

Taiwan's statehood illusion, US imperialism and the "Pro-Palestine" initiative

Shih-Yu Chou
15 July 2024

This essay was submitted to the World Socialist Web Site by Shih-Yu Chou. Now based in Taipei, she acquired her doctorate in politics from Sheffield University.

Solidarity movements organized by working people, students, and youth in defense of Palestine take various forms in different parts of the world. What they have in common is that global solidarity movements unanimously direct their anger at the culpability of imperialist governments that arm, finance, and enable the ongoing genocide in Gaza. This outpouring of international solidarity with Palestine has raised not only unprecedented public awareness of Palestine and imperialist barbarism but also the ire of the imperialist bourgeoisie.

More than nine months into Israel's genocide, only a small minority of Taiwanese working people have been involved in solidarity protests with Palestine. Some are conscious of the role played by US imperialism. They have translated into Chinese investigative reports, interviews, and commentaries from an anti-war perspective to inform the public, while others hold concerts and/or public meetings to raise awareness. Others have set up the Taiwan Alliance for a Free Palestine (TWAFP), an informal coalition of five groups, urging unity around the four demands stated in an online petition. Thus far, well over sixty Taiwanese groups have endorsed the petition.

The petition's specific demands can be summarized as:

- Taiwanese MPs should uphold the country's human rights values "by ceasing to facilitate connections between arms manufacturers and Taiwanese companies" and by "engaging with Israel in human rights and humanitarian advocacy."
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs should cease supplying Israel with resources.
- The Ministry of Economic Affairs should disclose trade in Taiwanese military equipment to Israel and ban the arming and bankrolling of Israel.
- The government should "uphold Taiwan's founding principles" to prevent the country from being embroiled in this ongoing genocide.

While the sympathy signatories of the petition feel for Palestine may be genuine, the core demands worked out by TWAFP only serve to confuse the public. Conspicuous by its absence is any reference to US imperialism with which Taiwan aligns itself. Also absent is an explanation of why Taiwan, which had previously supposedly upheld "founding principles", has suddenly "deviated" from its values by lending support to Israel. Notable in the petition is the claim that "Taiwan refuses to be complicit in the genocide."

So you get the idea. It is Israel's intransigence that is to blame for the rights violations and atrocities. Despite this, working people could settle accounts with Israel through human rights advocacy. No one in their right mind would argue that working people could stop the Holocaust through rights advocacy with the German Reich. The same can be said of the suggestion that Israel's genocide of the Palestinians could be ended through rights advocacy, or what Margaret Thatcher, in relation to apartheid South Africa, called "constructive engagement".

The trap of a "left-right" coalition

TWAFP is advanced as a "left-right" coalition by the opposing forces it unites. Among the initiators are an organization defending migrant worker rights that opposes all Taiwanese and Chinese capitalist parties, along with groups that are either politically aligned with the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) of Taiwan or the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) of China.

The support for the petition by the CCP-aligned group is motivated by its Stalinist line and opportunist considerations. China is Israel's second largest trade partner, only behind the US. China and Israel established diplomatic ties in 1992. From then onward, their relations have "expanded to their great mutual benefit" even though "they are about 6,437 kilometers away from each other", as portrayed by *Xinhua* in 2022, China's state news agency. In short, "China-Israel ties bloom spectacularly."

China's state-owned Shanghai International Port Group operates Haifa new port in Israel. As a maritime gateway to the Middle East and part of the Belt and Road initiative, the port has an annual capacity of handling "1.86 million 20-foot equivalent units." Chinese corporations have been constructing major infrastructure and transportation projects, including building Ashdod, a southern city in Israel, and a key section of Tel Aviv's light rail system.

This explains why, nine months into the Gaza Genocide, *Xinhua* has continued to propagate the two-state delusion and to depict the ongoing genocide in Gaza as the "Palestine-Israel conflict" and/or "the Gaza conflict".

The DPP-aligned groups (hereafter independentists) are known for their pro-imperialist stance, that is "it is a genocide only when the US says so". They have become the most active in bringing this left-right coalition together.

As the independentists have extended an olive branch in the name of promoting freedom and human rights, the other two groups had little difficulty accommodating themselves to them. Very little thought was given to: (1) why working people must confine their "opposition" to the Gaza Genocide to the online petition, press conferences, press releases, PR stunts, and/or moral appeals to two clients states of the US; (2) why it takes a left-right coalition to do things that could have been mobilized on the basis of a single NGO, given the fact that independentists run numerous human rights organizations and media outlets; and (3) who benefits from sinking political differences in order to promote unity.

