



Socialist Party President Fred M'membe with party comrades and the staff and children of Kasisi Children's Home on the outskirts of Lusaka on Christmas Day

A message of hope for 2024

Don't give up Fred M'membe says, but adds that things won't get better until the Socialist Party is voted into power in 2026

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M'membe has told the people of Zambia not to give up this year despite the fact that the country is continuing to suffer hard times as a result of Hakainde Hichilema's UPND government's failure to honour its promises and improve the situation.

Speaking at a New Year press briefing at the party secretariat in Lusaka, Dr M'membe's closing words were: "I know it's hard, I know it's not easy, I know it's difficult, I know it's painful, but please don't lose hope, please don't give up. A better tomorrow is possible, but we have to struggle for it. If we struggle for it, it will come. With God's guidance we'll get there."

However Dr M'membe made it clear in his briefing to the nation that real change would not come about until the Socialist Party was voted into power in 2026. He said:

"I come before you to address the current state of our nation and its future. I speak to you today, as many of you have several anxieties and worries.

"As a parent or guardian, you are preparing to send your children to

school next week, and you do not have enough money to meet the cost of school fees, boarding fees, to buy school supplies. Even those who do not pay school fees are struggling to raise money for transport, uniforms, and food to ensure children do not go to school hungry.

"We are all struggling to live under the high cost of living we today find ourselves facing. Food has become a challenge for most of our homes today. Zambia has become an extremely hungry country.

But do we expect 2024 to be different? Not under Mr Hichilema and the UPND. They have messed up the farmer input support programme.

"Where are our people going to get the food for 2024 when the input supply programme has almost broken down? Not enough seed, fertiliser, and chemicals have been supplied everywhere in Zambia, and to add salt to the injury, the inputs were distributed late.

"Many people are complaining that they have never seen the kind of hunger that we have today in the country. Where are the food reserves? They sold them – these are business people who only want to make money without caring about your wellbeing and the wellbeing of this country.

"Is 2024 going to be a better year? We don't think so, because the government has failed to demonstrate how it will reduce the cost of living,



improve the economy, reduce fuel prices, and improve the healthcare situation and food scarcity.

"Looking at the economy, Zambia has become a country where all privileges are given to transnational corporations, to their friends, while you, our people, are burdened with increasing utility costs, increasing fuel costs.

Unbearable

"We used to buy a litre of fuel for about K17, but today we are spending almost K30 per litre. For local businesses this makes the cost of doing business unbearable. We hear people complaining every day; they are wondering how they and their families are going to survive. Even mobile money transactions are to be taxed this year.

"Bally told you he would fix it but instead, he is fixing the people who voted for him in numbers. He promised you that he was going to arrest infla-

tion, but we have seen that the figure of inflation is on the rise. He promised that the dollar would be reduced, but today, one US dollar is K26. The dollar is going forward.

"He promised that mealie meal, Ubunga, would be K50, fertiliser would be K250, he promised to reduce fuel, but we know that is far from reality. Ababufi Balaya Ifingi! The lies are catching up with him. They think that people are fools; but our people are not fools. Time will tell. And it is evident that the lies will not stop.

"Our health system is deteriorating. Our hospitals are without medications. People are complaining that it is difficult to get access to decent healthcare. Many lives are being lost every day because of poor decisions.

"But why should we keep them in 2026 if they have failed on their very own promises? When will this nation heal, reconcile, and unite?

"They have no respect for the laws of this country. They have destroyed our parliament. They have destroyed our judiciary. The executive is in a shambles. It has become very tribalistic and very regional. The governance system has been weakened.

"There is a breakdown of order in society. They are trying so hard to move this country to a de facto one-party dictatorship. For us in the political arena, we closed the year on a very sad note. The liberties that our forefathers fought for were eroded. The freedoms of assembly, association,

and expression were being denied to us in the previous year, citing insecurity or security reasons.

"These security reasons have gone on for two-and-a half years of this government. The rule of law requires that every decision and action of the government must be backed by a law. There is no law that states that if those in government feel insecure, the rights of citizens are suspended. There are procedures for the suspension of citizens' freedoms, and part of that is the declaration of a state of emergency if there are high levels of insecurity in a country. But there are clearly laid down grounds and procedures for the declaration of a state of emergency. It's not done arbitrarily. The Inspector General of Police has no authority to arbitrarily suspend citizens' enjoyment of fundamental human rights guaranteed by the Constitution and international covenants. This is not the way the rule of law operates.

"We are entering this year with hope that these practices of the last two-and-a-half years must come to an end.

"This is our hope and we challenge the UPND government this year to listen to the advice that we have given them, our religious leaders in their pastoral letters or statements have given them, the Law Association of Zambia has given them, and various

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New Year warning on mining sector

The govt is playing mind games, Kashinga says

Socialist Party reporter

SOCIALIST Party Copperbelt spokesperson Reagan Kashinga has warned that failure to manage the mining sector properly on the Copperbelt will cost the UPND votes in 2026.

Reflecting on 2023, Kashinga said the UPND government was playing mind games with the people of the Copperbelt by delaying to revive Mopani and Konkola mines.

He said government pronouncements that it had found investors for Mopani and KCM were vague because nothing had changed about the two sleeping mining giants.

Kashinga said the UPND government had proved to be full of empty words as it had failed to lower the cost of living and to strengthen the kwacha.

“Fellow Zambians, as we begin the New Year 2024, allow me to look back at the year ended 2023. I am very sure that all well-meaning Zambians will agree with me that 2023 was a difficult year. Many suffering Zambians struggled to access basic needs such as food, shelter and water.

“In 2023, we witnessed the skyrocketing prices of essential commodities, such as mealie meal, fuel and electricity thereby pushing the cost of living to unprecedented high levels. This is a year we want to quickly forget because it pushed many Zambians into misery. We saw little effort from the government regarding policy changes to lower the cost of living. The cost of fertiliser remained high with a 50 KG bag fetching nearly K1, 000,” Kashinga said.

Violent

He predicted that 2024 would be another hard year for Zambians if the government failed to implement policies that favoured ordinary citizens.

“In 2023 we witnessed the violent removal of our people, the vendors, from streets without regard for human dignity. In case the UPND government is not aware, the removal of vendors worsened unemployment levels and sent many families into suffering. Government policies must be seen to be benefiting citizens and not just the friends of the Government, especially foreigners,” he said.

“In the mining sector, we saw declined Copper production coupled with a delay to revive Mopani and Konkola copper mines. As usual on this matter, the UPND government has proved to be full of empty words without action.

“The pronouncements that the state had found investors for Mo-

pani and KCM are vague because nothing has changed. In 2024, the people of Zambia want action not fake promises.

“We are warning the UPND that failure to revive the mining sector on the Copperbelt will cost them votes in 2026. No government survives once it starts playing mind games with ba Kopala. The year 2024 looks bleak because of the poor manner in which the UPND is governing our beloved country. Zambia is for all of us,” Kashinga concluded.

Questions on Senseli mine

CHINGOLA District Commissioner Raphael Chimupi is quoted in the media as saying the number of families claiming their relatives are missing after November’s Senseli open-pit mine accident has continued to rise.

“We are told that the number of families claiming missing relatives has increased from 36 to 62,” Socialist Party President Fred M’membe said.

“Once again we sympathise and mourn with the families who have suffered the loss of their loved ones in this horrific tragedy and we pray that Almighty God will comfort them during this period of great difficulty and pain.

“However, we are concerned about the government’s inability to provide adequate information over the situation, especially the corporate faces behind this tragedy.

“We, therefore, ask the following honest questions to Mr Hakainde Hichilema and his colleagues, and we seek honest answers:

- Who owns Senseli mine? Who are the real faces behind Senseli mine?
- When was Senseli issued with a licence to operate? Was it before or after Mr Hichilema came into office?
- Is this government prepared to lift the corporate veil on Senseli mine shareholders?
- Does this government have plans to compensate the grieving families following this disaster?
- Is Senseli mine linked to Mr Hichilema, any politically exposed person or any of the President’s business associates?
- From the facts gathered so far, what safety violations were committed by the owners of Senseli, and what is the Ministry of Mines doing about it?
- Are there any immediate interventions in place to help integrate the survivors and the victims’ families back into society? Is psychological counselling being considered or provided?

“We hope Mr Hichilema and his greedy, corrupt, puppet regime will provide the necessary clarifications, guidance, and honest responses to the questions raised.”



Trymore Mwenda (centre): only the Socialist Party can liberate the people and ensure freedoms

Mwenda appointed elections chair

THE Socialist Party has appointed Trymore Mwenda as chairperson for the election sub-committee and member of the National Council Management Committee.

In his acceptance of the appointment speech at the party secretariat in Lusaka, Mwenda said he had accepted to work with the Socialist Party because of his realisation that it was the only party capable of liberating the country from its economic struggles.

He said the Socialist Party was the only one that could stabilise the economy.

“I am Trymore Mwenda who has just been appointed and who has just accepted the appointment as chair of the election sub-committee under the only vehicle that will liberate suffering Zambians. The only vehicle that will stabilise the economy that is dwindling each and every day,” he said.

“I have accepted to work for the Socialist Party under the able and accountable leadership of President comrade Fred M’membe.

“I accept this appointment and I am coming to learn, and also to contribute to the already existing strong foundation that is attracting so many Zambians to join this movement.”

He described the party as unstoppable. “As chairperson of the election sub-committee, I will work with existing structures to offer leadership

and to ensure that whatever is required in terms of elections is put in place. I am not going to work alone. I am going to work with everybody else in the team because this is the movement, an unstoppable movement.

“(This is) a movement that has come to ensure that the people of Zambia are the power,” he said.

Mwenda observed how the country had surrendered key economic sectors to foreigners and cited the mining and banking sectors as among those being run by them.

“As it stands, we have no country to call Zambia, because everything is in the hands of foreigners. Talk about the mines, they are run by the foreigners, talk about the banks, they are run by foreigners. Talk about each and every sector of this country that is in the hands of foreigners.

“Therefore, I came to the realisation that the only movement, the only vehicle that can liberate, that can ensure freedom for the people of Zambia, is the Socialist Party,” he said.

“And therefore, I would love to thank the leadership for the trust that they have shown in me by giving me this position that requires a lot of concerted efforts.

“I thank the President, comrade Fred M’membe, the General Secretary, and all the leaders in this movement.”

‘They have no plan for the economy’

IT IS clear that Hakainde Hichilema and his corrupt puppet regime have no plan to manage the economic crisis of the country, Socialist Party President Fred M’membe says.

“They spoke so eloquently before about their plans and their policies to solve the economic problems of the country. They also blamed everybody except themselves for the problems that are causing so much misery and suffering among our people.

“And it’s on that basis that the people gave them a platform to make their voices heard and to eventually get them into government.

“Our people had hope that they were making the right choice and were choosing decent, honest and committed leaders. Our people believed every word of assurance that was given by Mr Hichilema.

“But today, there is nothing hap-

pening in the country, and life keeps getting worse. The rising cost of living is hurting the very citizens they promised a better life for.

“The hunger, poverty, and despair that are currently prevailing in the country is heartbreaking as prices of commodities sharply rise daily while earning power remains stuck in a rut.”

Dr M’membe said the situation was getting desperate and spiralling out of control. “There is hopelessness everywhere, including among the ruling party supporters. But how long will our people tolerate this?

“Even though Mr Hichilema and his league are trying so hard to look busy and pretend that all is well and that they have answers to our problems, the reality is that they are blank in their minds. “Mr Hichilema and his corrupt puppet regime have no idea what they’re doing and where they’re taking us as a nation.

They’re at sea and if not stopped they will destroy this country.

“What we are saying here is not something new because even senior UPND leaders are discussing these matters in the dark corners of the administration.

“We are aware that a number of their Western counterparts have already passed a verdict that Mr Hichilema will not solve this economic crisis and instead will resort to tyrannical and authoritarian measures in his quest to retain power.

“But it won’t work. There is no way the Zambian people will allow personal interest to dictate the future of our country.

“We shall stand together and stop this selfish and reckless ambition of Mr Hichilema, and restore order, stability, prosperity, and democracy in our country,” Dr M’membe said.

“Alefwaya nangu talefwaya, 2026 yena aleya!”

