

Trump's imminent indictment: The political issues

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The issuance of a “target letter” to former President Donald Trump, indicating that he will shortly be indicted on criminal charges arising from his attempt to overturn the 2020 election, including the January 6, 2021 assault on Capitol Hill, brings the long-festering political crisis in the United States to the point of explosion. The 2024 election will be conducted under conditions of an unprecedented crisis of class rule.

Among the potential charges listed in the target letter are obstruction of Congress (the January 6 attack), conspiracy to defraud the United States (by recruiting supporters to file fake certificates as “electors” for the Electoral College) and wire or mail fraud (for soliciting funds from supporters to oppose purported election fraud).

The prosecution of Trump on these charges is entirely legitimate and warranted. The expected indictment relates to the systematic, organized effort by Trump and his closest aides to overturn the 2020 election in a fascistic coup and overthrow the US Constitution. However, the working class cannot entrust the defeat of fascism and defense of democratic rights to the Democratic Party and the courts.

Trump, the frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination, has responded, predictably, by doubling down. He denounced Special Counsel Jack Smith, who issued the letter, as “deranged,” and claimed that Smith was acting on behalf of the White House to remove the main political threat to Biden's reelection. Trump said the letter set a Thursday deadline to appear before a grand jury in Washington D.C., which his lawyers made clear he would not do.

Trump attacked the letter in unhinged terms at a campaign rally in Cedar Rapids, Iowa and in an appearance on Fox News Tuesday night with his longtime media bootlicker Sean Hannity. He repeated

his rabid anticommunist ravings, declaring, “We're going into an almost communistic state, and we may already be there. ... The Department of Justice is totally weaponized.”

As usual, he did not address the subject of his own actions on January 6, 2021, when he brought thousands of his supporters to Washington D.C. and told them to march on Capitol Hill and “fight” to stop congressional certification of his election defeat. The mob stormed through police lines and invaded the Capitol, calling for the blood of Trump's opponents.

The response of congressional Republicans was to treat the target letter as a declaration of war. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, who only days after the January 6 attack spoke on the floor of the House of Representatives to condemn Trump's actions, now parrots Trump's claim of political victimization. Other Republicans call a potential prosecution of Trump for the attempted overthrow of the Constitution a “diversion.”

One obvious question that arises is: Why has it taken this long?

For the past two-and-a-half years, the Democratic Party has worked to avoid any move against Trump related to the January 6 coup, focusing instead on secondary issues or matters bound up with the interests of the military-intelligence apparatus. This is connected to the Biden administration's efforts to promote a “strong Republican Party” and forge a bipartisan agreement to wage war against Russia.

There may be many calculations behind the decision to move now against Trump over January 6. However, for the Democrats and the Biden administration, opposition to Trump has never centered on his violation of the Constitution or his fascistic policies, but on issues of foreign policy. Trump is an imperialist

politician who brought the US to the brink of war with Iran while he was in office. But he has asserted that if elected in 2024, he will end the war in Ukraine against Russia “within 48 hours.” This cuts across the declared intention of the Biden administration to continue and escalate the war until Russia has been defeated and Putin removed.

The indictment of an ex-president for seeking to overthrow the Constitution he was sworn to uphold has enormous historical and international significance. The political system in the United States, the center of global finance capital and the cockpit of imperialist conspiracy, has reached the breaking point. Washington’s claim to lead the “free world” and uphold democracy globally is suffering a shattering blow.

Even if Trump were to be removed from the political scene, it would not resolve the deep-going crisis of American democracy. There are many figures eager to take his place within the Republican Party and within the military-state apparatus.

The extreme decay of democratic forms of rule has deep, objective roots in the protracted crisis of American capitalism. Some 25 years ago, at the time of the impeachment of Democratic President Bill Clinton by the House of Representatives, then as now controlled by the Republican Party, the *World Socialist Web Site* published an editorial statement that posed the question, “Is America drifting towards civil war?”

The statement described the brutal and reactionary character of the Republican Party and the impotence of the Democrats, while explaining that the political straitjacket of the two-party system was increasingly under threat. We wrote:

Even the most subservient media and the most venal politicians cannot make the program of further enriching the wealthy attractive to the broad masses. The period when American politics was limited to a spectrum from conservative to ultraconservative, with socialism banned and even liberalism a dirty word, is coming to an end. The political coup by the radical right wing has already begun to provoke a political response from below.

The statement analyzed the shifts in class relations that preceded the eruption of the political crisis: the decline of the traditional middle classes, the proletarianization and impoverishment of vast layers of the population, the enrichment of a tiny few, the staggering growth of social inequality. A quarter-century later, these processes have reached a limit, with masses of workers moving into struggles that objectively challenge the capitalist profit system.

The Biden administration has committed the US to expanding the war against Russia in Ukraine into a global war of indefinite duration, and both parties have joined to make the working class pay the cost, as indicated in last month’s debt-ceiling agreement, with its down payment of \$1.5 trillion in social cuts.

The imposition of these policies requires police-state measures against the working class.

All of this is under conditions of a rising tide of working class resistance in the US and internationally, with strikes by SAG-AFTRA actors and WGA writers, British Columbia dockworkers, Italian rail workers and UK postal workers, as well as mass anti-government demonstrations in Israel, France, and many other countries, and the looming expiration of contracts covering hundreds of thousands of North American autoworkers and US UPS workers.

Opposition to fascism and dictatorship and opposition to imperialist war depend on the development within this movement of the working class of an independent, socialist political orientation and leadership.



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