As independentists have played a leading role in "finding common ground", the wording of the petition inevitably embodies Taiwanese nationalist prejudices hidden behind a "progressive" façade. To see why solidarity with Palestine is incompatible with nationalism of oppressor nations, we must look into Taiwan's role as a frontline state and client of the US during the Cold War and beyond.

Taiwan trained Salvadoran death squad leaders

Taiwan has worked alongside US-backed far-right regimes to enforce social relations under capitalism for decades. This can be traced back to the founding of the World Anti-Communist League (WACL) in 1966. The league held its first conference in Taipei, the Republic of China (ROC) in 1967.

ROC President Chiang Kai-shek, who headed the brutal counter-revolutionary Kuomintang (KMT) regime on mainland China until his defeat and exile following the 1949 revolution, proclaimed the anti-communist struggle was “an historic one between freedom and slavery”. He insisted that “the free people” must never “fight each of their own battles by themselves alone and run the risk of being defeated one by one.” Rather, he insisted they should take concerted action and forge “free world unity” to defeat communism in every corner of the world.

After the Republic of China was booted out of the United Nations in 1971, most countries in the Western bloc gradually established full diplomatic ties with the People’s Republic of China (PRC). From then on, the KMT regime used the WACL as a backchannel to US-backed far-right dictatorships in Latin America.

The KMT regime was happy to expand “freedom” to Latin America through WACL chapters. Selected Salvadoran military officers were given expense-paid trips to Taiwan to learn “unconventional warfare, interrogation, and counterterror tactics” at the Political Warfare Cadres Academy.

Among the graduates was Roberto D’Aubuisson, the Salvadoran death squad leader, CIA asset, and later a presidential candidate in 1984. He was one of the war criminals responsible for killing more than 75,000 people during the Salvadoran civil war (1979–1992), among them many women and children.

D’Aubuisson was infamous for deploying a blowtorch against political prisoners in interrogation sessions and for ordering the killing of Archbishop Óscar Romero.

American poet Carolyn Forché’s *What You Have Heard Is True*, a memoir about her time in El Salvador, recounts forced abduction against the civilian population and the tragic end of *desaparecidos*. They appeared “only in the body dumps, in the morgue, on the roadside, and along the beach”.

Forché explained how death squads subjected their members to discipline in order to act with impunity. “When someone joins a death squad, he is in for life. If you quit, you might talk, and no one wants to be fingered later for these crimes. The first time such a man goes out on an operation, he is tested by the others. They tell him he must rape the victim in front of them, then cut off certain pieces of the body. They want to see if he has the stomach for this. After that, he is as guilty as the others, and he is in.”

Why must each victim of death squads suffer mutilation and die in excruciating agony? “The death squad members must all be guilty of every murder. So one rapes, another strikes blows, another uses the machete, and so on, until it would be impossible to determine which action had caused the death, and the squad members are protected from each other by mutual guilt. Also, when mere death no longer instills fear in the population, the stakes must be raised. The people must be made to see that not only will they die, but [they will] die slowly and brutally.”

Under President Ronald Reagan, the US provided as much as \$1.5 million a day to support the Salvadoran military. Taiwan’s ruling elite was aware of the crimes perpetrated by the Salvadoran state and its death squads. *Taiwan Review*, a mouthpiece of the KMT regime, approvingly

referred to this state-sponsored terrorism as the “anti-communist road to freedom”. The stance taken by the Reagan administration against “communism” was not one of “passive containment” but of “active elimination”, and this offered much “encouragement” to the free world, explained ROC Premier Sun Yun-suan at the 1981 WACL conference.

It was not just D’Aubuisson alone who owed Taiwan a debt of gratitude. Lieutenant Colonel José Domingo Monterrosa Barrios, later Salvadoran Commander of the Armed Forces, was a trainee at the Political Warfare Cadres Academy in 1978. He was responsible for ordering the 1981 El Mozote massacre of over 1,000 Salvadoran civilians, nearly half of them children.

