

# Buffalo Forum



Local Publication of the  
U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization

**Workers of all countries, unite!**

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**April 20, 2018**

**Vol. 22 #4**

## DEMONSTRATIONS DEMAND

### Hands Off Syria! End All U.S. Wars Now!

Across the country on April 14-15 antiwar demonstrations took place rejecting Trump's illegal bombing of Syria and demanding *Hands Off Syria! End All U.S. Wars Now!* In some cities, like Boston, emergency demonstrations were held before the bombing took place and the

day after as well. Elsewhere, regional actions in Washington, DC, New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles brought people together to demand U.S. wars end now, not tomorrow, and that the U.S. close all foreign bases. Participants included

***End All U.S. Wars Now • 3***

## BUFFALO ANTIWAR RALLY

### To End U.S. Wars, Organize for an Anti-War Government

Buffalo joined many others demonstrating April 14-15 to *End All U.S. Wars* and oppose crimes at home, like police killings and deportations. Focus was given to opposing the bombing of Syria, the war against Yemen and the brutal attacks against Palestine. The spirit was that of standing as one in the fight for the rights of all abroad and at home. A number of organizations united in action for the rally and did broad mobilization through leafleting, poster and discussions on campuses, at churches and in the community. The internationalist spirit was also reflected in the poster for the rally, which was a large flag with the flags of many of the countries under attack by the U.S. contained within it. Chanting and signs brought out the connection between government violence against the peoples at home and abroad. *Killer Cops, Killer Drones, We Say Stop! Our Security Lies in Our Fight, for Our Rights We Unite! Defend Rights Abroad and at Home, No Wars! All Troops Home Now!* were among the chants.

***Anti-War Government • 4***



## ALL OUT FOR APRIL 20 ACTIONS

### Buffalo Students Join National Student Walkout

Students at several Buffalo area schools are organizing walkouts as part of the April 20 National Student Walkouts, where almost 2500 events are planned. The students are demanding solutions to the problem of gun violence, at their schools and in their communities, including demanding an end to police killings. They are also defending their right to education, including safe schools and the funding required.

Across New York and the country,

students are rejecting government plans for increasing the use of guns and force, such as having armed police in public schools, more fences and security cameras and various other means to make schools like prisons, not places of learning. As signs in many actions have brought out, students are putting forward solutions such as *Arm Teachers with Resources, Not Guns* and *Demilitarize Police to Bring Peace in Our Streets*.

***April 20 Actions • 14***

### Security Lies in Our Fight for Rights

As students gear up for more walkouts April 20, the issue of solutions that provide for the security and safety of the students, in their schools and communities, is being raised. The example provided by the president, of bombing Syria and continued wars against Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen, sending troops against immigrants and refugees at the southern

***Security Lies in Our Fight for Rights • 15***

## SAY NO!

### Killer Cops and Killer Drones Are Government Genocide

Several more police killings and impunity for those guilty of them have taken place in the past few weeks. These include:

- March 18: Stephon Clark — gunned down by two Sacramento,

***Killer Cops and Killer Drones • 15***

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## ***OPPOSE VIOLENCE OF POVERTY, RACISM, WAR***

### **Buffalo's King Legacy Rally and March**



A march and rally was organized in Buffalo April 4, the 50th Anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. A variety of groups came to gather for the rally. People spoke to their own experience with King when he came to Buffalo, as well as the experience of various other people who worked with King. The one thing that stood out was the view that to honor King, it was necessary to take action. What was left unsaid was what that action should be in this period. King himself spoke to this to some extent when he stated, "The Triple Evils of POVERTY, RACISM and MILITARISM are forms of violence that exist in a vicious cycle. They are interrelated, all-inclusive... The great problem and the great challenge facing mankind today is to get rid of war ..." *Buffalo Forum* urges all to consider that to contend with the violence of poverty, racism and war, we require an anti-war government and a pro-social agenda. Joining and strengthening the organized resistance with the aim of taking steps toward an anti-war government and an electoral process that ensures it is needed.



**I • END ALL U.S. WARS**

those demanding that the U.S. get out of the Philippines and Korea. Everywhere demonstrators called to *Stop Funding War and Fund Our Rights!* Attention was also given to the crimes of violence at home, including police killings and the connection between government use of force abroad and its use of force and violence at home. Signs included *Demilitarize the Police* and *All U.S. Troops Home Now*.

Dozens of actions took place in cities south to north and east to west. They reflected the growing antiwar stand of the majority and their rejection of a war government and war economy that provides no security at home or abroad. In many places the students engaged in walkouts and organizing against gun violence joined the actions, as did the many undocumented youth opposing immigrant raids and deportations. Consciousness is growing, as signs brought out, that security lies not in more use of force and violence but in defending the rights of all, abroad and at home.

