

Trump's call for the “annihilation” of Yemen and the US war to subjugate the Middle East

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As the Trump administration doubles down on its plans to ethnically cleanse and annex the Gaza Strip, the US has launched a new military offensive targeting Yemen and ultimately Iran as part of a systematic escalation of the US-Israeli war to reshape the Middle East under Washington's domination.

On Sunday, the US military launched a major attack on Yemen, the impoverished country of 34.7 million people located in the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula, followed by days of continuous bombardment.

On Wednesday, President Donald Trump pledged to “completely annihilate” Yemen, declaring, “It’s not even a fair fight, and never will be. They will be completely annihilated.” He proceeded to threaten Iran, saying it will “suffer the consequences, and those consequences will be dire!”

By declaring his intent to “annihilate” Yemen, Trump invoked the words of his political role model, Adolf Hitler. On March 30, 1941, Hitler told his assembled generals that the war Nazi Germany was planning against the Soviet Union would be a “*Vernichtungskampf*,” or a “struggle of annihilation.” True to his promise, Hitler waged the war to destroy the Soviet Union, involving the systematic massacre and starvation of the civilian population, leading to the deaths of over 30 million people.

Trump’s threat to “annihilate” a small impoverished country on the other side of the world expresses the degree to which the language of genocide, the operative concept of the US-Israeli effort to expel the people of Gaza from their land through massacres and starvation, increasingly defines broader areas of American foreign policy. Trump is vowing to treat all resistance to direct US colonial subjugation in the way that its Israeli client treats the Palestinians: through extermination.

Before the Gaza genocide, Yemen was the world’s leading example of the deliberate mass starvation of civilians at the behest of the imperialist powers. Between 2015 and 2022, Yemen was subjected to a Saudi-US campaign of bombardment and deliberate starvation that led to the deaths of as many as 400,000 people. As Kamel Jendoubi, the chairperson of a UN expert group on Yemen, said in 2020, “Civilians in Yemen are not starving, they are being starved,” citing the deliberate US-backed blockade of Yemen’s ports by Saudi Arabia.

At the time, the conduct of Saudi Arabia in Yemen was

recognized as criminal even by the governments funding and arming its military. In the November 2019 presidential debate, Joe Biden accused the Saudis of “going in and murdering children, and they’re murdering innocent people,” adding, “they have to be held accountable.” He pledged, “[w]e’re not going to, in fact, sell more weapons to them.”

But that is precisely what Biden did upon assuming the presidency. He sold the despotic Saudi regime \$650 million in missiles in 2021 and subsequently lifted all restrictions on arms sales to the kingdom. In 2022, Biden proceeded to give a public fist bump to de facto Saudi ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the man who orchestrated the 2018 murder of Jamal Khashoggi, a long-term US resident and journalist for the *Washington Post*. Bin Salman’s barbaric regime presided over the highest number of executions in Saudi history during 2024, when more than 300 people were put to death.

The immediate context of the renewed US assault on Yemen is the systematic scrapping of any pretense by Israel, with the support of the United States, that it is working toward a “ceasefire” in Gaza.

After having carried out daily attacks over the two-month period during which a ceasefire was nominally in force, killing hundreds of people, Israel has now abandoned any adherence to the “ceasefire.” Nineteen days ago, Israel blocked the entry of all food, water and medical care into Gaza. This week, it renewed its full-scale aerial bombardment of Gaza, killing over 400 people in a single day on Tuesday.

Under the terms of the “ceasefire” negotiated two months ago, Yemen’s Houthi movement, which controls territory that is home to 60 percent of the country’s people, suspended attacks on shipping transiting the Red Sea. In response to Israel’s imposition of the total blockade of food, water, fuel and medical supplies on Gaza, the Houthi government said it would target Israeli ships in the Red Sea.

The US has, in turn, seized upon this warning by the Houthis to renew its assault on Yemen as part of a military escalation throughout the wider Middle East. Figures within the Trump administration are openly advocating a direct attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities.

For over four decades, American imperialism has been determined to reverse the consequences of the Iranian

Revolution of 1978-79, which destroyed the bloodstained tyranny of the US stooge Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi.

The September 11, 2001 terror attacks provided a pretext for the launching of a massive military operation in the Middle East aimed at restoring direct US domination over the region.

Following the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, US President George W. Bush proclaimed an “Axis of Evil” including Iraq and Iran. “This campaign will not be finished on our watch, yet it must be, and it will be, waged on our watch,” he declared. Bush’s proclamation was followed the next year by the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

At the time of the 9/11 attacks, Gen. Wesley Clark said a decision had been made to go to war with “seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and then finishing off Iran.”

The Bush administration was only able to carry out full-scale invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. But the Obama administration launched regime change operations in Libya and Syria, succeeding in overthrowing the Libyan government in 2011. The Syrian government—after over a decade of war—was brought down in December 2024.

In 2006, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, praising that year’s US-supported Israeli invasion of Lebanon, proclaimed the “New Middle East” in which the US would wage war against countries aligned with Iran with increased violence.

Rice’s term—the “New Middle East”—has been the watchword of the regime of Benjamin Netanyahu in carrying out the Gaza genocide and waging war throughout the region. Just days before the Hamas-led uprising of October 7, 2023, Netanyahu travelled to the United Nations to display a map showing Israel annexing the entire territory of Palestine. Netanyahu declared, “we’ll build a new corridor … that connects Asia through the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel, to Europe.”

The broader framework of this effort to impose direct US colonial control over the Middle East is the US effort to position itself for a looming conflict with China. The Middle East is home to 50 percent of the world’s proven oil reserves and 40 percent of its proven natural gas reserves.

Perhaps even more importantly, approximately 9 percent of the world’s sea traffic and 20 percent of the world’s container traffic passes through the chokepoint of the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, which connects the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Yemen occupies the entire eastern and northern shorelines of this critical waterway.

As Bloomberg explained:

Massive volumes of crude oil, diesel, natural gas, other petroleum products and bulk commodities from the Middle East and India travel through the Red Sea on their way to Europe, as it’s the shortest route between these regions. Western sanctions on Russia following its

full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 turned the Red Sea into part of a vital trade artery for crude flowing in the other direction as well, as Moscow is now selling the lion’s share of its petroleum to Asia.

Under Trump, US imperialism is seeking to seize and dominate the key chokepoints of global trade in order to prepare for conflict with China. This includes not only the domination of the Red Sea but also Trump’s plan to seize the Panama Canal and annex Canada and Greenland to control a future Northwest passage through the Arctic.

Global war and the drive to establish a dictatorship at home are essential components of Trump’s program. Trump seeks, through unlimited military violence and the use of coercive economic tools like tariffs, to secure American global domination, principally against China.

His escalation of war is inseparable from the frontal assault on the working class being carried out by his administration, which is aiming to liquidate the bedrock social programs of Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security and use the proceeds for rearmament and bank bailouts.

None of this can be done without the turn to dictatorial forms of rule. The Trump administration has sought to slander opponents of US foreign policy as “terrorists,” using the police state machinery of the US immigration system to illegally detain and deport them. As Trump’s war throughout the Middle East escalates, including the potential direct targeting of Iran, this campaign to silence all opposition to the policies of his administration will extend to American citizens as well.

Trump’s plans for global war require the erection of a dictatorship and the impoverishment of the working class. For this reason, the struggle against his administration cannot be limited either to opposition to the Gaza genocide or his attack on democratic rights.

The only social force capable of stopping Trump’s efforts to create a dictatorship in the United States is the working class. The central task is building a socialist leadership in the working class, armed with the theoretical program of Marxism, so that it can be mobilized in an industrial and political struggle to put an end to imperialist war and the capitalist profit system that is the root cause of war. The Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) are in the forefront of this struggle.



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