He stated: “What we really admired in Taiwan was... the control [that the government] held over the people. If we could have... organized a unit of political warfare in every field, we could have won against the expansion of communism.” He added: “In Guatemala, the Taiwanese did similar work, and the Guatemalans are applying it today. Another thing we were taught was how to project ourselves to the civilian population and win them over”, according to Scott Anderson and Jon Lee Anderson’s *Inside the League: The Shocking Exposé of How Terrorists, Nazis, and Latin American Death Squads Have Infiltrated the World Anti-Communist League*.

Taiwan’s culpability in the Guatemalan Genocide

The KMT saw training Guatemalan military officers in Taiwan as a service to US imperialism. The US assigned geopolitical significance to Central America, a linchpin for political “stability” in Latin America, due to its proximity to the US. After Guatemala’s democratically elected president, Jacobo Árbenz, was overthrown in a CIA-backed coup in 1954, the US was deeply involved in the country’s civil war (1960–1996).

Taiwan’s alignment with despotic regimes paid off. After the ROC lost its seat as a permanent member of the UN Security Council to the PRC on October 25, 1971, speaker of the Guatemalan Congress Mario Sandoval Alarcon, later Guatemala vice president (1974–1978), visited Taiwan on October 28, 1971 to reaffirm his support for the island country.

Sandoval made numerous trips to Taiwan to strengthen the close-knit “fraternity” among far-right regimes that ran WACL chapters in individual countries. Colonel Elias Ramirez, one of the commanders of death squads in Guatemala City, served as a liaison to the ROC Embassy in Guatemala. The Guatemalan state subsequently sent over an estimated “fifty to seventy” military officers to Taiwan to learn political warfare and the KMT creed, namely “you have to be as cruel as the enemy” to win, as described in *Inside the League*.

Modeling after the KMT regime, the Guatemalan junta saw those who didn’t support the state as “communists” particularly students, teachers, intellectuals, journalists, priests, trade unionists, peasants, and the indigenous population.

As documented in a UN-sponsored report, “Guatemala, Memory of Silence”, in 1999, Guatemala’s Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) estimated that approximately 200,000 people were killed or disappeared during the civil war (1960–1996). Acts of violence carried out by the state constituted acts of genocide, as defined by the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The CEH’s investigation showed that “the rape of women, during torture or before being murdered, was a common practice,” aimed at destroying the “dignity” of victims. Those crimes against the civilian population were not a matter of individual “bad apples”. Some 93% of violations could be attributed to the state. In contrast, leftist guerrillas

were responsible for 3% of the violations; some unidentified groups or individuals accounted for the remaining 4%.

The report continued: while “the Chiefs of Staff for National Defense” within the Army was responsible for these violations, political responsibility ultimately rested with “successive governments”, given the fact that decisions were made “at the highest level of Government in accordance with the National Security Doctrine.”

As in El Salvador, Taiwan was an active player in the Guatemala Genocide. As shown by Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott, and Jane Hunter in *The Iran Contra Connection: Secret Teams and Covert Operations in the Reagan Era*, retired US Army General John Singlaub, later a founder of the US Council for World Freedom (USCWF), the US chapter of the WACL, purported “to speak abroad in the name of Reagan”. He met Guatemalan President Fernando Romeo Lucas García and other officials in 1979 and 1980.

After his return, Singlaub called for a “sympathetic understanding of the death squads” as he was “impressed” by the attempt made by Lucas García’s regime to “promote human rights” in the country. Squad activities surged after Reagan assumed power in January 1981, according to *Inside the League*.

Despite the fact that the UN-sponsored report showed the Mayan Genocide to be “an authentic chapter in Guatemala’s history” with incontrovertible evidence, there has been a deafening silence from the Taiwanese ruling elite about its culpability.

Taiwan aimed to be a Génocidaire

The DPP government took power in May 2000 and was eager to demonstrate its “usefulness” to the US. On March 17, 2003, US President George W. Bush gave Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his two sons a 48-hour deadline to leave the country or face US military action. One day later, the DPP government under Chen Shui-bian rushed to lend support to the impending invasion by issuing an ultimatum to Iraq, the only government to do so besides the US. Taiwan subsequently opened its airspace to the US air force, despite the fact that the US made no such request.

Following the US-led invasion, the DPP government lobbied the US congress hard for the deployment of Taiwanese marines to Iraq through its front group, the Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA).

