

At UN, New Zealand PM backs war against Russia, promotes internet censorship

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At the United Nations general assembly last week, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern reiterated her government's continued and deepening support for the US-NATO war against Russia over Ukraine.

The gathering of world leaders took place as Russia and the United States exchanged threats to use nuclear weapons in the worsening conflict, which is developing into a third world war. In response to its profound economic crisis, US imperialism is seeking to use its overwhelming military might to defeat and subjugate Russia, while simultaneously staging provocations against China, with the aim of bringing the entire Eurasian landmass under its hegemony.

In New Zealand, both the Labour Party-Greens government and the opposition parties support the war. The Ardern government has sent 230 troops to Europe and is providing military aid, intelligence support and training to Ukraine's armed forces. As a minor imperialist power, NZ depends on the alliance with US imperialism to secure its own neo-colonial interests in the Pacific and its place in the global financial system dominated by the US.

In a profoundly hypocritical speech at the UN, Ardern repeated NATO's propaganda that Russia bears sole responsibility for the war, which she called "illegal" and a "direct attack on the UN Charter and the international rules-based system."

In fact, Putin's invasion of Ukraine in February was a reactionary, nationalist response to the US and NATO military encirclement and threats against Russia. In 2014 the imperialist powers supported a coup in Ukraine, which installed an aggressively anti-Russian government backed by extreme right-wing forces, which play a major role in Ukraine's military and political structures.

Referring to the Russian threat to deploy nuclear

weapons, Ardern hypocritically said: "What country who claims to be a liberator, threatens to annihilate the very civilians they claim to liberate? This war is based on a lie."

The US and its allies, however, are entirely unconcerned about Ukraine's population. At every step they have sought to escalate the war in order to entrap and severely weaken Russia's military. Washington responded to Putin's statements by issuing its own threats of "catastrophic consequences for Russia," and NATO general secretary Jens Stoltenberg declared that "nuclear war cannot be won by Russia."

Ardern's refusal to criticise these statements exposes the hollowness of her calls for global nuclear disarmament. She told the UN: "In New Zealand, we have never accepted the wisdom of mutually assured destruction." Her government, however, has used the war against Russia, and preparations for war against China, to integrate New Zealand more closely than ever with the US military, which has roughly 3,700 nuclear warheads. The Biden administration spent \$44.2 billion on the nuclear arsenal in 2021 alone. The US remains the only country to have used such weapons against civilians in two Japanese cities.

New Zealand's ruling elite does not oppose illegal wars "based on lies" when they are launched by its allies. Over the past two decades successive governments, beginning with Helen Clark's Labour-Alliance coalition, sent troops to join the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. More than a million people were killed in these brutal imperialist wars, justified with lying propaganda about a "war on terror," non-existent "weapons of mass destruction," and supposed concern for women's rights and democracy.

Now, the Ardern government has dragged New Zealand into an even more explosive conflict that could

rapidly develop into a nuclear war.

While in New York, Ardern met with Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal on September 21, who thanked NZ for "supplying military systems for training [our] military, [we] appreciate this so much." Meanwhile, New Zealand's foreign minister Nanaia Mahuta said the expulsion of Russia's ambassador in Wellington was under "active consideration."

As the government places New Zealand on a more open wartime footing, Ardern is also ramping up her global campaign for internet censorship.

While at the UN, Ardern and French President Emanuel Macron chaired a summit of the Christchurch Call to Action, which they both founded in the aftermath of the 2019 Christchurch terror attack. The fascist Brenton Tarrant live-streamed his attack on two mosques, which killed 51 people, across multiple online platforms. Under the pretext of preventing such attacks and stopping the promotion of "violent extremism," the Christchurch Call is aimed at increasing state and corporate control over online information and discussion.

The Christchurch Call's new initiative will coordinate research on "algorithmic outcomes," in partnership with the US government, Twitter and Microsoft. The aim, Ardern said in a statement, is "to understand the outcomes of algorithms and other processes that may drive users towards terrorist and violent extremist content, to make changes where this occurs, and to develop effective interventions based on information sharing."

In fact, such interventions will be used to suppress and censor online information and discussion about social inequality, mass COVID infection, militarism and war. Twitter, Facebook and Google have censored content from the *World Socialist Web Site*, including our exposure of the Wuhan lab leak conspiracy theory and our defence of Australian zero-COVID activist Dr David Berger.

This anti-democratic agenda was also made clear in Ardern's speech to the UN General Assembly, where she linked the Christchurch Call to the war with Russia. Ardern characterised online "mis- and disinformation" as "weapons of war" which spread "hateful and dangerous rhetoric and ideology" and "cause chaos and reduce the ability of others to defend themselves." She added: "we have an opportunity here to ensure that

these particular weapons of war do not become an established part of warfare."

What this means is that governments and tech giants must be empowered to clamp down on opposition to the US-NATO war effort. In Europe, the US and internationally the ruling class is alarmed by the growth of strikes and protests over the soaring cost of living, fuelled by the war in Ukraine and the diversion of unprecedented sums of money to the military. The ruling classes everywhere, including in New Zealand, are seeking to divert anger over the social crisis by whipping up nationalism, militarism and anti-Russia and anti-China hate.

The reckless escalation of the war, including the use of nuclear weapons by both sides, can only be halted by the intervention of the working class. Governments have already proven, during the pandemic, that they are willing to sacrifice tens of millions of lives to protect the profits of big business, which opposes the necessary measures to stop the virus.

Masses of working people in the US, Russia, Ukraine, China, New Zealand, and internationally face the same danger of a global catastrophe. They must respond by urgently adopting a socialist political strategy to end war by abolishing its fundamental source: the global capitalist system, and its reactionary division of the world into rival nation states.



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