

New York Times declares “people around the world are better off than ever”

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No matter what is happening in the world, one can always count on the *New York Times* to lie about it. In this spirit, the *Times* published an article Tuesday telling its readers that “people around the world are better off than ever” and that the many millions who are risking their lives protesting against shortages of basic goods and the rising cost of living are simply ignorant of “all the data” showing how grateful they should be.

“Is the world really falling apart, or does it just feel that way?” reads the headline. Dr. Pangloss from Voltaire’s *Candide* couldn’t have posed the question any better. The *Times* writes: if one merely “scans the headlines, it’s easy to conclude that something has broken,” but “that sense of chaos can be difficult to square with longer-term data showing that, on many metrics, the world is generally becoming better off.”

According to the author, Max Fisher, “War is rarer today, by some measures, than it has been for most of the past 50 years—and, when it does occur, is significantly less deadly. Genocides and mass atrocities are less common all the time, too. Life expectancy, literacy and standards of living are all rising, on average, to historic highs. Also steadily declining: hunger, child mortality, and extreme poverty, liberating hundreds of millions from what are, by sheer numbers, among the pre-eminent threats facing humanity.” The article contains one passing reference to “the pandemic.”

In recent years, the *Times* has been held up as a model “authentic” news source, while the *World Socialist Web Site* has faced censorship and journalists like Julian Assange are rotting in jail for telling the truth. Nevertheless, we submit the following statements by the *Times* to basic fact-checking.

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“War is rarer today” and “is significantly less deadly”—LIE

The United States and NATO allies are presently waging a war against Russia in Ukraine, bringing the world closer to the brink of nuclear catastrophe than at any point since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. The US government has poured tens of billions of dollars into backing the Ukrainian

government in a war that Joe Biden said was aimed at removing Vladimir Putin from power. The conflict escalates every week and threatens to emerge into open world war between nuclear powers.

The US has been permanently at war for over two decades. The US invasions and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan killed over 1 million civilians. The US-backed Saudi invasion of Yemen had killed an estimated 377,000 by the end of 2021. The US-instigated war in Syria has killed an estimated 500,000 to 600,000 more. The number of people displaced by war has never been higher in world history.

How convenient that the *New York Times*, which supported each of these wars and helped initiate them, declares they are “significantly less deadly”!

“Life expectancy is rising”—LIE

A study published in March 2022 in the journal *Population and Development Review* reports that global life expectancy declined by roughly 0.92 years in 2020 and another 0.72 years in 2021 due to the pandemic and worsening social inequality. These are the first declines in global life expectancy since the United Nations began tracking this figure in 1950. According to a study published in the *Lancet*, global excess deaths in the last two years stood at 18.2 million by the end of 2021.

“Literacy is rising”—LIE

A series of studies in late 2021 and early 2022 note that a third of children in the United States are missing benchmarks for reading—a far higher rate than before the pandemic. A study from the University of Virginia showed that early childhood reading skills are at a 20-year low, and that 60 percent of children at impoverished schools are at high risk for functional illiteracy.

On a global scale, the World Literacy Foundation reported in 2020 that the pandemic is causing a “[c]atastrophic rise in illiteracy.” The organization’s CEO said, “770 million people in the globe can’t read or write a single word and a further 2 billion people struggle to read a sentence. We are now witnessing a rapid downward spiral in literacy standards and sadly many children will not return to their

education and will face lifelong poverty.”

“Hunger is declining”—LIE

In 2020, even before the outbreak of the pandemic, 2.3 billion people lacked regular access to food, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, while more than 700 million experienced severe food insecurity that year.

War and the pandemic greatly exacerbated world hunger, according to a recent UN report, which explains “the world is moving backwards in its efforts to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms.”

According to the head of the UN’s World Food Program, the US/NATO war against Russia in Ukraine has meant that “a record 345 million acutely hungry people are marching to the brink of starvation.” *Forbes* recently noted that this figure is nearly triple the 135 million who were in the process of dying of starvation before the pandemic hit. Food prices have reached all-time highs. The US cannot even provide children with sufficient *baby formula*.

“Child mortality is declining”—LIE

A UN report published days before the *Times*’ article warned that a staggering 22 percent of the world’s children under age five (150 million children) are so deprived of food that they have stunted growth and development. Some 45 million children under age five—6.7 percent of the total—suffer from “wasting,” which means they are actively dying of starvation. A remarkable 4,357 children died of gun violence in the US alone in 2020. Tens of thousands of children have died of COVID-19.

“Extreme poverty is declining”—LIE

In the last three months, “71 million people in the developing world have fallen into poverty,” according to a July report from the World Bank, which estimates that the combined crises of war and pandemic “will lead to an additional 75 million to 95 million people living in extreme poverty in 2022.”

During the pandemic, 1 billion full time jobs were lost, according to the International Labor Organization, and hundreds of millions of informal workers lost their sources of income. An additional 275 million people were thrown below the international poverty line of \$3/day. On top of this, the IMF has planned a new wave of austerity that will negatively impact over 6 billion people in 2022.

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The *Times* explains that the billions of people whose stomachs are grumbling, whose wallets are empty, who cannot receive a decent education and whose lives and livelihoods are threatened by coronavirus, war and environmental catastrophe, simply do not understand how good they have it under capitalism.

“We tend to judge how we are doing compared to those around us, or compared to our own recent past—not

compared to abstract benchmarks or previous generations. And many of the positive changes are about prevention,” the *Times* sagely explains. “No one notices the wars that don’t happen, the family members who aren’t claimed by disease, the children who don’t die in infancy.”

What an absurd and staggering statement! Twenty million people have died in an ongoing pandemic. Over 10 million children have lost a parent to COVID-19. One in 500 children in the US has been orphaned. All of this has happened in the span of just three years, with no end in sight. And in the midst of it all, as the *Times* advocates policies that will guarantee more death, the “newspaper of record” tells working people to be grateful for “the family members who *aren’t* claimed by disease”?

In May, the *New York Times* wrote a similarly stupid and delusional article claiming that economic conditions for American workers “haven’t been this bright since men landed on the moon.” At the time, the WSWWS replied by quoting Leon Trotsky’s description of the self-delusional social outlook of the Russian Tsarina on the eve of the Revolution of 1917, which bears repeating:

When Alexandra Feodorovna, three months before the fall of the monarchy, prophesies: “All is coming out for the best, the dreams of our Friend mean so much!” she merely repeats Marie Antoinette, who one month before the overthrow of the royal power wrote: “I feel a liveliness of spirit, and something tells me that we shall soon be happy and safe.” They both see rainbow dreams as they drown.



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