In close collaboration with Taiwan, co-chairman of the Congressional Taiwan Caucus Dana Rohrabacher and its member Jim Ryun put forward to the US House of Representatives a resolution in May 2004, calling on President Bush to request the deployment of Taiwanese Marines to Iraq. The resolution professed that Taiwan had long shared “the United States’ passion for promoting freedom, democracy, and human rights around the world” and wished to “fight alongside the United States”. Taiwan should be allowed to join “international coalition forces in the global war on terrorism” with “its 35,000 Marines” in Iraq. The deployment of Taiwanese Marines “could reduce the need for involuntary retention of members of the United States Armed Forces and would create positive effects throughout the United States military.”

This “war on terrorism” saga abruptly came to an end after US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia James Kelly made it plain that Taiwanese marines would not be welcome in Iraq during a subcommittee hearing of the House International Relations in June 2004.

It is necessary to take a closer look at those on the receiving ends of US “values” before the 2003 US-UK invasion of Iraq, a war of aggression in which Taiwan volunteered to serve.

After the first Gulf War (August 1990–January 1991), a United Nations

survey team visited Iraq between March 10 and March 17, 1991. The team was shocked to find, in its own words, the “near apocalyptic” decimation of Iraqi society, particularly social infrastructure, the public health system, industries, and cities. The US and the UK rejected the plea made by the team for lifting UN-imposed sanctions against Iraq and for preventing “epidemic and famine”, however. The economic sanctions on Iraq had remained in place until May 22, 2003, and hence prevented the reconstruction of the electricity, water, delivery pipes, sewage, and transport systems.

To compound ordinary Iraqis’ suffering, even imports of chlorine and alum widely used in water purification were banned. With virtually no access to safe drinking water, sanitation, or medicines, hospitals were incapable of treating children plagued by malnutrition and preventable diseases, particularly dysentery, diarrhea, and cholera. In situations where medicines were available, as soon as kids had been discharged from hospitals, they started to drink contaminated water again and fell ill again.

In a 1996 interview with CBS, US ambassador to the UN Madeline Albright, blurted out that “the price” of the deaths of half a million Iraqi children was “worth it.”

A research article, “Sanctions and childhood mortality in Iraq” in the *Lancet*, May 2000, indicated that “infant mortality rose from 47 per 1,000 live births during 1984–89 to 108 per 1,000 in 1994–99”. Phrased differently, one in ten Iraq infants would never see their first birthday. At the turn of the century, the deaths of Iraqi infants and children topped one million.

In 2005, the US political establishment floated the idea of the “Salvadoran option”. As indicated in *Newsweek* on January 7, 2005, US Special Forces teams would serve to “support and possibly train Iraqi squads, most likely hand-picked Kurdish Peshmerga fighters and Shiite militiamen, to target Sunni insurgents and their sympathizers.” As the military and squad operations depleted US ammunition stockpiles, the US then turned to Taiwan for the replenishment of ammunition in the same year. Having a “sympathetic understanding of the death squads”, the DPP government took its cue from the US and then repurposed the island of ex-death squad camps into one of death factories. The Taiwanese political establishment supplied the US with 500 million 5.56 mm and 7.62 mm bullets between 2005 and 2009.

It would be mistaken to think that bullets were less lethal than mortar, artillery rounds, rocket-propelled grenades, booby-traps, and hand grenades. As explained in a *New York Times* report dated August 19, 2009, statistics from half a century of medical research showed that a bullet wound would kill “about one in three people” it injured. This contrasted with the aforementioned munition, which would “kill between 5 and 20 percent of the people they injured”.

Taiwan’s dark past weighs heavily on the present. At a 2023 event held in Taipei celebrating the 40th anniversary of the founding of the FAPA, then Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen praised the front group that had previously sought to tie Taiwan to the 2003 invasion of Iraq for eliciting support from Washington “to jointly safeguard Taiwan” and for playing a key role in the success of “Team Taiwan”. Among those in attendance was John Bolton, one of the prime architects of the Iraq War.

In the lead up to the 2003 invasion, Bolton pressured Brazilian diplomat Jose Bustani, then director general of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, to abandon plans to send chemical weapon inspectors into Iraq or he would jeopardize the safety of his family. As lies told about Saddam Hussein’s Weapons of Mass Destruction would have fallen apart before the invasion, Bolton told the Brazilian diplomat, “We know where your kids live”, according to *the Intercept*.

Bolton represents the social layer with which Taiwan under the DPP has ingratiated itself since 2000, the year the DPP came to power. Such are the actual “founding principles” represented by the Taiwanese ruling elite.

