The war against Iran will intensify the class struggle

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Nearly 3,800 meatpacking workers are walking off the job today at the JBS plant in Greeley, Colorado, one of the largest beef processing facilities in the United States. Workers voted 99 percent in favor of strike action last month, protesting poverty wages and unsafe conditions. It is the largest strike of meatpacking workers in the United States since the bitter 1985–86 Hormel strike in Austin, Minnesota.

Many of the Greeley workers are recent immigrants from Haiti and Somalia, who are under direct threat from the deportation machine of the Trump administration. They voted to strike anyway. The Greeley workers' courage and determination reflect the explosive state of class relations in America.

The meatpacking strike begins against the backdrop of war. Two weeks ago, the United States and Israel launched its criminal war of aggression against Iran, which is rapidly spiraling into a regional and global conflict.

The causes of this war are multiple and complex. Iran has long been a target of American imperialism, which has waged a decades-long campaign to dominate the oil resources of the Middle East. The attempt to overthrow the Iranian government, through assassination and mass slaughter, is bound up with the offensive of the American ruling class against China and the drive for global hegemony.

However, a major factor is the social crisis within the United States. Throughout history, regimes that confront deep internal crises have sought to resolve them through war. The McKinley administration launched the Spanish-American War of 1898 amid intense class conflict and the aftermath of economic depression; Tsarist Russia's interior minister, Vyacheslav Plehve, advocated war with Japan in 1904 on the grounds that "what this country needs is a short, victorious war to stem the tide of revolution"—a calculation that received its appropriate response in the revolution of 1905.

The most catastrophic expressions of this tendency, however, belong to the twentieth century's two world wars. The ruling classes of Europe in 1914 viewed war as a means of drowning the rising tide of working class struggle in nationalist patriotism. The war itself gave rise to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and revolutionary upheavals across Europe. In relation to World War II, Hitler's relentless campaign of militarization and aggression was driven by both the imperatives of German imperialism and, as historian Tim Mason has noted, the effort to avert "collapse and chaos" at home.

The actions of the Trump administration reflect similar pressures. Consider the issues that dominated the first two months of 2026. In January and February, the United States was shaken by a wave of social protests, which followed the massive "No Kings" demonstrations last year. The trigger was the deployment of some 3,000 federal immigration agents into Minneapolis–Saint Paul, culminating in the killing of Renée Nicole Good, shot dead by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent on January 7. On January 23, tens of thousands of people in Minneapolis braved temperatures of -30°F to march in protest. There were growing calls for a general strike, which emerged not from the trade union apparatus or the Democratic Party, but from below.

The response of the Trump administration and its Gestapo agents in ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) was to murder Alex Pretti. Protests spread throughout the country, along with a nationwide wave of high school student walkouts. According to one tally, there were 334 walkouts in 2026 alone, in 236 school districts across 48 states and the District of Columbia.

Simultaneously, a significant strike movement was developing in the working class, which the apparatus of the trade unions worked desperately to contain. In New York City, 15,000 nurses struck for over a month. On January 26, 31,000 nurses and healthcare workers at Kaiser Permanente walked out in an open-ended strike in California and Hawaii, one of the largest healthcare strikes in American history. On February 9, 6,400 San Francisco teachers walked out for higher wages and adequate school funding.

The eruption of social protest and strike action expresses the accumulated consequences of decades of massive social inequality and an unprecedented concentration of wealth in the hands of an oligarchy. The ruling class is carrying out a jobs bloodbath, while demanding that workers accept falling living standards and deepening insecurity. The United States confronts a massive and unsustainable expansion of public and private debt, mounting threats to the global reserve status of the dollar, and renewed inflationary pressures that are devouring

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wages.

The Trump administration, led by a convicted felon, is hated by growing sections of the population. A Pew Research Center survey conducted in late January found Trump's approval rating at just 37 percent, with fully 50 percent of Americans saying his administration's actions have been worse than they expected. Trump has now spent an entire year with a negative net approval rating.

The release of millions of documents from the Jeffrey Epstein files has not only provided further evidence of Trump's venality, it has also exposed the moral rot of the American ruling class and its political representatives in both parties. In attempting to "change the subject" through war, Trump is acting as the representative of the capitalist oligarchy.

The Democrats are deeply implicated in the policies and crimes of the Trump administration. They are a sham opposition. They support the war against Iran and the overthrow of its government. As the war drive accelerated, Democratic leaders worked to secure the passage of massive military spending measures. And as protests erupted against ICE repression and political violence, Democratic officials reached an agreement with Trump.

Included in the collaborationist frenzy of the Democrats was New York City mayor and Democratic Socialists of America member Zohran Mamdani, who in the months leading up to the war met twice with Trump, including once just two days before the bombing began.

Trump wants to change the subject. The media wants to change the subject. The Democrats want to change the subject. But war is intensifying rather than diminishing the internal crises. The war against Iran is massively unpopular from the start. The economic consequences have been immediate and severe, including soaring oil prices. The $11.3 billion spent in the first six days of the conflict alone represents a massive diversion of social resources that will be paid for through an assault on social programs. Opposition will grow as the war expands and the death toll mounts.

At the opening of the Iraq War in 2003, the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote:

> Whatever the outcome of the initial stages of the conflict that has begun, American imperialism has a rendezvous with disaster. It cannot conquer the world. It cannot reimpose colonial shackles upon the masses of the Middle East. It will not find through the medium of war a viable solution to its internal maladies. Rather, the unforeseen difficulties and mounting resistance engendered by war will intensify all of the internal contradictions of American society.

In the more than two decades since those lines were written, the "internal maladies" of American society have metastasized. Trump, the gangster in the White House, is himself a product and personification of this reality. The war against Iran, in all its brutal criminality, as well as the government waging it, reveal a capitalist oligarchy hurtling toward catastrophe and a social order that is exhausting all political legitimacy.

The scale of the crisis conditions the increasingly reckless actions of the government.The conspiracy for dictatorship that found expression in the murders of American citizens in Minneapolis continues. In Iran, the administration has declared that "nothing is off the table"—a phrase that, from a government with the largest nuclear arsenal in the world, must be taken literally.

But the same contradictions that produce war and dictatorship also intensify class conflict. The war does not change the content of the struggles that erupted in the first months of 2026. It gives them greater urgency. The strike now beginning at the JBS plant in Greeley, Colorado is a powerful indication that opposition is deepening and expanding in the working class.

What is required is to unify these struggles—over wages, exploitation and inequality—with the defense of democratic rights, the fight against dictatorship, and opposition to the escalating and catastrophic war.

This cannot be done through the Democratic Party, the corporate media, or the trade union apparatus, which works systematically to isolate strikes, suppress opposition, and subordinate workers to the needs of the state and the corporations. It requires breaking free of the stranglehold of the bureaucracy and building rank-and-file committees in every workplace and industry, linked up across regions and borders.

The Socialist Equality Party calls for the expansion of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) as the means of organizing this independent power of the working class. The fight against war is inseparable from the fight against the capitalist system that produces it. The alternative is barbarism—war, repression and social devastation—or socialism: the political mobilization of the working class to take power, dismantle the war machine, end the rule of the oligarchy, and reorganize economic life on the basis of human need, not private profit.

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