*Buffalo Forum* joins all those denouncing U.S. aggression against Syria and in demanding that the *U.S. End All Wars Now* by closing foreign bases and bringing all troops home. We also urge all to focus attention on the people's agenda for an anti-war government. The disinformation being spread about Syria and chemical weapons is meant to cause doubt in the legitimacy of the anti-war protests while diverting from the growing consciousness that a new direction is needed, one that serves the interests of the people.

It is clear U.S. rulers have no solutions and there is constant crisis and battling within their own ranks. Defense Secretary General Mattis said there was no evidence of a chemical attack, as was widely asserted by U.S. intelligence agencies, but then submitted. The media then echoed the president, promoting the disinformation of the Pentagon and intelligence agencies and refusing to stand against the unjust and illegal bombing of Syria. Of editorials



in 26 major newspapers, including the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, none opposed the attack while having no difficulty spreading the disinformation that Syria is the threat and problem to human rights. The humanitarian situation in Syria has been made far worse by U.S. intervention and bombing but government accountability for this reality is not to be discussed.

Significant efforts are being made by the rulers and their monopoly media to now engage everyone in *their* agenda, which is to try and justify their crimes of aggression in the name of human rights and protecting the people of Syria, and before that of Libya and Iraq. Diversions of various kinds, such as about use of chemical weapons or the need for Congressional approval, are being promoted to block discussion of the people's agenda — which is an anti-war, pro-social agenda.

Faced with a war government, the people need an anti-war government. This is especially clear in the face of the brutal and unjust attacks on Syria, Palestine and Yemen currently taking place and given that tax time underlines the massive funding for war while social programs are cut. Hundreds of billions are given to the Pentagon every year, while *guaranteeing* the rights to education, housing, healthcare and jobs is not even considered. These are human rights and laying claim to these rights and to a budget that meets them is needed. The biggest problems with the current taxes are that we the people do not decide how they are utilized.

An anti-war government would reflect the demands of the people and ensure that the budget puts guaranteeing rights at home and abroad at the center. This would provide a path forward to peace and security.







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**I • ANTI-WAR GOVERNMENT**

Speeches also brought out the need to counter all U.S. wars abroad, including by closing all foreign bases and opposing aggression against Korea. They also provided a direction forward by calling to organize for an anti-war government. The current war government is harmful and destructive to all. It was brought out, for example, that

the Niagara Air Base is being used for an attack squadron for drones and another for refueling Saudi planes as they bomb Yemen. An anti-war government would end such crimes and turn it into a solar farm instead, with a developed proposal for such an alternative already in place.

An anti-war government is an aim for

the present that can serve to unite all those fighting for rights and advance the agenda of the people. It is a pro-active demand, in our hands to develop, not a reactive one to the actions of the rich. By taking up work for an anti-war government, a new anti-war, pro-social direction for the country can be advanced.



## U.S. ANTI-WAR RALLIES



BOSTON



PHILADELPHIA



DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA



COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA



DETROIT

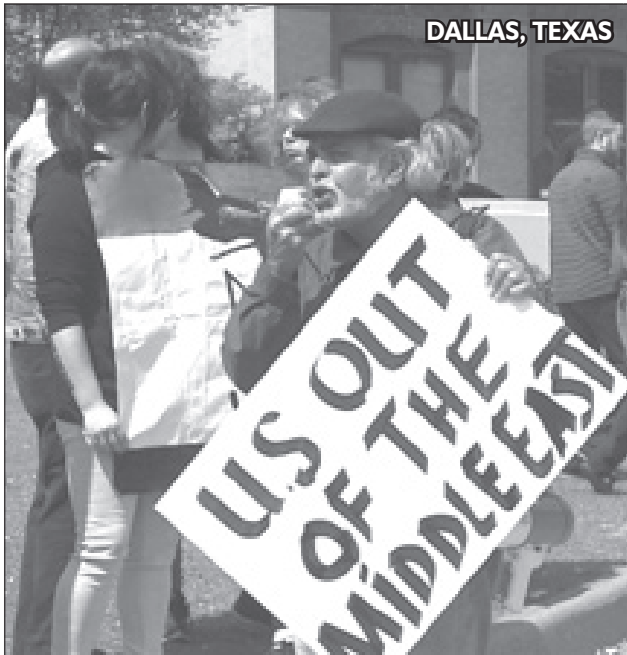


NEW YORK CITY



MINNEAPOLIS





DALLAS, TEXAS



AUSTIN, TEXAS



SALT LAKE CITY UTAH



SEATTLE, WASHINGTON



PORTLAND OREGON



OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA



LOS ANGELES

## **U.S. Attack on Syria Will Not Dissuade It from Confronting Any Aggression Regardless of Its Source**

Permanent Representative to the UN of the Syrian Arab Republic, Dr. Bashar Al-Jaafari, during a Security Council session April 10 on the situation in Syria, [before the U.S. bombing] stressed that threats of aggression on Syria by Western states and their maneuvers, misdirection, lies, and terrorism will not dissuade Syria from preserving its sovereignty and territorial integrity and from confronting any aggression regardless of its source. He added that Syria will not allow any of the permanent or non-permanent member states to do in Syria what they have done in Iraq or Libya.