Hapunda rejects UPND’s fake news

SOCIALIST Party Media Director Brian Hapunda says Fred M’membe will be in State House come 2026 as he is Zambia’s President in waiting.

Hapunda said Dr M’membe had not given up on the race for the Republican Presidency as insinuated by the UPND on various social media platforms.

He described the UPND propaganda as fictitious and malicious, adding that the ruling party was under panic for failing to fulfil its campaign promises.

Hapunda reminded the UPND that the CDF projects being talked about would only be meaningful if seen and not just talked about.

The media director said Zambians had been subjected to a high cost of living following the high cost of mealie meal, fuel, electricity and transport.

Hapunda said patients were grappling with serious challenges, as there were no medicines in healthcare facilities.

He said the agriculture sector had performed poorly under the UPND because most people who were on FISP did not receive their allocations after being removed erroneously from the list.

Hapunda urged UPND to go back to the drawing board to fulfil the development it promised the people of Zambia.

He said Dr M’membe and the Socialist Party in general would continue to remind UPND about the cheap mealie meal, fuel and fertiliser it promised Zambians.

He said Zambians were waiting for medicine in healthcare facilities and a stable exchange rate.

New Year message

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civil society groupings have given them, as well as from ordinary Zambians have given them.

“Let them stop asking for solutions; we and the people have given them the solutions over and over again. Let them stop asking for alternatives, but implement their promises to the Zambian people. Let them stop preaching to Zambians to work hard. Zambians have always been hard workers. What they need are jobs or capital.

“Let them work hard and fulfil the promises they made to the Zambian people, especially the youth. They promised free education from primary to university level. Let them fulfil that promise.

For now, let’s see real change! Our democratic space has been shrinking. Many of our people have pointed to this shrinking democratic space!

“But efforts to shrink the democratic space will take them nowhere. This will backfire. Their efforts to perpetuate their stay, to perpetuate their stealing will take them nowhere but kuwire!

“Those who liberated this country united us under the mantra One Zambia One Nation. But today, our people are being divided more and more by the current government. The nation heard Mr Hichilema’s utterances to mark the year-end at Mulungushi and his New Year’s rally held in Choma – both were full of tribal utterances.

“This year, we urge the UPND government to unite our people and not seek to divide people based on where they come from. Even when Mr Hichilema feels threatened, we urge him to refrain from retreating to tribal utterances.

“The Zambian people from all walks of life have been telling this UPND government what needs to be done to address the challenges we face today, the traditional leaders have been telling them what needs to be done, our religious leaders have been telling them what needs to be done, civic society organisations have been telling them what needs to be done, the business people of this country, including those in the markets, bus stations and streets, have been telling them what needs to be done, political and economic commentators have been telling them what needs to be done, but they do not listen.

“The Socialist Party has been emphatic on how to deal with debt restructuring, on how to deal with mining, on how to deal with the growth of Zambian businesses, both private and public, but they do not listen. Tabomfwala! Sibavela!

“They have become very arrogant. They know it all, they want to fix it alone and this arrogance is costing us. They are irredeemable.

“There is no way someone who is a Christian will tolerate the high levels of corruption we see today. There is no way a true believer in Christ will allow the masses to suffer under escalating economic hardships while they themselves and their friends get richer and richer. There is no way the wealth of the people can be stolen and given to foreigners, and you still proclaim to be a good Christian.

“Christianity has become a political selling point, where somebody is masquerading to be a good Christian and stand for Christian values. Christian values are those that the Socialist Party stands for – we stand for equity, honesty, justice, humility, and solidarity. This is what Christ believed in, and this is what Christianity is all about.

“The Socialist Party is the alternative government for our people come 2026. This year, make sure you get your NRC and voter’s card ready. Let us get ready to take them out in 2026. Join us to change this country for the better. Join the Socialist Party movement for a more just, fair, and humane Zambia. Join us to change the way we deal with education, health, agriculture, and mining

“Help us change who we prioritise. Zambians should come first at all times. Our people should benefit from the economy. We, together, can industrialise the economy and bring the real change Zambia needs. As we have said before; we cannot do this alone. We need you all on board! Zambia chalo cheso!

“Don’t forget that leaders lead, the people govern. We need to struggle together to correct the lies and false promises.

“With the protection and support of our ancestors, those brave Ngoni warriors under the leadership of Nsingu, we will overcome, we will win!

“I wish you and your families all the best in 2024!”

Fred M'membe: This is a govt of thieves, for thieves, by thieves

‘Hichilema must resign and former minister Kakubo should be arrested’

Socialist Party reporter

PRESIDENT Hakainde Hichilema should resign and corrupt former Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Stanley Kakubo must be arrested, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

President Hichilema accepted Mr Kakubo's resignation after documents, photos and videos of him allegedly collecting a sum in excess of US\$200,000 and a luxury Mercedes Benz automobile, among other things, from a named Chinese national, went viral on social media.

The transaction is in relation to the sale of a mine Mr Kakubo claimed to own in North Western Province.

Mr Kakubo is no stranger to corruption scandals. Last year, photos of him collecting a parcel from a Chinese national in the car park at Sinoma cement plant also went viral on social media, but he quickly dismissed the corruption allegations against him, claiming that the gift bag only contained calendars.

Mr Hichilema publicly rushed to Mr Kakubo's defence during a press conference after the Sinoma cement plant incident.

"From the above, it is evident that Mr Kakubo is a very corrupt individual who has been at it for some time now," Dr M'membe said in a Facebook post. "He is a typical corrupt UPND breed whose actions are a shame and not acceptable in any sense."

"But this does not surprise us at all because Mr Kakubo is not alone in his corrupt activities. This UPND government is corrupt to the core. It's extremely rotten from the bottom to the top. It's a very corrupt puppet regime, and they are not even as clever and sophisticated as they seem to think. These are shameless gluttons who don't even care about the people they represent."

"Even Mr Hichilema knows that he is heading a rotten and stinking government. No wonder he gave Mr Kakubo the luxury of resigning from government instead of firing him and getting him arrested. He shielded the disgraced Mr Kakubo from taking a walk of shame because he knows that he is not the only corrupt person in this administration," Dr M'membe said.

"To Mr Hichilema, Mr Kakubo is what maybe described as 'his boy'. A trusted loyalist/ And so, no matter what, Mr Hichilema is committed to protecting 'his boy' by granting him a dignified exit despite the fact that he is a thief."

"Where have you seen a thief being given the choice of resigning after being caught in the middle of a crime? This can only happen if the master who sent him is equally guilty of the same crimes. The master is guilty, afraid, and has no moral right to condemn or even do anything about it, so out of shame, he is forced to negotiate a better way out of the mess with a thief. This here is the simple logic behind behind Mr Kakubo's resignation."

"For the record, Mr Kakubo must be arrested and prosecuted for corruption, and his assets seized as proceeds of crime, and Mr Hichilema must resign immediately for aiding and abetting corruption. The cor-

ruption scandals that have rocked this government in recent months are a reminder that the country is in corrupt hands and needs a breather. It is clear that this is a government of the thieves, for the thieves, and by the thieves. Nobody is clean and honest in this case.

"Like this, how can Mr Hichilema be expected to genuinely fight corruption when there is so much grand corruption and looting surrounding him?"

"We have said this before, and we are repeating it, any meaningful fight against corruption in this country has to start with an investigation of Mr Hichilema's own dealings in almost every sector of our economy like mining, fuel, fertiliser, insurance, grain imports and exports, property and real estate, construction and manufacturing, among many others."

"There is a need to probe Mr Hichilema. He should be able to answer questions about his dealings. Without doing so, the fight against corruption becomes hypocritical, a facade and meaningless. Any meaningful fight against corruption must start with an investigation of Mr Hichilema's business interests and the government procurement and payment authorisation system," Dr M'membe said.

Systemic

"Mr Musa Mwenye, the chairman of the Anti Corruption Commission and the US envoy to Zambia, Mr Michael Gonzales, have emphatically demanded that Mr Hichilema declares all his assets. Why?"

"The day Mr Hichilema is made to fully disclose all his business interests, without being able to conceal anything, will mark the beginning of

the end of his presidency and the beginning of his journey to prison. Even Mr Hichilema knows this too well no wonder the resistance."

"The amount of systemic corruption and plunder of state funds that is being facilitated by State House is terrifying and confirms the sad reality that this presidency is a terrible burden to our society."

"We want to caution the citizens not to cheat themselves into believing they have a decent and corrupt-free leadership, because the truth and reality currently is that most of the bribery, embezzlement, illicit enrichment, trading influence and all manner of abuses and white-collar financial and economic crimes we are witnessing are engineered by State House."

"All the powerful dirty deals we are seeing, hearing, and reading about in the media are the

brainchild of State House. These deals are marinated, cooked, and served within the presidency. In short, the presidency is the command post of grand corruption and looting of public resources."

"Under this presidency, procurement procedures and regulations have been totally paralysed and they are going about their daily business with impunity, and without any oversight or regard for the moral, political and economic effects of their actions. This presidency is the most corrupt in the history of this country, and the presidential aides are the most incompetent, shady, and pathetically dishonest and corrupt of all."

"They're a deprived bunch who are distorting and eroding public trust and confidence in state institutions as well as damaging policy integrity."

"With the presidency organising and perpetuating this cancerous culture of corruption, it is wishful thinking to expect this regime to wage a relentless campaign against corruption and succeed or turn around the economy and improve the livelihoods of ordinary citizens."

"These are incorrigible liars, manipulators and fraudsters, who have no interest whatsoever in the welfare of ordinary citizens. All they are interested in is power and money to continue looting. It's just a matter of time before everything comes to the fore."

"Crooks of all shapes and sizes have been assembled and unleashed on the people and the state coffers by Mr Hichilema," Dr M'membe said.

"Tuletekwa naba kabwalala!"



Socialist Party President Fred M'membe, family and comrades visiting Zambia's biggest orphanage, Kasisi Children's Home, on the outskirts of Lusaka on Christmas Day

The first requirement of a revolutionary is love

THE FIRST requirement of a revolutionary is love, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe said when he visited Kasisi Children's Home on the outskirts of Lusaka on Christmas day.

After donating a variety of goods, Dr M'membe said the political work he and the Socialist Party were doing was "nothing" if those who were down "could not be uplifted".

"The political work we are doing means nothing if we cannot uplift those who are down, to give love to those who seriously lack it. Mother Teresa taught us that true love hurts. Love until it hurts," he said.

"We also know that the greatest delight of life is the feeling of being near to those who are in great need, those who despair, those who have lost hope," he said.

Dr M'membe praised the sisters of the Little Servants

of Mary Immaculate, who look after the children. "The work being done by our sisters here is the work all of us should do. You cannot do this work if you do not have great love for your fellow human beings. To be with these children . . . you have seen the range of these children," he said.

"It takes a great heart, a heart full of love. The first requirement of the revolutionary is love. If you don't have love in your heart for a fellow human being, you cannot be a socialist; that is why we draw our greatest inspiration from Christ."

"The love that Jesus Christ gives us every day, to the point of sacrificing on the cross, suffering the greatest humiliation. It is something that we will have to carry with us all the time."

"Coming here fills one with joy and at the same time

with sorrow. You feel like crying and at the same time you feel like smiling. Crying at the suffering of others, crying also at the joy that these sisters bring to our lives, they love their work and they love these children," he said.

The Kasisi Orphanage was founded in 1926 by the Dominican Sisters and handed over to the Little Servants of Mary Immaculate, a Polish Catholic order, two years later. Since then, it has grown to be the largest and best-known orphanage in Zambia. The name was changed from to Kasisi Children's Home in 2002.

The home has 230 orphaned children, of whom 60 are living with HIV and 40 are already receiving antiretroviral therapy. Kasisi is divided into four areas; a wing for babies and younger children, a house for older girls, a street kids' house and two wings for children who are infected with HIV/AIDS.

It is undemocratic for only one party to be able to hold rallies

IT IS very difficult to conceive of a multi-party political dispensation where only one political party and its leaders are allowed to have rallies, meetings, press briefings, and visits of its structures at will and without hindrance, Socialist Party President Fred M'membe says.

"Mr Hakainde Hichilema and his party, the UPND, are today enjoying unfettered exercise of their freedoms of assembly, association, expression, and speech at the exclusion of the opposition and all others," Dr M'membe said in a Facebook post.

"The public order Act and other related

laws don't seem to apply to them at all. And on everything else, Mr Hichilema is a shameless blame shifter."

"Seeking to exercise our constitutionally guaranteed fundamental human rights is not the pursuit of politics of confrontation or insolvency."

"We know very well that when they were in opposition, they were partially denied these rights. But it shouldn't be a matter of revenge. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth will leave them blind and snaggle-toothed."

"If they're mature politicians, they've got to break the cycle of abuses and mistreatment

of political opponents. Without a doubt, Mr Hichilema and the UPND endured a lot of injustice, and the nation aligned in sympathy for them, but they have squandered that goodwill. They have messed this up."

"Mr Hichilema seems to be a one-string guitar. The only tool he has is a hammer, and he doesn't seem to understand the need for tolerance, self-limitation, and modesty. Anything he sees in front of him, no matter how small or insignificant, he has to pound it down with full force."

"But this approach is very destructive and dangerous. He must be mindful of this and not be excited with power recklessly."

"We have repeatedly warned that this country will not be a good place for any of us to live in if it's not a good place for all of us to live in."

"When fundamental rights and freedoms are denied, they are always fought for. This is the reality Mr Hichilema and his corrupt puppet regime must be ready for."

"We shall fearlessly defend our liberties, human dignity, and rights."

"We will not allow Mr Hichilema to use power and privilege to constrain our efforts and existence in this country to maintain the status quo."

Why is UPND govt mismanaging the NHIMA – conflict of interest?

Fred M'membe analyses how its actions and policies have brought Zambia's health lifeline to the brink of insolvency

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M'membe questions why Hakainde Hichilema's government is mismanaging the National Health Insurance Management Authority (NHIMA), adding, "What is its personal interest?"

"Since 2011, the Government of the Republic of Zambia has been trying to start work on a health scheme that allows the entire population to pool resources into one basket and then procure medical supplies and services for the entire population – for all and one," he said in a Facebook post.

"In 2018, after extensive research and consultation, the National Health Insurance Act No 2 was enacted into law. Financial resources of circa K500 million were needed in the 2018/19 budget to start the project, but only K11 million was allocated.

"This should have dealt a huge blow to the prospects of the scheme taking off in 2019. But when political will, leadership, and management skills are combined, there is nothing that our country can fail to achieve!"

"It was agreed by then Minister of Health Dr Chitalu Chilufya that the project could start with the right leadership and skills notwithstanding no budget allocation.

"The Board of the NHIMA was instituted in March 2019, and in June, Mr James Kapesa, an accountant and investment banker, was appointed director general. Understandably, the scheme was heavily opposed by unions, opposition political parties, and the general citizenry, citing other past government projects that had failed due to wastefulness and corruption."

Dr M'membe said that prior to the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), only 4 percent of Zambians had access to good quality healthcare through insurance.

"The rest of the 96 percent faced financial barriers going to hospitals. For those who had finances, the prospect of poor service, lack of laboratory equipment, and chronic shortages of medicines, deterred them. So, we had a 4 percent island of rich, healthy citizens in an ocean of 96 percent poor and unwell ones. This was never going to be sustainable. It was a ticking time bomb.

"Under the NHI Act, the NHIS is a social scheme that pools money together from the rich, the middle class, and the poor, and pays for every member's medical bills on the basis of their medical needs and NOT

their social status. In this way, the well to do subsidise the poor, the young, and the healthy subsidise the old and feeble.

"The broader purpose of the NHIS was to provide complementary health financing to the health system, which had hitherto been chronically underfunded. It was noticed that the quality of health had been deteriorating due to underfunding.

"All Zambian citizens and established residents qualify to be members of and benefit from the scheme. However, contributing members must be aged 18 years to 65 years. Each contributing member can bring a spouse and five dependents under the age of 18. Those above 65, the mentally challenged, and those on social cash transfer, are exempt from contributing but are eligible to access the benefits.

Accredited

"A qualified and active member can present themselves and their family members at an accredited health facility and will access a predetermined health benefit package without paying anything. The health facility will generate a claim and send it to NHIMA, which will pay on behalf of the member who accessed the service.

"The medical services covered under the NHIS include consultation, OPD services, admission into wards, minor and major surgery, laboratory services, blood products, med-

icines and pharmaceuticals, renal and kidney, selected cancer services, mental services, and orthopaedic care. The package also includes maternal care, internal medicines, and eye, ear, and heart, conditions."

Dr M'membe said NHIMA was now the largest membership parastatal, with more than 3.5 million members and dependents registered, of which in excess of a million were in the informal sector.

"Nearly 370 health facilities are part of the NHIMA network. They include all government district hospitals, general hospitals, and teaching hospitals. Most of the private hospitals, laboratories, and pharmacies are also part of the network. Where a government hospital has no medicines, and laboratory equipment is not working, a member can present at a private pharmacy and laboratory and be attended to. The private pharmacy and laboratory will send the claim to NHIMA for payment.

"The inception team under the leadership of Mr Kapesa designed the financial system of the NHIS on the foundation of efficient private sector banking systems. This enabled NHIMA to start from no funding and become a viable vibrant health financing system; the fourth of its nature in Africa and only one in Southern Africa.

"From the first collection of only K700,000 in November 2020, NHIMA now collects nearly K100 million monthly.

"More than three million

Zambians have accessed quality healthcare without paying cash, and the journey to universal health coverage where 100 percent of Zambians are covered now seems possible.

"The NHIS has, for the first time, aggregated small, fragmented informal sectors' contributions and put them into the formal financial system. This has increased formal finances in circulation, further allowing the banking sector to expand.

The private health sector has expanded exponentially in the last four years of the NHIS existence and has employed significant numbers of healthcare workers who hitherto could not be absorbed into public health facilities.

"The NHIS has tremendously reduced households' out-of-pocket expenditure as they no longer have to pay cash at hospitals and/or send money to relatives for medical care, and the relatives are now on NHIS. Prior to the launch of the NHIS, households spent around 12 percent of their disposable income on out-of-pocket health costs.

"Health coverage has soared from four percent in 2018 and now stands at more than 40 percent in 2023. If supported and properly managed, Universal Health Coverage is attainable within the next 10 years.

"NHIS has complemented the Ministry of Health in the last four years with much-needed healthcare financing. With erratic procurement of

medical supplies, save for NHIS intervention, the health system would have collapsed.

"However, since ascension to power, principal officers of the UPND – from State House, Ministry of Finance and other line ministries – have not mentioned the NHIS in their policy speeches. This silence portends harm and ill will towards it. It is believed that this is due to business interests and conflicts within the UPND leadership, which has competing business interests with NHIMA's principal activity.

"The move to the Ministry of Labour is another sign of ill will towards a scheme that focused on Universal Health Coverage. Additionally, the placing of the scheme under the Ministry of Labour is a strategic misalignment that interrupts the synergies that a health scheme gets from a ministry in charge of health.

Premature

"No one was consulted from the NHIMA and Ministry of Health when Mr Hichilema's government transferred the scheme in the first week of its ascent to power.

"The NHIS was designed to complement government funding to the tune of about 20 percent of the funding gap. In the last three years, there has literally been no meaningful procurement of drugs and medical supplies. This has meant that NHIS became the default supplier of medicines for the entire medical system. This is NOT sustainable and

may cripple the scheme into premature insolvency.

"The governance and management of the NHIS has also been suboptimal with the board and management more focused on travel, workshops, and hounding out original office bearers. As a result, the scheme is nearly insolvent, service disrupted, and now demanding budgetary appropriation instead of generating its own money. For example, Director General Mr Kapesa was fired on politically trumped-up charges that he was illegally employed, as he had neither relevant qualifications nor management experience.

"So far, three of the inception directors who designed the systems have left the scheme. One is leading a similar project in Liberia, setting up an NHIMA equivalent, and another one is CEO of a large private health insurance company locally. As a result, most management performance indicators have been abandoned. The board has, in 18 months, spent more than ten times what the previous board spent in 36 months in allowances and unending foreign trips.

Owing to sustained erosion of professionalism in governance, tribalism, and chronic, relationship, and compliance management models imbedded in the NHIS at inception have been abandoned. This has led to low compliance levels as no one is enforcing compliance. The result is lower and lower collection of contributions while, naturally, claims are increasing. If there are no drastic changes in the management model, the scheme will implode.

"In the medium to long term, the contribution rate of two percent is low and ought to be adjusted upwards to at least five percent. But this should be done after management has done its part in elevating collections through compliance.

Health service levels in public facilities are low and undermine the intentions of the scheme. This has been made worse by taking the scheme away from the Ministry of Health. This was the very reason NHIMA was designed to be under the Ministry of Health.

"Unless political will, sober governance, and competent management, are introduced, the scheme could be insolvent in the next two years, barring the other matters of contributory rate and base.

"The NHIS is now one of the most beneficial and popular projects left by the PF and which has helped UPND in the eyes of the public. This is a good scheme that shouldn't be allowed to fall. It is a scheme that deserves support and continuous improvement.

"We challenge Mr Hichilema to explain why his government is shunning such a popular people-driven scheme. Is it that the government wants to trade it at the altar of personal business interests?"

"The NHIS needs to be strengthened and devolved to rural and peri-urban communities and be properly supported by all government functionaries.

The scheme needs to be taken back to the Ministry of Health. "There's a need to protect the investments of the scheme from conflicted third-party players who are in government now, so that the NHIS expands its resource base to provide health insurance for the foreseeable future," Dr M'membe said.





Socialist Party President Fred M'membe: man of the people

Pope calls on faithful to play their part in politics

CATHOLICS should not be indifferent to politics, Pope Francis says, but should offer their suggestions, as well as prayers, that their leaders may serve the common good with humility and love.

In a daily homily at Santa Marta, the Pope rejected the idea that “a good Catholic doesn’t meddle in politics”.

“That’s not true. That is not a good path,” he said. “A good Catholic meddles in politics, offering the best of himself, so that those who govern can govern.”

“None of us can say, ‘I have nothing to do with this, they govern’,” Pope Francis told those present for the Mass. Rather, citizens are responsible for participating in politics according to their ability, and in this way are responsible for their leadership.

“Politics, according to the Social Doctrine of the Church, is one of the highest forms of charity, because it serves the common good,” he explained. “I cannot wash my hands, eh? We all have to give something!”

He noted that it is sometimes common for people to speak only critically of their leaders, to complain about “things that don’t go well”.

Instead of simply complaining, we should offer ourselves, our ideas, suggestions, and, most of all, our prayers, the Holy Father said.

Observing that prayer is “the best that we can offer to those who govern,” he pointed to St Paul’s letter to Timothy inviting prayer for the conversion and strong leadership of those in authority.

Even if they believe certain politicians to be “wicked”, Christians should pray “that they can govern well, that they can love their people, that they can serve their people, that they can be humble”, he said.

At the same time, the Pope reflected on the role of those who hold political power, stressing the need for humility and love.

Reflecting on the Gospel of the centurion who humbly and confidently asked for the healing of his servant, the Holy Father explained that “a leader who doesn’t love, cannot govern. At best they can discipline, they can give a little bit of order, but they can’t govern”.

In addition, he emphasised, “You can’t govern without loving the people and without humility!”

“And every man, every woman who has to take up the service of government, must ask themselves two questions: ‘Do I love my people in order to serve them better? Am I humble and do I listen to everybody, to diverse opinions in order to choose the best path?’

“If you don’t ask those questions, your governance will not be good,” Pope Francis continued. “The man or woman who governs – who loves his or her people is a humble man or woman.”

UPND human rights failure

HICHILEMA and the UPND have scored badly on human rights and it will get worse.

Reflecting on United Nations Human Rights Day, it’s important to note that Mr Hakainde Hichilema’s government record has been disappointing. The abuse of all three arms of government have been blatant.

If we go by our observations of what we have experienced and seen to date in 2023, their human rights record has worsened in comparison to 2022. Instead of fixing the economy and fulfilling the promises they made, imingalato on the opposition has become their daily preoccupation.

What we have is a tin-pot dictator serving his own interests and not of those who elected him.

He is a man preoccupied with serving commercial or business interests at the expense of the poor people of this country.

If we go by the reports from civil society and his friends – the United States Department of State 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – we all need to worry. Where is this corrupt puppet regime taking this country?

The US 2022 human rights report on Zambia noted very worrying and frightening findings:

- unlawful or arbitrary killings,
- extrajudicial killings,
- torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by government, and,
- serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings; torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by the government; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and the media, including violence and threats of violence against journalists, censorship, or enforcement of or threat to enforce criminal libel laws to limit expression; substantial interference with the rights of freedom of assembly and association; and serious government corruption,

Impunity for excessive use of force by law enforcement agencies, particularly the police, remained a problem. The government also took steps to identify, investigate, prosecute, and punish officials for corruption, although impunity remained widespread.

This report covers Mr Hakainde Hichilema’s regime – <https://www.state.gov/.../2022-country-reports-on-.../zambia>.

They have scored badly on human rights and in other areas where they promised the people things would improve.

The Christmas message

AS WE move into 2024, let me reflect on the spirit of Christmas and the message it holds for us all in the year ahead.

I believe that the message of peace and love for humanity is the central theme of Christmas and one which our world needs, especially at this time when hunger, wars, divisions and selfishness are the causes for so much suffering and unhappiness in our world.

It is only our concern for each and every one and our willingness to work for the common good that will bring about a better world.

My special thoughts at this time go to all those who suffer from ill health or other adversities with the hope that they may also be able to share in the joy of Christmas.

Christmas is, above all, a special time for children and families. I hope that this occasion will be a time of joyful celebration for everyone and that it will help unite and strengthen all families in our country.

As we rejoice in the best of what life can offer, let us ask ourselves how we can act in the spirit of the season not just on this day but on every other day.

If each of us could find the wisdom, the courage, and the commitment to help bring hope to all and peace of mind to our own families, we could give a wonderful gift to ourselves, to our children, and our country. The fact is our children’s future is shaped by the values of our society, so we must act as responsible citizens, and our leaders must also act with decisiveness and purpose. All we need right now is a real sense of purpose.

Even if some of us are experiencing very serious economic hardship, I pray that you will find love, peace, joy, and hope this year.

Dishonesty and dexterity

THE USE of dexterity or cunning, especially to deceive the poor, is highly contemptuous.

Mr Hakainde Hichilema promised the poor people of this country that if they voted for him on August 11, 2021, he would reduce the price of mealie meal to K50.

Recently he was seen parading himself in ShopRite next to ZNS mealie meal, which was being sold for K229, in a desperate attempt shore up his declining political fortunes.

In many places, mealie meal is being sold for more than K300. What was he trying to prove? Except by sleight of logic, K50 and K229 (and K300 plus) cannot be harmonised. This is probably what he himself would call, “kutumpa uku”.

They won elections on the strength of their promises and it is true to say they are not carrying them out. Deception is always a pretty contemptible vice, but to deceive the poor is the meanest.

Dishonesty is always distressing and sometimes dangerous, but when it manifests itself in the Head of State – and becomes government policy – it needs to be done away with.

We are in a very serious crisis, but a crisis does not have to mean that things get worse and worse. It should be a crossroads, a time for decisions – in this case, about which way we want our society, politics, and economy to go.



A still from the video in which Dr Elijah Muchima exhibits ‘favouritism, cronyism and corruption’

Discriminatory vid shows UPND for who they are

Minister makes ‘reckless utterances’

THERE is a video circulating online of Dr Elijah Muchima, the Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, proudly exhibiting extreme levels of indiscipline and discrimination by issuing reckless and dangerous utterances, Socialist Party President Fred M’membe says.

“In the video, Dr Muchima is shown addressing what appears to be a UPND meeting, where he is openly pledging discrimination, favouritism, cronyism, and corruption in the allocation of land,” he said in a Facebook post.

‘I have said if there will be any plots in any council, I will favour first UPND people and a poor person. That I’m going to do it . . . for ten years, you must also have a share,’ Dr Muchima said to a jubilant audience.

“This is highly reckless, unnecessary, and lacks control in behaviour by a person who, under normal circumstances, is expected to be above such divisive and cheap partisan rhetoric. What type of leaders are these who encourage divisiveness, discrimination, and lawlessness? What type of over-zealous behaviour and unfair management practice is this?”

“Anyway, we are not surprised. Even the Holy Bible says, ‘you shall know them by their fruits’ and also that ‘from the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks’. That is the calibre of Mr Hakainde Hichilema’s ministers. This is how high Mr Hichilema has raised the bar of leadership in this country as per promise to the nation when he was elected in 2021.”

Dr M’membe said that going by their record so far, it was evident that “Mr Hichilema and his corrupt puppet regime are not true liberal democrats”.

“They’re just quacks and ignorant democrats who wrongly believe that they have a moral responsibility to do what is necessary and best for themselves in order to perpetuate their greedy and corrupt political agenda, even if it means perpetuating illegalities and violating the laws of the land.

“Theirs is an agenda that is only meant to satisfy themselves first

and foremost, and then the citizens who voted for them later through a little bit of trickle down approaches like the ones Dr Muchima is suggesting in the video. These are deceptive, pretentious, and shameless people masquerading as leaders who are not even fully aware of the consequences of their irresponsible utterances and actions.

“What is even worse about them is their over-adventurous nature and haste to make clowns of themselves through the predictable and thoughtless abuse of the law.

“It’s clear that Mr Hichilema and his league have pinned their political survival on the abuse of the law in whatever they do. But it won’t work! It will backfire very badly if they don’t grasp the reality that power has limitations, too.

Confusion

“We are aware and understand the panic and fear in them. We also understand the pressure and confusion that is driving this highly corrupt regime and how they’re desperate to impress their disgruntled, hungry, and angry supporters who are increasingly becoming impatient and violent.

“It was only recently during the burial of one of Mr Hichilema’s party security personnel at Lusaka’s Leopards Hill memorial park, that an irate and violent

mob of UPND cadres ran amok and attacked senior party officials and cabinet ministers, who they accused of extreme greed, corruption, incompetence and neglecting their own members.

“This unfortunate incident resulted in some cabinet ministers and senior party officials scaling up the fence to the cemetery and disappearing in the nearby shrubs just to escape a beating. Cabinet ministers and senior party officials fled for their dear lives, leaving their official vehicles and drivers behind. What was meant to be a solemn ceremony became a chaotic scene, with senior officials scampering in all directions and hiding behind anything they could find.

“We have always warned Mr Hichilema to be very careful with the way they’re taking advantage of state systems and institutions. We have also warned them not to take citizens for granted.

“Now, if their own membership can be this agitated, hungry, and angry about the current hardship and suffering they face in their own lives today, what about the silent common person on the streets?”

“The events of last week at Leopards Hill Memorial Park are just a tip of the iceberg and a reminder that all is not well in the country right now.”

“Uwafitala akaimwena!”

Rent increases ‘unrealistic’

SOCIALIST Party President Fred M’membe says Lusaka City Council’s increased monthly levies for shops, stands, and booths in all markets and bus stations are “detached from reality”.

The revised monthly rentals are: Q shops increased from K100 to K1000; blocked shops from K290 to K1500; and numbered shops increased from K75 to K150. This increment was with effect from January 1.

“It is painful to see Mr Hakainde Hichilema and his corrupt puppet regime exorbitantly increase monthly levies for these properties amidst such cruel economic conditions facilitated by themselves,” he said. “This is precisely what we mean when we say Mr Hichilema

is totally detached from reality. As if ostracising street vendors is not enough, this government has proceeded to keep more people in the extreme margins of economic structures and activities through further reforms and senseless decisions. What type of leadership is this that lacks compassion, kindness, and love for the poor people of this country?

“Why does Mr Hichilema always view the suffering majority of our people, who are trying so desperately to earn a decent living, as people of very little value to him now that he is president?

“Why has he forgotten so quickly that these are the same people who toiled for years to get him elected? What type of ingratitude is this?”

Empty phrases and h

Vijay Prashad

THE INDECENCY of the phrase “humanitarian pause” is obvious. There is nothing humanitarian about a brief interlude between bouts of horrendous violence. There is no true “pause”, merely the calm before the storm continues.

We are witnessing the bureaucratisation of immorality, the use of old words with great meaning (“humanitarian”) and their reduction to new, empty phrases that betray their original meanings. Before the debris from the first rounds of Israeli bombs could be cleared, the bombing resumed just as viciously as before.

The word “humanitarian” has been severely bruised by the West. You might remember another phrase, “humanitarian intervention”, that was used as cover for the destruction of Libya in 2011 after the legitimacy of Western military intervention had been eviscerated by the illegal US invasion of Iraq in 2003. To rehabilitate this legitimacy, the West pushed the United Nations to hold a conference that resulted in a new doctrine, Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which, while purporting to “ensure that the international community never again fails to halt the mass atrocity crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”, instead provided the West with a UN Security Council mandate (under Chapter VII of the UN Charter) for the use of force. The attack on Libya in 2011 took place under this doctrine. The guise of humanitarianism was used to destroy the Libyan state and throw the country into what appears to be a permanent civil war. There has never been even a whiff of R2P when it comes to the Israeli bombardment of Gaza (not in 2008-9, not in 2014, and not now).

It does not seem to matter that more Palestinians have been displaced and killed by Israel since October 7 than were displaced and killed in the Nakba (“Catastrophe”) of 1948. If the word “humanitarian” meant something in 1948, it certainly does not mean much now.

Onslaught

As the numbers of the dead and displaced increase, a sense of numbness grows. It began with a hundred dead, then a hundred more, and is rapidly escalating into the tens of thousands. In Iraq, approximately a million people were killed by the US onslaught, the sheer scale of death and the anonymity surrounding it forcing a sense distance from the rest of the world. It is difficult to wrap one’s head around these numbers unless there are stories attached to each of the dead and displaced.

Part of the problem here is that the international division of humanity makes for unjust accounting of human life: were the Palestinians killed in Gaza treated with as much dignity as the Israelis killed on October 7? Are their lives, and deaths, assigned equal worth? The uneven response to these deaths, alongside the uncritical acceptance of this unevenness, suggests that this international division of humanity remains in place and is not only accepted, but also perpetuated, by Western leaders, who make allowances for the killing of more brown bodies than



Left: Israeli soldiers transfer Palestinian hostages out of the Gaza Strip. Centre: Israeli forces detain a Palestinian child. Many of children spend years in the Israeli system, often un



white ones, the latter seen as precious, the former seen as disposable.

During the “humanitarian pause”, a hostage transfer took place through which Hamas and the Palestinian factions released 110 Israelis while Israel released 240 Palestinian women and children. The stories of the Israeli casualties, many of them residents of settlements near the Gaza perimeter fence, and other hostages such as the Thai and Nepalese fieldworkers are now well-known. Less frequently discussed and much less understood are the stories of the Palestinian casualties. Equally disregarded is the fact that after October 7, Israel launched a mass campaign to detain more than 3,000 Palestinians, including nearly 200 children. There are more Palestinians in Israeli prisons now than before October 7. During the first four days of the truce alone, Israel arrested almost as many Palestinians as it released through the hostage transfer.

It is of note that most (more than two-thirds) of the Palestinians released from Israeli prisons are never charged with any crime and have been held in “administrative detention” in the military’s legal system, meaning that they are held without a time limit, “without trial [and] without having committed an offence, on the grounds that he or she plans to break the law in the future”, as defined by the human rights organisation B’tselem. Some of them have been lost in the maze of the Israeli incarceration system indefinitely, unable to exercise even the most basic right of habeas corpus, with no court appearance, no access to a lawyer, and no access to the evidence against them.

Israel currently holds more than 7,000 Palestinian political prisoners, many of them associated with left-wing factions (such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine). More than 2,000 of these prisoners are being held in administrative detention.

Many of these Palestinian prisoners are children. Many of them spend years in the Israeli system, often under administrative detention, unable to make a case for their release. The Defence for Children International

(Palestine) reports that 500-700 children are detained each year, and a chilling report from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in 2015 showed that Israel is in full violation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990). Article 37 of the convention says that the “arrest, detention, or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time”. As multiple cases show, Israel uses arrests as a measure of first resort and holds children for long periods of time.

Affidavits

Defence for Children International studied sworn affidavits from 766 child detainees from the occupied West Bank arrested between January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2022. The following data emerged from their analysis:

- 75 percent were subjected to physical violence.
- 80 percent were strip-searched.
- 97 percent were interrogated without a family member present.
- 66 percent were not properly informed of their rights.
- 55 percent were shown or made to sign a paper in Hebrew, a language most Palestinian children do not understand.
- 59 percent were arrested at night.
- 86 percent were not informed of the reason for their arrest.
- 58 percent were subjected to verbal abuse, humiliation, or intimidation during or after their arrest.
- 23 percent were detained in solitary confinement for interrogation purposes for a period of two or more days.

There are thousands of untold stories of the brutality inflicted upon Palestinian children. One of them, Ahmad Manasra, was arrested on October 12, 2015 at the age of 13 in occupied East Jerusalem on the charge that he stabbed two Israelis: Yosef Ben-Shalom, a 20-year-old security guard, and Naor Shalev Ben-Ezra, a 13-year-old boy, who survived the attack. The Israeli courts initially found Ahmad guilty of the stabbing but then changed

their opinion to say that his 15-year-old cousin Hassan Khalid Manasra, who was shot dead at the scene, had stabbed the two Israelis. There was no evidence of Ahmad’s complicity, yet he was sentenced to nine-and-a-half years in prison.

Still in prison, Ahmad Manasra (now 21) has been held in solitary confinement for months on end. Khulood Badawi of Amnesty International said in late September that Ahmad “was taken to the mental health unit at Ayalon prison after spending the better part of two years in solitary confinement. The Israeli Prison Service has requested an extension of Ahmad’s isolation for another six months in brazen violation of international law. Prolonged solitary confinement lasting more than 15 days violates the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment”.

Ahmad’s case took place during a wave of what were called “knife attacks”, when young Palestinians were accused of rushing at Israeli military posts with knives and were then shot dead. At that time, I investigated several of these attacks and found them to be based on little more than the word of Israeli soldiers. For instance, on December 17, 2015, Israeli soldiers at the Huwara checkpoint shot and killed 15-year-old Abdullah Hussein Ahmad Nasasra. Eyewitnesses told me that the boy had his hands in the air when he was fatally shot. One of them, Nasser, told me that there was no knife, and that he “saw them kill the boy”. Kamal Badran Qabalan, an ambulance driver, was not allowed to retrieve the body. The Israelis wanted control over the body and the story they would tell about it.

Another story is that of 23-year-old Anas al-Atrash in Hebron. Anas and his brother Ismail returned home from a week of work in Jericho, their car filled with fruit and vegetables. At a checkpoint, Anas got out of the car when instructed to do so and an Israeli soldier shot him dead. The next morning, Israeli media reported that Anas tried to kill the Israeli soldiers. The journalist Ben Ehrenreich, who reported the story with a fierce determination for the truth, sought out the family’s

version. Anas had no interest in politics, they told him. He was studying accounting and hoped to get married soon. The Israeli soldiers and intelligence officials kept asking Ismail if his brother had a knife. There was simply no knife. Anas had been killed in cold blood. “This is a savage country,” an eyewitness told Ehrenreich. “They have no shame.” He meant the Israeli soldiers.

The grammar of the Israeli occupation is to put pressure on Palestinians until an act of violence takes place – a knife attack, say, or even a fabricated knife attack – and then use that event as an excuse to deepen the displacement of Palestinians with more illegal settlements. The events that have followed October 7 maintain this logic. Israel has used people like Anas, Abdullah, and Ahmad, and the fabricated narratives surrounding their alleged crimes, as the *raison d’être* to increase the demolition of Palestinian homes and expand illegal Israeli settlements, accelerating the Permanent Nakba.

Intimate

Ten years ago, I met with Professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, who teaches at Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Shalhoub-Kevorkian studies how the occupation produces an everyday form of victimhood that stretches from the streets to Palestinians’ most intimate of spaces. Her book *Security Theology, Surveillance, and the Politics of Fear* (2015) provides a glimpse into the industry of fear that is produced and reproduced in the everyday violence inflicted upon Palestinians by settlers and the military, including the difficulties that Palestinians face in giving birth and burying their dead. The depth of the violence and uncertainty, Shalhoub-Kevorkian writes, moves Palestinian women to speak of “being choked, suffocated, or gagged” and has led many of their children to lose their will to live. There is widespread social trauma in Palestine or what Shalhoub-Kevorkian calls “sociocide”: the death of society.

More than 50 years of an occupation and war have created a strange dynamic. Both Ehrenreich and Shal-

houb-Kevorkian’s work offer windows into this madness. Shalhoub-Kevorkian, who lives in Jerusalem, told me that she is part of a group of women who walk Palestinian children to school each day, since it is too dangerous for them to confront the police and the settlers on their own, or even in the company of their Palestinian family and friends. “Bikhawfuni!” (“They scare me!”), one girl, Marah (age eight), told her.

The children draw pictures at school. One of them drew a clown, a Palestinian clown. When Shalhoub-Kevorkian asked the child (age nine) what a Palestinian clown is, he explained, “This is a Palestinian clown. Clowns in Palestine cry.”

The poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, who moved to Beirut to edit the magazine *Lotus* in the aftermath of the 1977 military coup in Pakistan, wrote with horror about the plight and struggles of the Palestinians:

*Tere aaga ne kiya ek Filistin barbaad
Mere zakhmon ne kiye kitne Filistin aabaad.*

*Your enemies destroyed one
Palestine.
My wounds populated many
Palestines.*

Faiz’s poem “A Lullaby for a Palestinian Child”, written during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, reflects the reality facing Palestinian children today:

*Don’t cry children.
Your mother has just cried herself
to sleep.
Don’t cry children.
Your father has just left this world of
sorrow.
Don’t cry children,
Your brother is in an alien land.
Your sister too has gone there.
Don’t cry children.
The dead sun has just been bathed
and the moon is buried in the
courtyard.
Don’t cry children.
For if you cry,
Your mother, father, brother, and
sister
And the sun, and the moon
Will make you cry ever more.
Maybe if you smile,
They’ll one day return, disguised
to play with you.*

Tricontinental

Unprecedented violence



Under administrative detention. Right: A nine-year-old Palestinian pupil drew a clown at school. 'This is a Palestinian clown. Clowns in Palestine cry,' he told Hebrew University's Professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian

US admits aiding and abetting war crimes by the Israeli government

Andre Damon

JOE BIDEN recently made a series of damning admissions regarding the ongoing genocide in Gaza that makes clear the United States is consciously aiding and abetting what it knows to be war crimes by the Israeli government.

At a campaign event, Biden stated that Israel was carrying out "indiscriminate bombing" of the civilian population of Gaza. He subsequently added that Israeli Defence Minister Ben-Gvir said, "They not only want to have retribution, which they should for what the Palestinians – Hamas – did, but against all Palestinians."

In other words, Biden admitted that Israel is not making efforts to limit civilian casualties, and explained that the reason was that the defence minister was deliberately seeking to carry out retribution, ie, collective punishment – against all Palestinian civilians, including unarmed women and children.

The American president has thus admitted to arming, funding and politically supporting the intentional murder of civilian members of a targeted ethnic group – that is genocide.

Significantly, even in light of these admissions, Biden reiterated that the United States would continue its unconditional funding and arming of the Israeli military, declaring that "in the meantime, none of it is going to walk away from providing Israel what they need to defend themselves and to finish the job."

Indiscriminate attacks are prohibited by the Geneva Conventions Additional Protocol I

of 1977. They constitute a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and the perpetrators can be prosecuted and held responsible in international and domestic courts.

Significantly, on multiple occasions, the Biden administration has made clear that the United States has set no limits on the extent to which Israel may target civilians. On November 7, asked whether it is "still the case" that the administration has "no red lines" regarding civilian deaths, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby replied, "That is still the case."

Biden's statements will be "Exhibit A" in any war crimes trial, effectively constituting an admission that the United States is consciously aiding and abetting war crimes by Israel.

In a press briefing, Kirby and State Department spokesman Matthew Miller went into damage control mode, attempting to walk back the president's statements, with Miller effectively declaring that Biden's admission did not represent the formal position of the US government. "We have not made a formal determination to that question," Miller said.

Opposite

Asked by a reporter, "Does the President believe, based on those comments, that Israel's conduct in this war thus far has been in accordance with international law?" Kirby said the opposite of Biden's statement that Israel is carrying out "indiscriminate bombing". He maintained, "We know they've stated their intent to reduce civilian casualties. And they have acted on that ... by publishing a map online." Another reporter asked,

"Biden said, of course, there were indiscriminate attacks, which to the rest of the world is a war crime."

To this, Kirby replied, "There is a clear intent by the Israelis and attempt that they have admitted to publicly that they are doing everything they can to reduce civilian casualties."

He added, "We're going to continue to support them ... They have every right to defend themselves."

The United Nations' official definition of genocide notes that there are two elements to the crime of genocide, "a mental element" and "a physical element", with the physical element being "killing members of the group" or "causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group". Israel has killed at least 10,000 Palestinian children and injured tens of thousands more.

But, the UN notes, "The intent is the most difficult element to determine." It adds, "To constitute genocide, there must be a proven intent on the part of perpetrators to physically destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group."

But as Craig Mokhiber, former director of the New York office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, explained, the Israeli assault on Gaza is a "textbook case of genocide", precisely because, "explicit statements of intent by leaders in the Israeli government and military leave no room for doubt or debate". To cite one of innumerable examples, Giora Eiland, the former head of the Israeli National Security Council, called for the deliberate targeting of Palestinian civilians and creating the conditions for the spread of "severe epidemics".

Now, however, the leading

On multiple occasions, the Biden administration has made clear that the United States has set no limits on the extent to which Israel may target civilians. On November 7, asked whether it is 'still the case' that the administration has 'no red lines' regarding civilian deaths, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby replied, 'That is still the case.'

funder and arms dealer for the government committing the genocide has explicitly stated that they are "killing members of the group" because they want to target the entire Palestinian population.

Critically, the UN document defining genocide notes, "This means that the target of destruction must be the group, as such, and not its members as individuals." When Biden admits that the Israeli Defence Ministry is seeking "retribution ... against all Palestinians", he is making clear that Israel is carrying out precisely this critical component of genocide.

Biden made these statements against the backdrop of an overwhelming vote in the United Nations General Assembly calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.

But like dozens of non-binding

resolutions passed by the United Nations over the course of decades, this resolution will have no direct effect.

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller made this perfectly clear in his briefing afterwards, declaring, "it's not the first time that Israel has not done well in a vote in the UN; you've seen the UN take a number of votes, oftentimes by fairly dramatic margins with respect to Israel, when we have disagreed with the outcome of those votes. So this is not the first time that has happened."

In other words, the United States is making clear that symbolic votes in the UN General Assembly will do nothing to stop its criminal activities. Israel, for its part, demonstrated open defiance of the vote, launching a series of atrocities, including the blowing up of a school operated by the UN refugee agency in Palestine, and flooding underground structures in Gaza with seawater, potentially poisoning the water supply and killing the plant life that sustains agriculture.

Temporary

In announcing that the US would vote against a ceasefire in Gaza, US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said, "Any ceasefire right now would be temporary at best and dangerous at worst." She added, "Israel, like every single country on earth, has the right and the responsibility to defend its people from acts of terrorism."

Workers and youth must draw the lessons of these developments. The imperialist countries that either voted for the ceasefire – including France and Australia – as well as those that abstained,

including the UK, Italy and Germany, have all endorsed Israel's onslaught against Gaza and provided material logistical support for it, with the UK, France and Australia all sending warships to the region so as to threaten Iran not to intervene.

Each and every one of these countries has attempted to criminalise demonstrations against the genocide, seeking to equate opposition to the genocide with antisemitism and support for terrorism.

The Arab states, for their part, have for years enabled Israel's oppression and mass murder of the Palestinian population in an effort to seek an accommodation with US imperialism.

None of these governments or institutions can be relied upon to stop the genocide in Gaza. The basic reality is that the struggle against the genocide in Gaza is a struggle against the governments that are supporting it.

For this reason, stopping the genocide in Gaza requires the mass mobilisation of the working class. Workers should support the call by the Palestinian trade unions not to handle war materiel destined for Israel. The global demonstrations by millions of people against the genocide must be expanded and armed with a socialist perspective.

Millions of people have taken part in marches and demonstrations against the genocide. But if this movement is to succeed, it is urgently necessary to fuse the growing movement against war with the struggles of the working class and arm this movement with the socialist perspective of putting an end to the capitalist system that is the root cause of war and imperialist barbarism.

wsws.org

INTEREST in China is growing, yet most news and analysis outside the country is produced by mainstream media from the global north. To provide Chinese perspectives, the *Dongsheng Collective* – researchers from various countries – offers a China digest. This is an edited selection. <https://dongshengnews.org/en>

Vietnam business up

CHINA has become Vietnam's largest investor, doubling its investments in the first eleven months to US\$8.2 billion. Vietnam's exports to China increased by 5 percent to reach nearly US\$50 billion, while exports to the United States fell by 15 percent in the same period.

Asia Financial

Russia trade boom

CHINA-Russia trade hit a record US\$218 billion through November, up 26.7 percent year-on-year. The target set in 2019 to increase bilateral trade to US\$200 billion by 2024 was reached ahead of schedule, thanks to energy trade and the growing use of the yuan. China's exports to Russia increased by 50.2 percent and imports from Russia by 26.7 percent.

Global Times

HK vote turnout low

HONG Kong's 2023 District Council Elections voter turnout set a record low of 27.5 percent. With 1.19 million voters having cast their ballots for 88 directly elected seats, the city leader will elect another 179, local committees will decide another 176, and rural leaders will hold the remaining 27 seats.

South China Morning Post

Exports rise by 0.5%

CHINA'S exports rose 0.5 percent year-on-year in November, following a six-month slump. After a 6.4 percent drop in October, November exports reached US\$291.9 billion, driven by sales of cars and cell phones, which rose 54 percent. On the other hand, imports fell 0.6 percent to US\$223.5 billion after a 3 percent increase in October.

Nikkei Asia

Rural women online

CHINA'S rural women are trending on social media, showing off their work and increasing their purchasing power. Research from a China Women's Federation magazine found that 40 percent of the content analysed focused on making domestic and agricultural work visible, while 34 percent broke down traditional perceptions of rural women. Social media has introduced the digital economy to rural women, enabling new opportunities.

Sixth Tone

Billionaires down 15%

THE number of Chinese billionaires fell again, now 15 percent or 224 individuals less than two years ago when the peak was reached. Total wealth fell 4 percent to US\$3.2 trillion – 522 saw their wealth increase however. China remains the country with the most dollar billionaires in the world (895), almost 200 more than the US and more than three times as many as India.

Hurun

Steely determination

CHINA has gone from being a buyer to a producer of high-end steel sheets in less than a decade. Steel sheets, the cost of which per gram became almost the same as gold, has a wide range of applications, such as aerospace components, solar panels, folding cell phones, and surgical equipment.

South China Morning Post

COP 28

Imperialism is the biggest barrier to climate change

It affects developing nations' ability to transition from fossil fuels

Tina Landis

The COP28 UN Climate Conference that closed on December 13 once again failed to make any meaningful commitments to stemming the climate crisis and instead seemed to be in complete denial of the urgent crisis that humanity faces.

The conference took place in the petro state of the United Arab Emirates, and was led by oil executive Sultan al-Jaber, who was appointed president of COP28 despite overwhelming opposition.

On top of this blatant conflict of interest, more than 2,500 fossil fuel lobbyists were also in attendance, bringing the green washing that always occurs at these events to new heights.

We are all witnessing the unravelling of our global climate with more extreme and unpredictable weather increasing each year. 2023 is on track to be the hottest year on record with the warmest eight years all occurring since 2015.

Urgency

You would expect this increasing urgency that is threatening life on this planet to be reflected within the international bodies that are tasked with addressing the climate crisis. But instead, we see a mad scramble from the very industries that are most responsible for the problem – backed by Western capitalist interests – attempting to maintain the status quo to ensure profits continue to roll in.

How can we take these climate conferences seriously when these same interests are allowed not only to attend, but to also control the outcome?

US imperialism is the biggest obstacle to preventing climate disaster

THE COP28 negotiations ended with the adoption of language to “transition away” from fossil fuels, rather than “phasing out” fossil fuels, which was the stronger language that 130 countries called for.

The goal of accelerating zero- and low-emission technologies includes nuclear, which has the third highest life-cycle emissions of any energy source, and carbon capture and storage, which has yet to be proven safe or effective in reducing carbon emissions, and is really just a cover for continued fossil fuel production with some minor tweaking of emissions controls.

There was also language to “phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies”, which was also included in the COP27 agreement, yet US\$7 trillion annually still gets handed over to oil, gas and coal sectors globally.

The loss and damage fund agreed upon at past COPs, which wealthy nations agreed to start contributing US\$100 billion to annually starting in 2020, has yet to see more than a trickle of funding and no plan as to who pays how much. The fund is an attempt to balance wealthy countries' overwhelming responsibility for climate change with developing nations' burden of increasing climate disasters and a much lower contribution to the problem.

While the fund attempts to address the historic contribution of emissions stemming from the Western imperialist countries, it fails to make an honest assessment of the role of imperialism in holding back the world from overcoming climate change today. The UN conferences never talk about the immense carbon emissions from the US military industrial complex, which are still exempt from

“The large-scale advances that China is making toward sustainability – like their eco-cities and sponge cities – show how socialism has the capacity to solve the crisis through the centralisation of resources and a planned economy. The multipolar world emerging beyond the grip of Western imperialism also shows a path toward cooperation and shared development

UN emissions reporting, despite the fact that the US military is the largest institutional consumer of fossil fuels on the planet. And to truly achieve the rapid emission reductions in an equitable and just manner globally will take international cooperation on an unprecedented scale, free of domination and divisiveness by a few wealthy countries that prefer the status quo.

The role of Western imperialism in blocking the path to an ecologically sustainable world is the biggest barrier to the change that's needed for our survival.

Imperialism impacts developing nations' ability to transition away from fossil fuels and protect ecosystems like forests, wetlands, oceans and river systems. Imperialism keeps developing countries deeply indebted, which forces them to sell off their resources for transnational corporations to plunder. It blocks the sharing of

technologies through sanctions and trade deals that benefit Western capitalist interests. And the US and its imperialist partners literally bomb, invade, occupy, destroy, undermine and economically blockade any country that attempts to take a path independent of Western domination and exploitation.

Socialism is the only way forward

HOW CAN we have any honest negotiations on climate change with imperialists in the room? What is needed is internationalism – which can only truly occur under socialism – where all countries work together and share resources and technologies to overcome the global crisis, and collectively provide real assistance and aid to countries most impacted by climate disasters with no strings attached.

We cannot let the ineffectiveness of the UN climate summits demoralise and deactivate us. So many communities around the globe are already implementing real solutions in their local areas, from renewable energy-powered micro grids, to using organic, regenerative methods to grow food, to ecological restoration of the land and oceans and so much more that contributes to healing the planet.

Evolving

The large-scale advances that China is making toward sustainability – like their eco-cities and sponge cities – show how socialism has the capacity to solve the crisis through the centralisation of resources and a planned economy. The multipolar world emerging beyond the grip of Western imperialism also shows a path toward cooperation and shared development. But the domination of Western imperialism is holding

humanity back from truly evolving and transforming how we live on this planet and relate to the natural world.

Capitalism requires ever-expanding markets and endless exploitation of our labour and the Earth. It cannot be anything else. And it must be overthrown and replaced with socialism for humanity to move forward.

Imagine a future where the US\$1 trillion of the US budget that goes to the military every year and the millions of workers that contribute to the war machine could be utilised to build a sustainable world, contributing to life instead of destruction and domination. Under socialism, communities would have the resources and power to implement climate solutions and contribute to the global effort.

Building social movements that connect all our struggles – poverty, homelessness, racism, police brutality, poor working conditions, lack of affordable healthcare and education, and the climate crisis – is the solution.

We have seen a huge leap forward in consciousness over the last few months with a whole new layer of society seeing through the lies of the imperialists as they continue to enact genocide against the Palestinian people.

That same awakening will inevitably happen for millions more as the capitalist system continues to show that it is incapable and unwilling to implement the solutions that are needed for a liveable future.

Humanity has the tools and the understanding to make the transformations that are needed to solve the climate crisis and all the other crises we face. Only the capitalist system and the handful of the super-rich that control that system stand in our way.

Liberation

Taxing problem of transnational corporations' unregulated profits

The Global South fight to rein in the greed of the wealthiest companies

Vijay Prashad

WITHIN the United Nations, there is a little-known debate about the status of global tax regulation.

In August 2023, UN Secretary-General António Guterres released a draft document called “Promotion of Inclusive and Effective International Tax Cooperation at the United Nations”. This document comes out of a long debate led by the Global South about the unregulated behaviour of transnational corporations (especially the ways in which they avoid taxation) and about the fact that discussions regarding regulations have been dominated by Global North countries (notably those in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, an intergovernmental platform largely made up of the richest countries in the world).

In October 2022, the government of Nigeria spearheaded a resolution in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) that advocated for an international tax cooperation treaty and proposed that the UN take over jurisdiction of the debate about tax regulation. In December 2022, the UNGA passed the resolution, which asked Guterres to move forward with a report on the topic and develop a new international tax agenda.

Guterres's August 2023 report affirmed the need for an “inclusive and effective” tax treaty, arguing that the two-pillar solution laid out in the OECD and G20's Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting is insufficient.

Minority

The second pillar in this solution discusses the development of a global minimum effective tax on “excess profits”. However, this tax would be levied on a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction basis, which would open the entire process to chaos. Furthermore, even though the OECD-G20 policy has been developed by a minority of countries, it is intended to become the global norm for all countries. Even when the OECD and G20 ask for inputs from other countries, Guterres writes, “many of those countries find that there are significant barriers to meaningful engagement in agenda-setting and decision making”. This, Guterres said, is unjust. The UN should be the site where a new international taxation treaty is created, not a site for arbitrary bodies such as the OECD and the G20 to impose their agendas.



To be fair, the OECD has developed a number of important proposals, including a global tax deal in 2021 that was agreed upon by 136 countries. However, due to pressure from transnational corporations (and the United States government), the implementation of this agreement was delayed until 2026. Nonetheless, leaks from illicit tax havens (such as the Paradise Papers, beginning in 2017, and the Luxembourg Leaks, beginning in 2014) brought the issue of the regulating of financial flows to the fore, pressuring the OECD and the G20 to act on its promises.

An outcome statement from the OECD in July 2023 put the issue back on the table, with the two-pillar tax regime coming into effect in 2024. This regime institutes a global tax of at least 15 percent on transnational corporations' profits that exceed €750 million in each jurisdiction. Even here, the regulations offer transnational corporations a safe harbour until June 2028 through practices such as a simplified effective tax rate, a routine profits test, and a de minimis test – all instruments that require some accounting training to properly

understand. In other words, the system designed to regulate transnational corporations merely creates business opportunities for global accounting firms that help these companies continue to shield their profits.

In 2022, the main four accounting firms earned between US\$34 and US\$60 billion each in revenues, and Deloitte alone earned US\$64.9 billion in 2023 (a 9.3 percent increase since last year).

Estimate

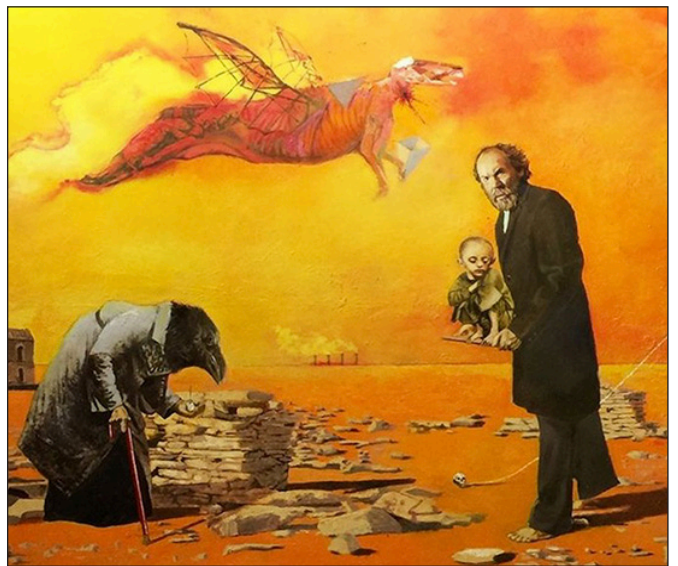
The Tax Justice Network's annual report, published in July 2023, noted that the entire debate over taxes “boils down to one number: US\$4.8 trillion. That is how much tax we estimate wealthy corporations and individuals will avoid and evade over the next decade under the current direction of OECD tax leadership”. The data shows that, “higher income countries lose the greatest amounts of revenue in absolute terms and also that they are responsible for the greatest share of the problem, globally”.

The top ten contributors to global tax theft are, in descending order; the United Kingdom,

the Netherlands, the Cayman Islands, Saudi Arabia, Luxembourg, Bermuda, the United States, Singapore, Ireland, and Hong Kong (it is worth noting that both the Cayman Islands and Bermuda are British territories). Lower income countries, however, “incur the most intense losses, losing by far the greatest share of their current tax revenues or public spending needs”. For instance, as the OECD report Tax Transparency in Africa 2023 shows, the continent loses up to US\$88 billion each year due to illicit financial flows. In its report, the Tax Justice Network issued a clarion call:

“Countries have a choice to make: forfeit the money now, and with it our future, to the wealthiest handful of people in the world, or claim it, and with it a future where the power of the wealthiest corporations and billionaires, like the kings and barons before them, is reined in by the march of democracy. A future where tax is our most powerful tool for addressing the challenges our societies face and for building a fairer, greener, and more inclusive world.”

In 1975, the United Nations established the Information and Research Centre on Transnational



Left; Quentin Massijs ((Belgium), *The Tax Collectors*, c. 1525–1530. Above: Arturo Rivera (Mexico), *El Encuentro* ('The Meeting'), 2016. Art from Tricontinental's site: <https://thetricontinental.org/newsletter/issue/global-tax-regulation/>

Corporations (UNCTC). Two interconnected events led to its inception: first, the UNGA's passage of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) in 1974, and second, the coup against the Popular Unity government of Chilean President Salvador Allende in September 1973.

By 1972, Allende had taken leadership of the process to create the NIEO to allow countries such as Chile sovereignty over their raw materials. Allende spoke forcefully on these issues at the UNCTAD III meeting in Santiago in April 1972 and at the UNGA in December 1972. The coup against Allende strengthened the will in the Third World to oversee and regulate transnational corporations such as the former telecommunications giant International Telegraph and Telephone Company (ITT) and copper firm Anaconda, both of which played a decisive role in the coup in Chile. The UNCTC was, therefore, the child of both the NIEO and the coup.

The UNCTC's mission was straightforward: build an information system about the activities of transnational corporations, create technical assistance programmes that help Third World governments negotiate with these firms, and establish a code of conduct that these firms would need to abide by with respect to their international activities. The UNCTC, with 33 employees, did not begin its work until 1977. From the start, it found itself under pressure levied by the International Chamber of Commerce as well as various US-based think tanks, which lobbied the US government to prevent it from functioning.

Plunder

Nonetheless, in its 15 years of existence, UNCTC staff produced 265 documents that covered areas such as bilateral investment treaties and the social impact of transnational corporations. The UNCTC's work was slowly inching toward creating a code of conduct for transnational firms, which would have hampered the ability of the firms to create a system of financial plunder through illicit financial flows (including transfer pricing and remittance of profits). In 1987, the UNGA urged the

UNCTC to finalise the code of conduct and hold a special session to discuss the code.

That same year, the Heritage Foundation, based in the US, argued that the UNCTC had a “deliberate anti-West and anti-free enterprise motive”. In March 1991, the US State Department sent a démarche to its embassies to lobby against the code of conduct, which it saw as a “relic of another era, when foreign direct investment was looked upon with considerable concern”. The session to finalise the code of conduct never took place. The US pushed the incoming UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to abolish the UNCTC, which he did as part of a broader UN reform agenda. This was the sunset of tax regulation. When the OECD picked up the mantle, it did so almost to ensure that a patina of liberalism would remain in place while transnational corporations operated in a largely lawless global environment.

In 1976, the radical Peruvian poet Magda Portal (1900–1989) wrote “A Poem for Ernesto Cardenal” (a Nicaraguan poet). The poem acknowledged that inequality and misery had been in our towns for centuries, but that what the “transnational corporations and their henchmen” are doing is worse. As she wrote:

On this side of America, you can feel the nauseating and toxic breath of those who only want our mines, our oil, our gold, and our food.

Never was more torment spread over the sleepless earth. It was not more execrable to continue living without shouting at the top of our lungs in a howl, the protest, the rejection, the demand for justice. To whom? How can we continue living like this on a daily basis, ruminating on food, loving and enjoying life when hundreds of thousands of condemned people on Earth are drowning in their own blood? And in Black Africa, with its apartheid and its Sowetos, and in Namibia and Rhodesia, and in Asia, in Lebanon and in Northern Ireland, on the rack of the executed? Can we continue living like this when a single scream of horror runs through the vertebrae of the world?

Tricontinental

Asia leads the way despite the West

China pioneering a new kind of socialist path

Vijay Prashad

IN OCTOBER 2023, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) published its annual Trade and Development Report. Nothing in the report came as a major surprise.

The growth of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) continues to decline with no sign of a rebound. Following a modest post-pandemic recovery of 6.1 percent in 2021, economic growth in 2023 fell to 2.4 percent, below pre-pandemic levels, and is projected to remain at 2.5 percent in 2024. The global economy, UNCTAD says, is “flying at ‘stall speed’”, with all conventional indicators showing that most of the world is experiencing a recession.

The latest notebook from Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, *The World in Depression: A Marxist Analysis of Crisis*, questions the use of the term “recession” to describe the current situation, arguing that it acts as “a smokescreen meant to hide the true nature of the crisis”. Rather, the notebook explains that “the prolonged and profound crisis that we are experiencing today is . . . a great depression”.

Neglect

Most governments in the world have used conventional tools to try and grow their way out of the great depression, but these approaches have placed an enormous cost on household budgets, which are already hit hard by high inflation, and have curbed the investments needed to improve employment prospects. As UNCTAD notes, central banks “prioritise short-term monetary stability over long-term financial sustainability. This trend, together with inadequate regulation in commodity markets and continuous neglect for rising inequality, are fracturing the world economy”.

Our team in Brazil explores these matters further in the recently launched *Financiarização do capital e a luta de classes* (“Financialisation of Capital and the Class Struggle”), the fourth issue of our Portuguese-language journal *Revista Estudos do Sul Global* (“Journal of Global South Studies”).

There are some exceptions to this rule, however. UNCTAD projects that five of the G20 countries will experience better growth rates in 2024: Brazil, China,

Japan, Mexico, and Russia. There are different reasons why these countries are exceptions: in Brazil, for instance, “booming commodity exports and bumper harvests are driving an uptick in growth”, as UNCTAD writes, while Mexico has benefited from “less aggressive monetary tightening and an inflow of new investment to establish new manufacturing capacity, triggered by the bottlenecks that emerged in East Asia in 2021 and 2022”. What seems to unite these countries is that they have not tightened monetary policy and have used various forms of state intervention to ensure that necessary investments are made in manufacturing and infrastructure.

The OECD’s Economic Outlook, published in November 2023, is consistent with UNCTAD’s assessment, suggesting that “global growth remains highly dependent on fast-growing Asian economies”. Over the next two years, the OECD estimates that this economic growth will be concentrated in India, China, and Indonesia, which collectively account for nearly 40 percent of the world population. In a recent International Monetary Fund assessment titled “China Stumbles But Is Unlikely To Fall”, Eswar Prasad writes that “China’s economic performance has been stellar over the past three decades”. Prasad, the former head of the IMF’s China desk, attributes this performance to the large volume of state investment in the economy and, in recent years, to the growth of household consumption (which is related to the eradication of extreme poverty). Like others in the IMF and OECD, Prasad marvels at how China has been able to grow so fast “without many attributes that economists have identified as being crucial for growth – such as a well-functioning financial system, a strong institutional framework, a market-oriented economy, and a democratic and open system of government”. Prasad’s description of these four factors is ideologically driven and misleading. For instance, it is hard to think of the US financial system as “well-functioning” in the wake of the housing crisis that triggered a banking crisis across the Atlantic world, or given that roughly US\$36 trillion – or a fifth of global liquidity – is sitting in illicit tax havens with no oversight or regulation.

What the data shows us is that a set of Asian countries is growing very quickly, with India and China in the lead, and with the latter having the longest sustained period of rapid economic growth over at least the past 30 years. This is uncontested. What is contested is the explanation why China, in par-



Above: Han Youngsoo (Republic of Korea), Seoul, Korea 1956–1963. Below: Chinese Perspectives On Twenty-First Century Socialism

WENHUA ZONGHENG

Quarterly Journal of Chinese Thought



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Chinese Perspectives on
Twenty-First Century Socialism

ticular, has experienced such high rates of economic growth, how it has been able to eradicate extreme poverty, and, in recent decades, why it has struggled to overcome the perils of social inequality. The IMF and the OECD are unable to formulate a proper assessment of China because they reject – ab initio – that China is pioneering a new kind of socialist path. This fits within the West’s failure to comprehend the reasons for development and underdevelopment in the Global South more broadly.

Over the past year, Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research has engaged with Chinese scholars who have been trying to understand how their country was able to break free of the “development of underdevelopment” cycle. As part of this process, we collaborate with the Chinese journal *Wenhua Zongheng* to produce an interna-

tional quarterly edition that collects the work of Chinese scholars who are experts on the respective topics and brings voices from Africa, Asia, and Latin America into dialogue with China. The first three issues have looked at the shifting geopolitical alignments in the world (“On the Threshold of a New International Order”, March 2023), China’s decades-long pursuit of socialist modernisation (“China’s Path from Extreme Poverty to Socialist Modernisation”, June 2023), and the relationship between China and Africa (“China-Africa Relations in the Belt and Road Era”, October 2023).

The latest issue, “Chinese Perspectives on Twenty-First Century Socialism” (December 2023), traces the evolution of the global socialist movement and tries to identify its future direction. In this issue, Yang Ping, the editor

of the Chinese-language version of *Wenhua Zongheng*, and Pan Shiwei, the honorary president of the Institute of Cultural Marxism, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, contend that a new period in socialist history is currently emerging.

For Yang and Pan, this new “wave” or “form” of socialism, following the birth of Marxism in 19th century Europe and the rise of many socialist states and socialist-inspired national liberation movements in the 20th century, began to emerge with China’s period of reform and opening up in the 1970s. They argue that, through a gradual process of reform and experimentation, China has developed a distinct socialist market economy. The authors both assess how China can strengthen its socialist system to overcome various domestic and international challenges as well as

the global implications of China’s rise – that is, whether or not it can promote a new wave of socialist development in the world.

In the introduction to this issue, Marco Fernandes, a researcher at Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, writes that China’s growth has been sharply distinct from that of the West since it has not relied upon colonial plunder or the predatory exploitation of natural resources in the Global South. Instead, Fernandes argues that China has formulated its own socialist path, which has included public control over finance, state planning of the economy, heavy investments in key areas that generate not only growth but also social progress, and promoting a culture of science and technology. Public finance, investment, and planning allowed China to industrialise through advancements in science and technology and through improving human capital and human life. China has shared many of its lessons with the world, such as the need to control finance, harness science and technology, and industrialise.

Initiative

The Belt and Road Initiative, now ten years old, is one avenue for such cooperation between China and the Global South. However, while China’s rise has provided developing countries with more choices and has improved their prospects for development, Fernandes is cautious about the possibility of a new “socialist wave”, warning that the obstinate facts facing the Global South, such as hunger and unemployment, cannot be overcome unless there is industrial development. He writes: “This will not be attainable merely through relations with China (or Russia). It is necessary to strengthen national popular projects with broad participation from progressive social sectors, especially the working classes, otherwise the fruits of any development are unlikely to be reaped by those who need them the most. Given that few countries in the Global South are currently experiencing an upsurge in mass movements, the prospects for a global “third socialist wave” remain very challenging; rather, a new wave of development with the potential to take on a progressive character, seems more feasible.”

