Fight war, oligarchy and climate catastrophe! Fight for socialism!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (UK)
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To find out about our events visit the International Youth and Students for Social Equality campaign page here.

A world at war—the new imperialist carve-up

Students begin the new term at a time when war with Russia is discussed in matter-of-fact terms in the media, the imperialist offensive against Iran is exploding again, and the fascistic Israeli government is preparing to complete the Gaza genocide through the total removal of the Palestinians.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed in the war in Ukraine. NATO built the country up as a far-right garrison state from which to strike at Russia. Vladimir Putin, head of a vicious capitalist oligarchy, responded with a reactionary invasion to preserve its interests against imperialist encroachment.

Ever since, the situation has come closer to direct conflict between NATO and Russia, with threats escalating on both sides. The UK's Labour government has played a particularly provocative role, including by providing Ukraine with long-range missiles for strikes on targets deep inside Russia.

Israel's genocide of the Palestinians, ongoing in Gaza and the West Bank under the cover of a fraudulent "ceasefire", proceeds alongside the occupation of Lebanon. Overseen by the imperialist powers, above all the United States, it is part of plans to bring the Middle East fully under their control.

America's war against Iran has the same objective. It is one front of a new explosion of imperialist violence—targeting not only Russia and the Middle East but Venezuela, Cuba, and ultimately China—aimed at seizing resources, profits and geostrategic advantage around the world. Global military spending is a fever chart of the crisis, surging 41 percent in the last decade.

Young people, strongly opposed to fighting what they recognise as wars for the rich, are faced with conscription and political repression. Major protests have been held in Germany against military service. In Ukraine, our comrade, 27-year-old Bogdan Syrotiuk, has been sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment for his socialist, anti-war politics.

Rule by the oligarchy—austerity and repression

Imperialist wars abroad are coupled with class war at home. Students will graduate into a society ransacked by the capitalist oligarchy. Graduate vacancies hit their lowest level in a decade in July, reflecting a jobs market which has abandoned one million young people (and rising) without a job, education or training.

Swathes of what were once considered good and secure jobs are threatened by AI, a technology whose potential for improving society is turned by capitalism into a force for mass layoffs, speedups and environmental degradation.

Social welfare, especially for young people, is on the chopping block, as the ruling class demands austerity to pay the government's creditors and for rearmament. Keir Starmer's government was junked by the financial aristocracy and the military lobby because it failed to make these cuts fast and deep enough. Andy Burnham has been given the same ultimatum and is preparing to act on it.

Meanwhile, the cost-of-living crisis deepens. The impact of the Iran war alone is expected to deliver a £2,400 hit to households across 2026-7. Far worse is threatened by an economic crisis on a scale dwarfing that of 2008, as the AI bubble grows to bursting point and government debt levels reach unprecedented highs.

The ruling class knows the mass social opposition its wars and economic crises bring and is preparing police-state measures and far-right political forces to meet it. Scores of young people have been tried and branded terrorists for direct action protest against a genocide. Major demonstrations have been hit with police restrictions and mass arrests. Strikes have been served with court orders.

Reform UK, like the French National Rally, Alternative for Germany and countless other examples internationally, is being lined up to wage a savage war against the working class begun with anti-migrant and benefit claimant scapegoating.

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Climate catastrophe—profits for the rich, disaster for the poor

The insanity of capitalist war is matched only by that of capitalism-driven climate change, which threatens the health, lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions around the world. The clock is being run down on the time humanity has left to secure a liveable planet for future generations.

Europe has been battered by unprecedented heatwaves and droughts, leading to tens of thousands of deaths and billions in economic damage. What is likely to be the hottest year on record in 2027 threatens more mass starvation and displacement, concentrated in the poorest parts of the globe. International agencies have already warned of an additional 50 million people forced into acute hunger.

Corporations and governments have largely given up on the pretence of climate action, openly pursuing vast profits at the expense of human lives and the natural world. Earlier this month, the UN published new forecasts for global temperature rises in the next decades, the lowest of which was 1.8°C—smashing through the 1.5°C "limit" supposedly set by the Paris Agreement.

Even this is a pipe dream. Net zero financing and climate adaptation targets are being missed by trillions of dollars a year. Forecasts based on current policies put the average global temperature rise by the end of the century between 2.3°C and 2.8°C, a global disaster in our lifetimes.

Social inequality, the private ownership of production and the obscene fortunes of a few are the source of this catastrophe. The world's richest 1 percent have the same combined carbon footprint as the poorest *two-thirds* of humanity. To appeal to these forces to put a stop to carbon emissions and other environmental catastrophes is like discussing vegetarianism with a pack of hungry wolves.

Socialism—what it is and how to fight for it

These experiences have generated a groundswell of popular protest and struggle. Millions have taken to the streets to protest the Gaza genocide. A wave of strikes was launched against the cost-of-living crisis coming out of the pandemic. Before Covid, millions of young people across the world were driving a protest movement against the climate crisis.

The problem is not a lack of opposition, but of political perspective. People are rejecting capitalism and turning towards socialism in numbers unprecedented for generations. But they are being led to defeat by the likes of Jeremy Corbyn, Zack Polanski and their international counterparts, who put themselves forward as the answer.

Corbyn has now consummated his ten years of betrayal of left-wing sentiment with the debacle that is Your Party. Polanski's double-talk on NATO, bond markets and the Labour Party line him up to do the same. Their role is best underscored by the experience in Venezuela, where the "Bolivarian socialism" of Hugo Chavez has delivered the country's working class to American imperialism.

These movements failed because they were based on national programmes aimed at reforming capitalism. But a ruling class driven to war and dictatorship by fierce competition and economic and social crisis cannot be pressured or persuaded. It can only be defeated, and only by a world revolution that topples capitalist states and expropriates the oligarchy.

Plenty of organisations on campus will provide pseudo-socialist arguments for lending semi-critical support to Your Party, the Greens, and even the Labour Party, on the basis that they are the best there is. We reject this perspective entirely.

The global crisis is preparing an almighty movement in the international working class. This social force, numbering in the billions, will mount increasingly determined fights against right-wing governments and the major corporations. If these struggles are to succeed, then they must acquire a revolutionary socialist programme and leadership based on the lessons of the twentieth century.

Developing that leadership is the work of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE)—the youth section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement. Trotskyism is the continuation of Marxism in the 21st century, founded in the struggle to defend the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the programme of world socialist revolution on which it was based against the nationalist degeneration represented by Stalin.

Through meetings, lectures, film screenings, classes and campaigns, we will create the conditions on campus for students to learn this history, develop as revolutionaries, and take their place in the fight for socialism. Sign up here at the IYSSE campaign page today!

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