

UN debate begins under shadow of war and dictatorship

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24 September 2019

Today marks the opening of the annual United Nations General Assembly debate. Heads of state from at least 90 countries have assembled at the New York City headquarters of the UN, an organization formed in the aftermath of the rise of fascism in Europe and World War II's slaughter of more than 70 million human beings.

The UN's Charter, ratified in October 1945, pledged the organization to saving "succeeding generations from the scourge of war." Basing itself on the Nuremberg principles upon which the surviving leadership of Hitler's Third Reich were tried for their "crimes against peace," i.e., aggressive war, the document required the UN's member states to "refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state." The document's preamble affirmed a commitment to "fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person."

Nothing could so graphically give the lie to these purported principles, nearly three-quarters of a century on, than the lineup of the first three speakers scheduled to address the General Assembly.

Leading the list, as is traditional, is Brazil, represented by the country's fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro, making his debut speech. An open admirer of the US-backed dictatorship that ruled his country for two decades, he has faulted the torture regime only for failing to finish the job by massacring 30,000 people.

He will be followed by Washington's own fascistic president, Donald Trump, whose principal aim in attending the UN debate is to drum up support for a US war of aggression against Iran. In his two previous speeches to the General Assembly Trump declared himself "ready, willing and able" to "totally destroy" North Korea and its 25 million people, while delivering

tirades extolling the virtues of retrograde nationalism, "sovereignty" and "patriotism" that echoed the rhetoric of Mussolini and Hitler.

Since last mounting the General Assembly's green marble-backed rostrum, Trump has earned international infamy by waging a pitiless war on immigrants and refugees, holding children in concentration camps under conditions tantamount to torture, launching mass round-ups and deportation of immigrant workers and effectively abrogating the right of asylum. This savage campaign has gone hand-in-hand with increasingly naked fascist appeals to his base and the drive toward authoritarian forms of rule.

Following Trump will be the man he described at last month's G7 meeting as his "favorite dictator," the "butcher of Cairo," Egypt's Gen. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Admired by Trump and other world capitalist leaders for his bloody suppression of the mass revolutionary upsurge that erupted in Egypt in 2011, inspiring working people across the Middle East and around the world, Sisi has massacred thousands, continued to imprison and torture tens of thousands for opposing his regime and condemned 2,500 to die in rigged trials.

No sooner had Sisi left Cairo to attend the UN General Assembly debate than mass protests erupted once again in Cairo, Suez and other cities, demanding the dictator's downfall. They have been met with tear gas, live ammunition and mass arrests. Among those detained was the prominent human rights lawyer Mahienour El-Massry, who was grabbed by police while seeking to represent protesters who had been arrested by the state.

This rogues' gallery presents an accurate reflection of the descent of capitalist rule on a world scale into outright criminality. This process is the product not of the noxious personal attributes of the likes of Trump,

Sisi and Bolsonaro, but rather the crisis of world capitalism, the accelerating growth of social inequality and, above all, the protracted decline of American capitalism, characterized by the rise of financial parasitism and a quarter-century of uninterrupted wars aimed at reversing the erosion of US global hegemony.

The great Russian revolutionaries, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, were scathing in their assessments of the the UN's predecessor, the League of Nations, founded in 1920 with the ostensible purpose of maintaining "world peace" in the wake of the mass slaughter of the First World War.

Lenin described the body as a "thieves' kitchen" and a "piece of fakery from beginning to end." He went on to say, "[I]t is a deception from beginning to end; it is a lie from beginning to end."

Trotsky defined it as US imperialism's "attempt to chain to its chariot of gold the peoples of Europe and other parts of the world and bring them under Washington's rule. In essence the League of Nations was intended to be a world monopoly corporation, 'Yankee and Co.'"

The UN is, if anything, more contemptible. It served as a direct participant in the US war in Korea that claimed the lives of over two million. It was incapable of restraining US imperialism's war in Vietnam that killed three million. And it has facilitated the slaughter in the Middle East over the past quarter-century that has killed millions more, while turning tens of millions into homeless refugees.

It is also noteworthy that the first two speakers in the UN General Assembly debate, which was preceded by a UN Climate Summit dominated by warnings of approaching global catastrophe, were Trump and Bolsonaro. Both are climate change deniers who are actively repressing research by the scientific agencies of their respective governments. Bolsonaro's foreign minister has dismissed climate change as a hoax by "cultural Marxists" bent on undermining Western capitalism. In this area too, the UN is incapable of confronting the existential threats facing humanity.

Now Trump roams the halls of the UN building in New York in search of allies for a war against Iran—under the pretext of defending the filthy regime of royal parasites and assassins in Saudi Arabia. Such a military intervention threatens to become the antechamber of a Third World War, dragging in every

country in the region as well as all of the major powers—including nuclear-armed China and Russia—because of Iran's vital geostrategic position and its vast energy reserves.

Even while preparing this new war, the Trump administration continues the old ones with unrelenting savagery. On Sunday night, US-trained and led Afghan special forces carried out the massacre of at least 40 members of a wedding party, the majority of them women and children. This slaughter comes only days after the September 19 US drone massacre of more than 30 Afghan farmworkers, as the Pentagon intensifies its attacks following Trump's ripping up of a peace agreement with the Taliban.

These atrocities make it clear why Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning, who exposed earlier US war crimes, remain imprisoned and persecuted by the US government.

The turn toward dictatorship and fascism has its most essential roots in the global resurgence of the class struggle—from the mass demonstrations in Egypt to the autoworkers' strike in the United States—which has shaken the world's ruling capitalist oligarchies to their core.

At the same time, the ruling classes in the United States and the other imperialist powers are driven to war in no small part by the need to divert outwards the immense social tensions building up in every capitalist country.

Once again—for the third time in a century—humanity is confronted with the alternative of socialism or barbarism. The rise of fascism and the march toward a Third World War and nuclear annihilation can be halted only through the socialist revolution. The decisive question is that of establishing a new revolutionary leadership in the working class through the building of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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