

Phony “Peace Talks” Cannot Erase the Palestinian Liberation Struggle

George W. Bush visited Jerusalem on January 9 in an attempt to reinitiate phony “peace talks” while Israel continues to escalate violence and terror against the Palestinian people.

The fraud of the so-called “peace talks” can be seen not only in the fact that Israel carries out daily military operations in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza, but it can also be seen in the fact that Israel continues to build settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem. It can be seen in the fact that Israel continues to build an apartheid wall throughout the West Bank, in the fact that it continues to choke off Gaza, depriving the people of the most elemental necessities, such as food, water, and electricity, etc. In short, it can be seen in the fact that Israel continues to carry out a program of genocide against the Palestinian people.

U.S. imperialism is the author and organizer of this aggression. It is the U.S. government that finances Israel to the tune of \$5 billion per year. It is the U.S. government that provides the political support, the “peace talks” themselves being one of the means through which U.S. imperialism attempts to provide shelter and space for Israel to continue its war and expansion.

First of all, neither the “framework” for the current talks which was laid out at the Annapolis meeting in November 2007, nor the “roadmap for peace” upon which the framework is based, call for Israel to end the occupation and war. Nor does it call for Israel to end the building of settlements in the occupied territories.

On the other hand, the very starting point of “negotiations” is the requirement that Palestinians renounce all resistance to the brutal Israeli occupation. Any Palestinian organization that does not give in to this impos-

sible demand is labeled “militant, extremist, terrorist,” etc., and a legitimate target of escalating Israeli military repression. And at the very height of cynicism, “negotiations” that pay lip service to the creation of a “Palestinian state” are carried out without Hamas, the elected representatives of the Palestinians people.

Bush makes very clear that when he uses the words “Palestinian state” he does not mean an independent Palestinian state, but rather he means a neo-colonial administration completely under the domination of the U.S.-Israeli aggressors. In particular, he has used the occasion of the “peace talks” to renew his calls for all-out war against Hamas and other Palestinian resistance organizations and to impose the blackmail that any Palestinian government or institution must actively participate in the

war to receive a seal of approval from the U.S. and Israel.

In short, the “peace talks” are designed to legalize Israeli domination over all of Palestine and they are part of a program that aims at liquidation of the Palestinian national liberation struggle.

These aims are of high importance to U.S. imperialism at this time because in order to carry out its wars against Iraq and Afghanistan, in order to make good on its threats against Iran, in order to re-colonize the entire region, it seeks to crush any and all resistance. It especially seeks to secure its base in Israel as the lynchpin in this strategy. Thus the Palestinian liberation struggle has long been and continues to be a thorn in its side and U.S. imperialism is again

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2007 War Escalation Brings Most Deaths Ever to Afghanistan

According to an Associated Press (AP) report released in late 2007, over 6,500 people were killed in Afghanistan in 2007. This count is the highest of any year since the U.S. invasion in 2001. The count is bound to be low as it was obtained from Western and Afghan officials.

This tragedy is the result of the U.S. escalation of the brutal war and troop surge. In 2007, U.S. troop presence increased by 4,000 bringing it to a total of over 26,000.

An additional 26,000 NATO troops under U.S. command occupy the country, making the total number of foreign troops in Afghanistan more than 52,000. The numbers of armed occupation forces under U.S. command is much higher than these fig-

ures reveal. As in Iraq, the Pentagon is employing private military contractors in Afghanistan. In addition, there is a current total of 70,000 Afghan police, and U.S.-NATO occupation forces plan to step up training efforts during 2008.

According to the AP, in just the first 6 months of 2007 the U.S. and NATO carried out more than 1,000 airstrikes in Afghanistan. The savagery of the U.S.-NATO offensives have been so severe that even the U.S. puppet President Hamid Karzai had to protest, “Our innocent people are becoming victims of careless operations of NATO and international forces.”

Venezuela Attends 4th Annual Petrocaribe Summit in Cuba

The following is excerpted from an article by Kiraz Janicke which appeared in venezuelanalysis.com, December 23, 2007.

The 4th Summit of Petrocaribe, a regional energy organization initiated by Venezuela, concluded in the Cuban city of Cienfuegos Friday, with member nations signing new agreements to promote economic and social development and regional energy integration.

During his opening speech Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez presented member nations with the option of paying for low-cost oil with goods and services instead of cash, based on the model of Cuba, which

provides thousands of doctors to treat poor patients in Venezuela in exchange for around 93,000 barrels of oil per day.

Slamming U.S. imposed free trade agreements as "the road to hell" Chavez said that Petrocaribe aims to "resolve asymmetrical access to energy resources through a plan of favorable, equitable and just exchange."

Petrocaribe is creating a "new geopolitics of oil" that serves the people's interests, and not those of imperialists or big corporations, Chavez said.

In addition to the 93,000 barrels to Cuba, through Petrocaribe Venezuela provides for the distribu-

tion of a further 53,000 barrels of oil and derivatives per day under favorable conditions of payment to member nations allowing them up to 25 years for repayment with 1 percent interest as long as the price of crude remains above \$40 a barrel.

The summit addressed ways of implementing the exchange of goods and services for oil without burdening countries with financial debt as well as more efficient energy use, potentials for technical and professional development and training and the creation of a fund for the financing of energy projects in the region. Chavez also called for the creation of an international fund to promote alternative energy sources such as geothermal, solar and wind power.

Members of the Petrocaribe include Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Guyana, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, St Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Surinam, Venezuela and Honduras. Honduras was formally incorporated as the 17th member of the regional energy organization.

The Petrocaribe Summit had been an "extraordinary success" Ramirez affirmed, adding that Guatemala has also registered their intention to join Petrocaribe, and two other countries have expressed interest in joining the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), a Venezuelan initiative, with the participation of Cuba, Bolivia and Nicaragua aimed at promoting fair trade throughout the region in opposition to the free trade agenda of Washington.

Acting Cuban President Raul Castro also stressed the importance of ALBA and Petrocaribe as evidence that "a better world is possible."

"We truly believe in solidarity, cooperation and the joint capacity to develop our countries for our people," he added.

Palestine

showing that it will go to any lengths to defeat it, including the very destruction of the Palestinian nation.

The tired old strategy of the U.S. government playing "honest broker" in "peace talks" between Israel and Palestine is wearing very thin.

The heroic struggle of the Palestinian people continues to rally the support of world public opinion and continues to expose U.S.-Israeli aggression in all its naked horror. U.S. imperialism's surrogate Israel also suffered a blow in 2006 with the swift defeat of its invasion of Lebanon. Furthermore, U.S. imperialism is facing increasing difficulties in its wars on Iraq and Afghanistan, in its

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attempts to pressure Iran, Syria etc. The current continuation and renewal of offensives against Palestine, along with the renewal of phony "peace talks" are a reflection not of the strength of U.S. imperialism in the Middle East, but of its growing weakness and desperation.

U.S. imperialism must not be given any breathing room in its attempts to consolidate its position in the Middle East. It is the duty of the American people to step up our struggle to demand an immediate end to all U.S. aid to Israel and to support the right of the Palestinian people to their own genuinely sovereign state in their national homeland.

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