Nationalism fuels division

We now arrive where we began. Demanding an end to Israel's war on Gaza on Nakba Day (May 15, 2024), the independents who initiated TWAFP staged a protest outside of Taiwan's legislature. TaiwanPlus, the country's English-language state media, encapsulated the sentiment and sympathy felt by independentists in this description: "Palestine's battle for statehood resonates with their own as neighboring China claims sovereignty over Taiwan and regularly threatens to take the self-rule island nation by force."

As one protester said, the people of Taiwan and Palestine faced existential threats posed by countries that sought to "deprive them of national identity."

This is not the first time independentists saw "parallels" between Palestine and Taiwan in terms of a quest for statehood hampered by external interference. In a protest held in November 2023 organized by the Taiwan Association for Human Rights, an initiator of TWAFP, a key speaker drew a comparison between the White Terror (1947–1987) inflicted on Taiwanese civilians by the KMT regime and the ongoing genocide perpetrated by Israel while calling for support for Palestine "on the basis of Taiwan's avowed democratic values".

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to explain what the White Terror (1947–1987) was about. The KMT regime took over Taiwan from Japan in October 1945 and was initially greeted as a liberator by the Taiwanese people. As in China, however, KMT officials who ruled Taiwan were generally corrupt through and through and infamous for bandit-style looting. They regarded the ethnic Chinese in Manchuria and Taiwan, who had previously lived under Japanese military rule and colonial occupation, as Japanized people or collaborators and treated them with contempt. This arrogance and authoritarianism provoked widespread anger among workers, peasants, students, intellectuals, and professionals, shocked to find that the KMT regime acted like a conqueror.

The regime put down an anti-government uprising in Taiwan in 1947 by killing and/or jailing tens of thousands. Following its defeat in the Chinese Civil War, Chiang Kai-shek's regime retreated to Taiwan with approximately two million "mainlanders", a term that refers to civilians and troops moved to Taiwan with the KMT's authority. Among them were many poor workers and peasants who were drafted into the KMT Army, used as cannon fodder against the CCP Army, and then exploited as unpaid or cheap dispensable laborers in social infrastructure projects in Taiwan.

The KMT regime subsequently imposed martial law between 1949 and 1987, one of the longest martial law periods in the twentieth century. As in China, the KMT regime was an "equal-opportunity" oppressor in Taiwan. During this period, any correspondence between mainlanders and their parents and siblings in China was an act of treason punishable by the death penalty.

The DPP and its supporters generally lump antagonistic classes and interests together and present all mainlanders as the oppressors during the White Terror and as the most privileged layer.

On this basis they make a comparison between the White Terror and the Gaza Genocide, implying that, similar to Israel, the KMT was a "foreign" power that ruled Taiwan through military force and "settler occupation". In contrast, successive governments under the DPP had supposedly based their rule over Taiwan on "avowed democratic values". This serves to reinforce the false dichotomy between the KMT and the ROC as reactionary forces "external" to the island nation and the US-backed DPP as a "liberal" force "indigenous" to Taiwan.

An article dated June 6, 2024, made explicit what lay behind the so-called "support" for Palestine. It suggested that, like Taiwan's statehood, Palestinian statehood was a fundamental right, not a gift bestowed by

others. It then expressed the concern that the global standing of the US had "suffered" due to its support for Israel. As the war dragged on, "positive perceptions of China" had been on the rise. Given these, "[s]taying silent on Palestine will not advance Taiwan's international status."

This view is essentially an expression of imperialism and bourgeois nationalism in liberal disguise. It is not difficult to see that safeguarding the interests of the imperialist and sub-imperialist bourgeoisie is the last thing that should bother genuine solidarity activists.

As an expression of the interests of the sub-imperialist bourgeoisie, Taiwanese nationalism has never been a legitimate basis for solidarity with oppressed nations. Sharing a commitment to elevating Taiwan's international standing at all costs, the Taiwanese ruling elite and independentists are united by a false victimhood.

Like Israel's "Hasbara" propaganda, the Taiwanese bourgeoisie has depicted the island country as an eternal victim facing annihilation. This analogy is then used to justify Taiwan's collusion with the Axis of Genocide. In contrast, independentists have portrayed Taiwan as Palestine, or an eternal victim of settler colonization and of denial of statehood by its neighbour. This view is then used to justify war drives against China.

The construction of Taiwan as a victim of oppression and aggression rather than an oppressor nation and a destructive force, in the final analysis, is a lie and a source of political reaction, and it is concocted for public consumption.