This is precisely what we indicated in our July dossier, *The World Needs a New Socialist Development Theory*. A future that centres the wellbeing of humankind and the planet will not materialise on its own; it will only emerge from organised social struggles.

Tricontinental

G7 discusses Gaza future without Hamas, ignoring Palestine views

Old habits die hard as imperialists carve up Middle East to satisfy Israel

Tafi Mhaka

OLD (colonial) habits die hard. After a two-day meeting of foreign ministers from the wealthy Group of Seven (G7) countries in the Japanese capital, Tokyo, in early November, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced that the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas would no longer be allowed to rule Gaza.

“Israel has repeatedly told us that there’s no going back to October 6 before the barbaric attacks by Hamas,” Blinken said, adding that Gaza – besieged and separated from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory – should eventually be unified with the West Bank but only “under the Palestinian Authority”.

Hence, the G7 nations – the United States, Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy – plus the European Union, seemingly ignored what the rest of the world and, most importantly Palestinians in Gaza and elsewhere, may think or want and singlehandedly decided that Hamas is effectively over and Palestine after this war will be shaped according to the wishes of Israel.

As an African, I find it extremely condescending and disturbing that the world’s leading former colonial powers sat around a small table in Tokyo and developed a provisional blueprint for the sociopolitical future of Palestine, all without a clear mandate or significant input from the Palestinians.

And I couldn’t help but notice the dubious convention in Tokyo bore a striking resemblance to the infamous Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, where Western powers met to stake their illegal claims to African territories.

Even though one of the Berlin Conference’s alleged aims was to consider the interests of the Indigenous populations, Otto von Bismarck, the first chancellor of the German empire, did not invite Africans to the 104-day-long conference.

To my mind, the G7’s exclusive rendezvous in Tokyo was Gaza’s umpteenth Berlin 1884 moment in the past seven decades.

Why can Palestinians not exercise their democratic right to choose a government of their liking? Why does the G7 get to impose a new political arrangement and dispensation that will specifically exclude Hamas? Is democracy in Palestine only synonymous with the West’s (and Israel’s) demands?

To be clear, Blinken – the highest ranking diplomat of a country that has waged countless bloody wars across the world in the name of “democracy” and “human rights” – did not mention anything at all in this meeting, which included zero Palestinian representatives, about Palestinian self-determination. He did not make any plans to aid the surviving inhabitants of the besieged enclave, to hold a referendum on Gaza’s political fu-



High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly, France’s Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna and Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani attend a working dinner during G7 ministerial meetings, in Tokyo, Japan

ture or put forward a roadmap for them to hold democratic elections to choose a post-war leadership of their liking.

Far from establishing a viable peace in Gaza and the West Bank, the G7 countries want to obliterate the will of the Palestinian people, clearly in the vain hope it will facilitate a problematic return to an Israeli-friendly dispensation under Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, a deeply unpopular and ineffective leader who has long been eager to “cooperate” with Israel to keep his government in power and the Palestinian resistance to apartheid and occupation in check.

Clandestine

Hamas has been governing Gaza since it defeated Abbas’s Fatah party in the January 2006 parliamentary elections. Since then, the Western countries conspired to topple the Hamas government and return Gaza to PA control at least one more time.

In 2006, then-US President George W Bush and his secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, reportedly approved a clandestine plan for Abbas’s Fatah party to overthrow the Hamas government in Gaza.

In the event the plot failed, the Bush administration had set aside US\$1.27bn over five years to train 4,700 new Fatah troops that would try to disrupt and eventually oust the democratically elected government of Gaza.

Although these plans failed and are now widely condemned as illegal, immoral and counterproductive, today the US and its powerful allies once again appear determined to get rid of Hamas and put the entirety of the occupied Palestinian territories under a docile, Israel-friendly puppet government.

This should not be allowed. Forcing Palestinians under the authority of a government that is only Palestinian in name and that is propped up by and indebted to colonial powers will not achieve sustainable peace or deliver justice.

As Africans, we know such neo-colonial puppet governments either swiftly fail and trigger renewed bloodshed or remain in power for a prolonged time through violence, oppression and outside support while turning the land they govern in the name of their colonial masters into a swamp of corruption, human rights abuses, extreme poverty and widespread unemployment – a swamp that takes consequent national government years, if not decades, to fully clean up.

I lived through the first scenario myself. I was born in Rhodesia, a white settler colonial state in Southern Africa (present-day Zimbabwe), where Africans were discriminated against and had only a few, very limited land, socioeconomic, political and human rights.

Like most countries on our beautiful continent, freedom was not handed to us Zimbabweans on a silver platter. Thousands of men and women fought and died in the 1896-1897 First Chimurenga and the 1964-1979 Second Chimurenga (revolutionary liberation wars).

The nationalist successes in the Second Chimurenga and growing international pressure for a political resolution to the conflict led to the formation of a new Black government of supposed moderate African nationalist Bishop Abel T Muzorewa.

Rhodesia-Zimbabwe, however, was still a country controlled not by its Indigenous inhabitants, but by white settlers. Its short-lived constitution allowed the settlers to retain their ill-gotten farms and make all important government appointments and promotions. Muzorewa and his black cabinet ministers were nothing but eloquent and well-educated political stooges who served to protect

white supremacy and impede Zimbabweans’ 89-year struggle for land and independence.

The people refused to support the puppet administration, and the Patriotic Front, a guerrilla alliance waging an armed struggle against settlers, continued its fight for a fully independent country.

The Organisation of African Unity, the predecessor to the African Union, also refused to recognise Muzorewa’s government. The settlers’ nefarious plans to co-opt a few black moderate political elites and rule through a toothless front fell flat within a year, and Zimbabwe gained its independence in April 1980.

Strategic

Elsewhere in Africa, some puppet regimes did endure, unfortunately. In January 1960, France successfully installed a neo-colonial government in Cameroon under Ahmadou Ahidjo, the West African country’s founding president. As a consequence of a co-operation agreement signed by Ahidjo and then-French President Charles de Gaulle on December 26, 1959, France had control over Cameroon’s political, economic and sociocultural direction. It also provided Cameroon with the

CFA franc, a currency guaranteed by France and pegged initially to the French franc and then to the euro, and continued exploiting Cameroon’s strategic raw materials. French advisers even had the authority to overrule Cameroonian ministers on crucial policy decisions.

Cameroon was effectively rendered a French imperial outpost, and Ahidjo went along with it. It gained independence in 1960, but the principal beneficiaries of its freedom were the French treasury, French politicians, French businesses, and everyday Frenchmen and women. To this day, Cameroon is still working to free itself fully from the suffocating grasp of its former colonial ruler.

As demonstrated in Zimbabwe, Cameroon and many other African countries, puppet regimes are a certain recipe for disaster.

It would be a colossal mistake to allow the West to get its way in Palestine and ensure that all of the occupied Palestinian territories are ruled by a puppet regime like that of Abbas, which in the end serves only the Israeli state, which keeps it in power.

Sustainable peace in the region can be secured only after the formation of an independent Palestinian state along the 1967 borders and nothing less.

Just like us Africans did some decades ago when we were living under colonial occupation, Palestinians today have the right to resist Israel in anyway they see fit and to choose their own political leaders, be they from Hamas, Fatah or any other political organisation.

African countries and the African Union should oppose and not recognise any political dispensation or roadmap that smothers the democratic will of the Palestinian people.

As Israel makes clear its plans after the end of this war to occupy Gaza for an indefinite time, expand its illegal settlement enterprise in the West Bank and continue to deny the Palestinian right to self-determination, African states, which know such colonial abuse well, should not stand idly by.

They must sever diplomatic ties with Israel and pressure it to follow international law.

The time is ripe for the end of Western colonisation in Palestine, and Africa must do its part to put things right.

Aljazeera

Hearing date set for Assange’s last bid to fight extradition

FEBRUARY 20 and 21 have been confirmed as the dates for a hearing of what is the last avenue of appeal within the British legal system open to WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange.

The confirmed hearing means that Assange is perilously close to extradition to the US, where he would be tried in a secret national security court on Espionage Act charges carrying a maximum-sentence of 175-years’ imprisonment.

The date was revealed shortly before Christmas – the fifth Assange has spent behind bars in maximum-security Belmarsh Prison.

His supporters have repeatedly warned that during that protracted detention, solely aimed at facilitating the US extradition

request, Assange’s health has continued to worsen.

In a press release, his wife, Stella Assange, stated: “The last four-and-a-half years have taken the most considerable toll on Julian and his family, including our two young sons. His mental health and physical state have deteriorated significantly.” She added: “With the myriad of evidence that has come to light since the original hearing in 2019, such as the violation of legal privilege and reports that senior US officials were involved in formulating assassination plots against my husband, there is no denying that a fair trial, let alone Julian’s safety on US soil, is an impossibility were he to be extradited. The persecution of this innocent journalist

and publisher must end.” The hearing will be held before a panel of two High Court judges. They are to review an earlier decision, released in writing by another High Court judge on June 6, refusing Assange permission to appeal.

To find in favour of Assange, the judges would, in effect, need to overturn a decision previously brought down by one of their colleagues. If they were to do so, it would not result in Assange’s freedom, only permission to proceed with a full appeal hearing at some point in the future.

If the High Court panel upholds the previous rejection, Assange’s avenues within the British legal system are closed. There is an application to appeal before the European Court of Human Rights, but

it is entirely unclear whether Britain would even accept its jurisdiction in the case.

In his June 6 ruling, Justice Sir Jonathan Swift declared that there was not a point of law on which Assange could appeal. Assange’s lawyers had been seeking to appeal on substantive grounds, including the fact that the WikiLeaks founder is being targeted by the US for his political opinions and protected speech, which would rule out extradition under the relevant US-British treaty.

They had also raised that the US had misrepresented the facts of the case to the British courts and that the extradition attempt constituted an abuse of process. Swift summarily dismissed those arguments in a short written judgement.

wsws.org



OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ARE FED UP

THERE IS no age group in this country today that is as united and strong as the young people in expressing their frustration and discontent with Mr Hakainde Hichilema's leadership.

While other voters across the political spectrum are equally concerned about the current state of affairs, the young people are increasingly frustrated and worried, and are turning to various social media platforms to vent their disappointment, displeasure and outrage at the current socioeconomic and political climate.

With the Kwacha in free fall, the rising cost of living, high unemployment, grand corruption, ethnic bigotry, political tensions, unfilled campaign promises and many more issues, it is clear that the young people are getting convinced each day that passes that Mr Hichilema and his corrupt puppet regime do not possess either the imagination or the will power to change this country and its people.

The clarity and conviction from the young

people that Mr Hichilema will not change anything is actually very scary for this government.

In fact, the growing numbers of frustrated, hungry, and angry young people is a clear warning to Mr Hichilema and his league, as they struggle to cope with the growing economic crisis in the country that, not all is well for them.

Our young people already feel disengaged, forgotten, and deflated by the current leadership's inability to find common ground in dealing directly with the problems they face. They feel isolated and frustrated with the daily challenges of their lives.

They were promised sweeping reforms and improved lives, but none of this has materialised to date.

Consequently, there is a serious realisation among the young people that they were deceived, and there is definitely no innovative approach to the problems they face. They also don't see how this leadership can be trusted and respected in view of its deceptive

behaviour and lack of accountability for its actions.

Today, the young people have been left out to dry, and they are yearning for decent, honest, and patriotic leadership, and not Mr Hichilema's "wishy-washy" puppet leadership.

However, we would like to assure the young people of this country that we are aware of their problems, frustrations, concerns, and fears about their future and we would like to encourage them not to lose hope.

We urge them to continue with their hard work, commitment, and patriotism as we march together towards a more just, equal, peaceful, and prosperous future.

It is clear that Mr Hichilema is out of touch with the people of all age brackets, especially the younger generation. He doesn't have the required patriotism, vision, and dynamism to steer this country forward.

One bad term, doesn't deserve another, aleya!

Fred M'membe, Socialist Party President

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