

The January 6 Committee's referrals against Trump and the intensifying crisis of American democracy

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The House January 6 Committee's issuance of criminal referrals against former President Donald Trump is a political milestone.

In making its referrals, the committee has finally acknowledged the staggering fact that Trump, who is still the political leader of the Republican Party, engaged in a "conspiracy to incite, assist or aid an insurrection." The conspiracy had as its aim the overthrow of the 2020 elections and the establishment of a presidential dictatorship.

Analyzing the significance of the events of January 6, 2021, the WSWS wrote the following day:

What occurred yesterday was the outcome of a carefully planned conspiracy. It was instigated by Donald Trump, who has been working with a gang of fascist conspirators strategically positioned within the White House and other powerful institutions, departments and agencies of the state. Wednesday's operation carries with it the overwhelming stench of the Trump sons, close aides like Stephen Miller, and numerous others working behind the scenes within the military, the National Guard and the police.

Nearly two years later, the committee's action—backed by a mountain of evidence presented in a 154-page executive summary issued on Monday, to be followed Wednesday by the release of its full report—constitutes an acknowledgement of this political reality.

In addition to Trump, the committee also issued

criminal referrals against lawyers and federal officials who played leading roles in the conspiracy, including coup lawyers John Eastman, Rudy Giuliani and Kenneth Chesebro, former Justice Department official Jeffrey Clark, and Trump's chief of staff Mark Meadows.

The criminal referrals go to the Biden Justice Department, which has placed its investigation of January 6 and Trump's withholding of classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago, Florida compound in the hands of Special Counsel Jack Smith.

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In beginning her remarks on Monday, Committee vice-chair and de facto leader Elizabeth Cheney, the neo-con war hawk and daughter of war criminal Dick Cheney, invoked the legacy of her great-great-grandfather, who enlisted in the Union army in 1861 and fought for the entire duration of the war. In raising the Civil War, Cheney, intentionally or not, raised the specter of civil war in the US today. What she did not say was that her Republican Party, which opposed slavery and led the crushing of a slave-owners' insurrection, is now the party of fascist insurrectionists.

That this will not be altered by the committee's investigation and recommendations was made abundantly and immediately clear. The Republican Party, to which Biden and the Democrats incessantly appeal for "unity" and "bipartisanship," recognizes neither the committee nor, for that matter, the Biden administration as legitimate. The Republican National Committee has declared the January 6 insurrection a "legitimate form of political discourse."

Even before the committee had completed its hearing

on Monday, Trump denounced it as a “kangaroo court.” John Eastman, who led the drive to pressure Vice President Mike Pence to reject the electors in swing states that voted for Biden, called the committee’s deliberations “Stalinist.” Republican Representatives Jim Jordan, Scott Perry and Andy Biggs all similarly denounced their ethics referrals as partisan witch-hunting.

In less than two weeks, the Republicans will retake control of the House, having won a narrow majority in last month’s midterm elections. Congressman Kevin McCarthy, also cited by the January 6 Committee, will likely become speaker of the House, making him the second in the line of presidential succession.

Jim Jordan, who was actively plotting with Trump on January 6 as fascist militia forces were overrunning the Capitol, will become chair of the House Judiciary Committee. Biggs, who played a leading role in organizing the “Stop the Steal” demonstrations in Washington, and Perry, who chairs the far-right House Freedom Caucus, will similarly occupy key committee posts.

All of them, and virtually the entire Republican caucus, have pledged to investigate not Trump, but the January 6 Committee, which will go out of existence when the 118th Congress convenes at the New Year, with four of the committee’s nine members leaving Congress.

For its part, the Biden administration has said nothing about the committee’s referrals. At a briefing Monday afternoon, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre repeatedly dodged questions on the committee’s conclusions and recommendations. The Democratic Party-aligned *New York Times* did not even publish an editorial on the committee meeting and referrals.

In line with the policy of the Biden administration and the Democratic Party, the committee’s report seeks to present the coup attempt—and ongoing authoritarian conspiracies—as the work of one man—Trump—along with a handful of Republican “crazies,” whose machinations were thwarted by the majority of the Republican Party, along with the police, the military and the intelligence agencies.

The last three of the 17 specific findings in the committee’s executive summary are largely devoted to covering up and providing alibis for the role of the police, the military and the intelligence agencies,

including Trump’s loyalists in the Pentagon, in facilitating the coup attempt.

The Biden administration in particular wants no serious examination of the social and political forces behind the coup. Its motto on coming into office was the need to build a “strong” Republican Party.

In response to the midterm elections, Biden last month reiterated his pledge to “work with my Republican colleagues,” citing in particular the necessity for continuing the “bipartisan approach of confronting Russia’s aggression in Ukraine.”

Proclaiming an end to “endless political warfare,” Biden stressed “the need to be looking to the future, not fixated on the past.”

For the Democratic Party, opposition to Trump is dictated not by fidelity to democracy, but by the need to maintain support within the GOP to prosecute two wars: First, the imperialist war for global hegemony against its main rivals in Europe and Asia, and, second, its war against the working class at home.

Hence the overnight, bipartisan passage of the bill earlier this month to strip rail workers of their right to strike and impose a company-dictated contract that had been voted down by the workers.

For the American ruling class the preservation of the corporate-controlled two-party system through which it has ruled for nearly two centuries is an existential question. So, too, is the need to build up the repressive apparatus of the state and conceal from the working class its role in preparing the way to dictatorship.

The same conditions that underlie the threat of fascism and dictatorship—the objective crisis of American capitalism, the extreme growth of social inequality, and unending and expanding war—also fuel the growth of the class struggle and the conditions for millions in the US and internationally to grasp that democratic rights can be defended only through a struggle to put an end to capitalism and establish workers’ power and socialism.



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