Hillary Clinton, declared, “Today's attacks will only strengthen our resolve to stand together as allies against terrorism and radical jihadism around the world.” She called for more pervasive mass spying by US and international intelligence agencies, saying “We have to toughen our surveillance, our interception of communication.”

Despite the horrifying character of the Brussels attacks, it is essential that people not allow themselves to be stampeded into new wars and police state measures by the propaganda of the media and a thoroughly degraded political establishment.

All of the statements of bourgeois politicians condemning terrorist violence are as hypocritical as they are dishonest. The wave of ISIS attacks in Europe, from the *Charlie Hebdo* and November 13 bombings in Paris last year to yesterday's Brussels bombings, are

inextricably bound up with decades of wars and military interventions that have destroyed large parts of the Middle East and destabilized the rest.

ISIS itself is the product of three imperialist wars: first, the illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the United States, aided by European countries including Britain, Spain and Italy, on the basis of lying claims that the Iraqi government would give weapons of mass destruction to Al Qaeda; second, the war for regime-change in Libya waged by the US and NATO, utilizing Al Qaeda-linked militia as proxy ground forces; and, third, the proxy war stoked up by the US and the European powers in Syria, where they have backed various Islamist militias including ISIS in an effort to topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

Particularly in the initial stages of the Syrian war, as the Islamist militias sought to sow terror and destabilize the government, they resorted to repeated terror bombings. Just in the capital, Damascus, there were 44 killed and 166 injured in a December 2011 attack, 55 killed and 400 injured in a May 2012 attack, and 80 killed and 250 injured in a February 2013 attack.

Washington and its European allies have supported the Islamist opposition throughout this bloody rampage, turning against ISIS only gradually after it attacked the US puppet regime in Baghdad in the summer of 2014. Even then, as France's PS government bombed ISIS targets in Iraq, it stated it would not bomb ISIS targets in Syria. Paris refused to deny media reports that it was refraining from attacking ISIS in Syria in order to avoid weakening the anti-Assad forces. France began bombing ISIS in Syria only after the January 2015 attack on *Charlie Hebdo*.

These wars have created a Frankenstein monster in Europe, a network of Islamist fighters closely tied to European foreign policy and police circles. Those carrying out ISIS attacks in Europe, like the Kouachi brothers in the *Charlie Hebdo* attack and Abdelhamid Abaaoud in the November 13 Paris shootings, inevitably proved to be linked to operations to recruit Islamists from Europe for the war in Syria. Inexplicably, though they were well known to intelligence agencies throughout Europe and closely monitored, they were allowed to travel across the continent and prepare bloody attacks.

A significant factor in the accelerating pace of attacks in Europe is the fact that broad sections of the European

ruling class welcome the pretext provided by such crimes to fan anti-Muslim hatred so as to divide the working class, while expanding their police state measures. As they seek to justify a ruthless and illegal policy of denying the right of asylum to millions of refugees fleeing Middle East wars, and impose ever more brutal austerity measures on the working class, the ruling elites view such terror attacks as a political godsend.

With the bloodletting of the imperialist wars in the Middle East coming home to Europe, political lessons must urgently be drawn. The increased buildup of security forces and police state powers after each terror attack has only set the stage for more draconian attacks on democratic rights, new military escalations and further terror attacks.

The only way this reactionary spiral of violence can be stopped is by addressing its root cause—the war drive through which the major imperialist powers seek to dominate the Middle East. This requires the development of a broad movement of the working class against war and for socialism.



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