One sixth of world's people want to flee their home countries

Eric London
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The world is pulsing with hundreds of millions of people desperate to flee their homes under the weight of the crisis of world capitalism. According to a recent Gallup study, a sixth of the world's adult population—some 750 million people, not including children—want to flee their home countries to escape war, poverty, conflict and disease.

The statistics expose the devastating impact of decades of imperialist war and corporate exploitation. In the more than quarter-century since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the ruling classes of the major powers, led by the United States, have unleashed an unprecedented wave of military plunder and social counterrevolution, killing millions and laying waste to broad swaths of the world.

A third of the inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa want to escape. The region, which is rich in minerals and oil coveted by French, Dutch, Belgian and American corporations, has a life expectancy of 46, while 70 percent of the population lives on less than $2 per day.

In Latin America, 27 percent of people want to leave their home countries to escape the aftermath of US invasion, IMF austerity and US-backed dictatorships.

Twenty-six percent of Eastern Europeans want to flee the near-universal devastation that has followed the privatization of state industries by the Stalinist bureaucrats-turned-oligarchs.

Twenty-four percent of Middle Easterners and North Africans wish to leave in search of shelter from the storm of bombs and missiles that the US has rained down upon the region since the Persian Gulf War.

In 13 countries, *nearly half or more* of the adult population finds life unbearable.

In Sierra Leone, a country ravaged by the bloody fight to turn over diamonds to European jewelers, 71 percent of adults want to flee. In Haiti, 63 percent want to leave after more than a century of American invasions and occupations.

Fifty-two percent of Salvadorans and 47 percent of Hondurans want to escape the violence, poverty and corruption that dominate Central America following the civil wars of the 1980s and 1990s. Forty-eight percent of Nigerians want to leave their country, bled white from the extraction of crude oil by Chevron and Royal Dutch Shell.

This year, the ruling classes of Europe and North America implemented unprecedented anti-immigrant policies and inflamed xenophobic sentiment to distract from growing social inequality and strengthen far-right forces that will be used against the working class.

In June, the European Union agreed to cut migration and erect concentration camps to house immigrants in North Africa.

In August, French President Emmanuel Macron signed a law slashing asylum eligibility.

Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini repeated threats to deport 500,000 immigrants and the entire Roma population. In the United Kingdom, the Tory government is preparing a Brexit deal that may cut the country off to Eastern European immigrants. In Germany, the neo-Nazi Alternative for Germany held anti-immigrant demonstrations this summer with the encouragement of the state.

Nowhere is the anti-immigrant scapegoating more fierce and dangerous than in the United States. In April, the Trump administration began separating children from their families at the US-Mexico border and erected tent-city internment centers to house the children.

In October, Trump deployed thousands of troops to the southern border. Thousands of participants in the Central American migrant caravan have been sleeping in the streets of Tijuana for months. When two Guatemalan children died in US custody this month, the government blamed their impoverished indigenous parents.

"Left" populist demagogues around the world play the

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most criminal role, justifying the anti-immigrant measures of the far-right and attempting to poison the working class with nationalism. In the United Kingdom, Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn echoed United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) leader Nigel Farage when he told a Scottish Labour conference in March that Britain should curb the entrance of foreign workers.

In Mexico, the new government of "left" nationalist Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) made a deal this month with Trump to detain Central American refugees in Mexico and block them from exercising their right to asylum in the US.

In Greece, the government of the Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza) has jailed hundreds of thousands of refugees in internment camps and recently deployed police to brutally assault immigrants attempting to cross the Evros River from Turkey.

Syriza's position on immigration is summed up in a recent report from Human Rights Watch:

> Abuse [by Greek police] included beatings with hands and batons, kicking and, in one case, the use of what appeared to be a stun gun. In another case, a Moroccan man said a masked man dragged him by his hair, forced him to kneel on the ground, held a knife to his throat, and subjected him to a mock execution. Others pushed back include a pregnant 19-year-old woman from Afrin, Syria and a woman from Afghanistan who said Greek authorities took away her two young children's shoes.

In the US, Bernie Sanders begged Trump in January to "work with us to make sure we have strong border security."

Earlier this month, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) wrote a statement titled "Toward a Left Position on Immigration," which includes the subsection "It's Not About Open Borders."

The DSA writes: "The actual alternative to the current existing immigration policy is not 'open borders.' It is enforcement of existing employment laws, followed by the development of new employment and immigration laws, leading to a fair, pro-worker system of immigration."

This is a thinly veiled, foul appeal to anti-immigrant nationalism and chauvinism, in no basic way different from that of the trade union bureaucracy, the Trump administration and neo-fascists such as Stephen Bannon.

With such actions and statements, Corbyn, Syriza, AMLO, Sanders and the DSA expose their hostility to the international working class and to socialism. They are pledging—or in the case of Syriza and AMLO have already shown—that they will use state violence against workers demanding a redress of their grievances.

In contrast to nationalist groups like the DSA that defend the existence of national boundaries, the Socialist Equality Party fights for socialist *internationalism* and rejects the lie that any ruling class has the right to jail desperate workers escaping imperialist war or prevent them from seeking safety and a better life in another country. Immigrant workers are not to blame for growing poverty and declining living conditions in Europe and America. The real enemies of the workers are the same imperialist governments and transnational corporations that are responsible for forcing immigrants from their homes in the first place.

The Socialist Equality Party demands the immediate release of all interned immigrants and the provision of trillions of dollars, confiscated from the banks and corporations, to provide all immigrants with decent-paying jobs, housing, social services, education and safe passage to a destination of their choosing without fear of deportation.

Capitalism has turned broad swaths of the world into a foul prison, holding workers and the poor in nation-state straitjackets from which a sixth of the world is fighting to escape. Socialist revolution will free the productive process from the control of the world's oligarchs, abolish national boundaries and guarantee the right of all workers to travel the world in peace.

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