Glorifying a self-serving image of Taiwan as a beacon of freedom and democracy facing aggression and annihilation, the two seemingly contending representations of Taiwan easily converge into one of perpetual victimhood. Instead of battling against the Taiwanese political establishment, independentists are in unison with the bourgeoisie. Their disagreement over Taiwan performing a dual role as either Israel or Palestine is largely tactical in character. As the false parallel between Palestine and Taiwan has gained traction over time, this independentist tendency will only shift further to the far right.

Solidarity means internationalism

In 1847, Frederick Engels and Karl Marx gave a speech explaining why the emancipation of working people in different countries assumed an international character. Engels, as a revolutionary communist, understood that the bourgeoisie of all countries saw nationalism as a means to divide the working class. To fight for the liberation of the working class, it was essential for the working people to root out nationalism and expose the crimes perpetrated by their "own" bourgeoisie. "A nation", he warned, "cannot become free and, at the same time, continue to oppress other nations. The liberation of Germany cannot therefore take place without the liberation of Poland from German oppression."

Marx further elaborated on how the fraternity of the bourgeois classes worked against the liberation of the international working class. In his words:

The unification and brotherhood of nations is a phrase on the lips of all parties today... A certain kind of brotherhood does... exist among the bourgeois classes of all nations. It is the brotherhood of the oppressors against the oppressed, of the exploiters against the exploited. Just as, despite the competition and conflicts existing between the members of the bourgeoisie, the bourgeois class of one country is united by brotherly ties against the proletariat of

that country, so the bourgeois of all countries, despite their mutual conflicts and competition on the world market, are united by brotherly ties against the proletariat of all countries.

The independentists cannot bring themselves to admit that Taiwan's support for the ongoing genocide in Gaza is no aberration. Taiwan has been fueling genocide since the 1970s, more than half a century before the term "the Axis of Genocide" was coined. This commitment to aiding and abetting genocide in the name of "freedom and democracy" has persisted to this day. It is the "perfectly normal" brotherhood of the oppressors against the oppressed.

It is not in the power of "tyrannical China" to turn torture, blowtorch interrogations, mutilation, rapes, mass murder, the Guatemalan Genocide, and the Salvadoran option in Central America and in Iraq into daily occurrences. Nor is it in China's power to churn out mendacious and hypocritical stories about Taiwan as a defender of freedom, democracy and human rights. Nor is it in China's power to keep Taiwanese people ignorant of the fact that the island country has acted as a reactionary, oppressive, and sub-imperialist power for over half a century.

It is the Taiwanese ruling elite, bourgeois intelligentsia, and media that keep under the rug the crimes perpetrated by the island country at home and abroad and make the Taiwanese populace indifferent to human suffering. This explains why independentists prefer the Taiwanese ruling elite's "engagement with Israel in human rights and humanitarian advocacy" to an independent political mobilization of working people and why US imperialism remains the great unmentionable.

The claim, as set out in the TWAFP petition, that "Taiwan refuses to be complicit in the genocide" is not about demanding an end to Taiwan's complicity in the ongoing Gaza genocide. Rather, it serves to exonerate Taiwan, which never admits its culpability for the past and ongoing genocides.

Clouded in ambiguity, this stance also serves to shore up the empty "left" and "socialist" posturing favored by the CCP-aligned group. Confined within the framework of Chinese Stalinism, this tendency simply cannot see the struggle for the genuine liberation of both Palestinian and Israeli working people as anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and internationalist in character.

In closing, genuine solidarity requires a conscious struggle on the part of workers to see nationalism as a prison for the masses and a tool of the bourgeoisie to subordinate and disarm the proletariat. If we are to build a solidarity movement in defense of Palestine and all oppressed nations, we must oppose every kind of nationalism by making a decisive break with our "own" bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie of all countries and by fighting for socialist internationalism.

As Marx and Engels demonstrated in words and in deeds, solidarity means that the oppressed unite, not with their oppressors, and hence leaves no space for opportunism. It is the duty of internationalists to struggle against nationalist prejudices prevalent in society and fight for a principled stance against the oppressor classes without fear of being in a minority position. Either you are an internationalist or you ain't. You cannot fake it, however cunning a nationalist you are. It is as simple as that.

*Many thanks to Chien-Yi Lu, John Smith, and Chris Marsden for commenting on an earlier draft. Any mistakes and omissions are mine.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact