

# American imperialism wages war of extermination against Iran

WSWS Editorial Board  
5 March 2026

As the war enters its fifth day, the US-Israeli assault on Iran has assumed ever more openly the character of a war of annihilation and extermination.

The sinking of an Iranian vessel more than 3,000 kilometers from Iran—carried out in international waters on Wednesday—is the latest act in a boundless campaign of destruction that recognizes no legal or geographic restraint. The vessel had 180 people on board, and the Sri Lankan navy rescued 32 people, meaning that 148 people were killed.

In the opening days of the war, the United States and Israel murdered a large section of the Iranian leadership, including Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Tehran and other cities have been hammered by repeated air attacks. Hospitals have been hit. A girls' elementary school in Minab was struck, killing over 150 children, part of a death toll that has already passed 1,000.

There is a repeated refrain in the media that Trump “does not have a strategy.” This is a lie. There is a strategy: the obliteration of Iran as a state and a campaign of terror against the population. The methods pioneered by the United States and Israel in Gaza are now being scaled up from an enclave of 2 million people to a country of more than 90 million.

This is the next stage in an expanding global offensive—following the assault on Venezuela and the strangulation of Cuba—in which the United States, utilizing its bought-and-paid-for attack dog Israel, seeks to break up and subjugate any society that resists imperialist domination.

Civilian casualties are not a byproduct of “military objectives.” Mass murder is the aim. On Wednesday, the White House published a video that opens with imagery drawn from the Call of Duty video game franchise, then shifts into a remix of infrared strike footage—American bombs detonating across Iran—edited like a highlight reel. After the “kills,” a score flashes on screen. That is, the

“success” of the US-Israeli operation will be determined by how many people are slaughtered.

Every statement made by Trump and his “Secretary of War” Pete Hegseth is saturated with criminality and the language of fascism. On Wednesday, Hegseth gave a news briefing in which he gloated over the slaughter. “We are punching them while they’re down, which is exactly how it should be,” he said. He promised “death and destruction from the sky all day long,” waged “decisively, devastatingly and without mercy.”

Hegseth sadistically tallied the dead: “Iran’s senior leaders are dead. The so-called governing council that might have selected a successor, dead.” And he made clear the killing will not stop: “We will find them, and we will kill them.”

Hegseth announced plans for a saturation bombing campaign against the entire Iranian people. “With complete control of the skies, we will be using 500-pound, 1,000-pound and 2,000-pound GPS and laser-guided precision gravity bombs, of which we have a nearly unlimited stockpile.”

He gloated over the sinking of the Iranian ship in the Indian Ocean, a clear violation of international law. In a Pentagon briefing the day before, Hegseth boasted that there will be “no stupid rules of engagement.” This is a statement that international law does not apply. It is a declaration of intent to wage war as the Nazis did.

The fascistic character of this war is being reinforced through the systematic infusion of Christian-nationalist propaganda. The *Guardian* reports that commanders are urging troops to be told that the war against Iran is “all part of God’s divine plan” and citing the Book of Revelation and “Armageddon.” According to one complaint from a soldier, troops were told that Trump had been “anointed by Jesus to light the signal fire in Iran to cause Armageddon and mark his return to Earth,” i.e., to trigger apocalyptic events through systematic

extermination.

The European powers are eager accomplices in this unfolding war of extermination. German Chancellor Merz, standing beside Trump at the White House Tuesday, declared: “We are on the same page in terms of getting this terrible regime in Tehran away.” Britain has deployed F-35 fighters. NATO Secretary General Rutte declared the bombing did not violate international law.

The Democratic Party, while quibbling over procedure, parrots the talking points of the Trump administration and facilitates this genocidal war. The Senate vote Wednesday on a War Powers resolution was a political charade from the start—designed not to stop the war but to provide a fig leaf for their support of it.

At a House Democratic Leaders press conference Wednesday, every speaker echoed the administration’s talking points. Representative Ted Lieu denounced “a murderous, theocratic regime.” Representative Houlihan declared: “I don’t mourn those leaders.” Representative Goodlander called Iran “a brutal and determined enemy... a regime that has the blood of our fellow Americans on its hands.”

All of this demonstrates that the war against Iran is not an improvisation dreamed up in Trump’s head. It is the final iteration of a chain of imperialist wars launched over the last 35 years: the Gulf War; the decade-long sanctions siege of Iraq; the 2003 invasion and occupation; the war in Afghanistan; the destruction of Libya; the CIA-backed regime change operation in Syria; the expansion of US operations across the Middle East; and the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

What unites these crimes is a single counterrevolutionary aim: to undo and reverse the setbacks suffered by imperialism in the 20th century as a result of the revolutionary and anti-colonial movements of the oppressed masses.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio spelled out this reactionary program last week. Speaking at the Munich Security Conference, he declared that ever since the end of World War II—that is, since the defeat of the Nazis—the “great Western empires” had entered into “terminal decline, accelerated by godless communist revolutions and by anti-colonial uprisings.” The imperialist powers, he lamented, had been “shackled by guilt and shame,” and by casting off these restraints, the “West’s age of dominance” could be resurrected.

In his press conference on Wednesday, Hegseth ranted about “47 years”—a reference to the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which overthrew a US-backed dictatorship and

shattered Washington’s direct control over the Persian Gulf. American imperialism is now determined to exact “payback” against Iran by reasserting imperialist dominion over one of the world’s most strategic regions.

There is no “dividing line” that confines these methods to one battlefield or one people. The same methods will be employed everywhere imperialism encounters resistance: Cairo and Karachi, Nairobi and Lagos, Istanbul and Jakarta, Moscow and Beijing, Seoul and Manila, Mexico City and Johannesburg.

Workers in America, in Germany, in Britain and in all the imperialist countries see their own future in the streets of Tehran. Within the United States, this foreign policy gangsterism is inseparable from the assault on democratic rights and the erection of a presidential dictatorship. A government that claims the right to murder foreign leaders and wage war without law will not tolerate opposition at home. The methods of violence and murder—already employed in Minneapolis—are being readied for broader use against all resistance to the dictates of the corporate and financial oligarchy.

The very brutality of the assault expresses an element of desperation: A ruling class that cannot secure its aims through political means turns to mass murder to intimidate and break resistance. But this war will not crush the Iranian people. Each day this war continues deepens anger and outrage among workers and youth throughout the world—and within the United States itself.

Outrage, however widespread, is not enough. The decisive question is the development of a political perspective, a conscious program, and the independent mobilization of the international working class—the only social force capable of stopping the descent into barbarism.

The *World Socialist Web Site* will hold an emergency global webinar this Sunday, March 8, at 3:00 p.m. EDT to explain the origins of this war, the social forces driving it and the strategy required to stop it. We urge all readers to distribute this statement as widely as possible, attend the meeting, and help build a conscious, organized movement against imperialist war and dictatorship.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**