Al-Jaafari said, "The U.S. representative said that there is a single monster today which stands in the face of the whole world, and it is a monster which has armed and financed terrorists for more than seven years

in Syria, and I say that this monster is the U.S., Britain, and France who sponsored terrorism in Syria and before it in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya."

He clarified that Syria's Foreign and Expatriates Ministry -- in response to the campaign launched by some Western states against Syria regarding the alleged chemical attack in Douma city — sent a formal invitation to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on April 10 for a team from the fact-finding mission to visit Douma to investigate.

Al-Jaafari added that Syria welcomes the visit. He asserted Syria's commitment to cooperate fully and its readiness to provide all the required help to allow this mission to do its work and to guarantee the safety of its members. He stressed that Syria hopes

the mission will perform its work with transparency and professionalism based on credible evidence.

The mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism expired in November 2017. At the April 10 Security Council meeting, two draft resolutions were presented ostensibly to establish a mechanism to investigate the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Both resolutions were defeated, neither receiving a unanimous vote from the council's five permanent members.

Al-Jaafari reiterated that those who backed the U.S. draft resolution at the Security Council on April 10 are not seeking to uncover the truth, because the truth will

***Syria Will Confront Any Aggression • 8***

## **U.S. Aggression Destroyed Raqqa and Brought Horrific Massacres of Syrians**

The UN Security Council recently held a meeting to discuss the humanitarian situation in the city of Raqqa and al-Rukban refugee camp on the border with Jordan. At the meeting Syria's Permanent Representatives at the UN Dr. Bashar al-Jaafari stressed that the U.S.-led "international coalition" had completely destroyed the city of Raqqa, under the pretext of fighting terrorism, in particular Daesh (ISIS). The UN assessment mission to Raqqa reported that the city is facing a critical situation, which necessitates its full reconstruction and restructuring of public services. The city lacks water, electricity, and mobile communications, and all the hospitals and infirmaries were destroyed, leaving the city without any operational hospital. The report said members of the mission saw the massive destruction of the city as each building is either completely destroyed or partially damaged.

Al-Jaafari said that conditions in Raqqa are just one example of the crimes perpetrated by the U.S. under the pretext of combating terrorism. Giving examples, he made clear the goal of this U.S. coalition

has never been fighting terrorism. Its goal was undermining the sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Syria and weakening power of the Syrian Arab Army, as the most recent bombings show.

He spoke to the killing of thousands of innocent citizens using the dirtiest kinds of weapons and destroying the Syrian infrastructure, including dams, bridges, hospitals, schools, and developmental facilities and economic resources. He gave as examples the massacres committed by the U.S. coalition in al-Mayadeen and al-Bukaman in May 2017, in al-Soura, al-Dablan, al-Mayadeen, Dhiban, and Tal al-Shayer in June 2017, in al-Zayanat and Kashkash in July 2017, and in the southern countryside of Hasaka, al-Shafa, Dhahret Alouni, and al-Bahra in February 2018.

Al-Jaafari noted that this UNSC session coincided with Syria's Independence Day, marking the expulsion of French colonialism on April 17, 1946. He expressed regret that some countries, including France, the U.S. and Britain, which had launched cowardly aggression on Syria on April 14, have yet to understand that the will of the

peoples to liberation and independence has become a firm truth.

On the humanitarian situation in al-Rukban camp, Syria's Representative stressed that the Syrian government agreed, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), to deliver humanitarian aid to the camp, but the U.S. forces which are present in the camp prevented that and set impossible conditions to deliver that aid.

He held the U.S. responsible for the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the camp, asserting that the U.S. is using the camp for training the remnants of Daesh and other terrorist organizations to exploit them in other battles against Syria, Iraq, Libya, and other countries in the region and the world.

Al-Jaafari asserted that the political scene in Syria is very clear and does not require draft resolutions or semi-daily meetings. Instead, the Council must fulfill its mandate in the UN Charter and act against the occupation of Syrian territory by the United States.



# Cold War Provocations to Justify Aggression

*Workers' Weekly, Britain*

Many commentators have torn to shreds the assertions of the British government that Sergei Skripal[1] and his daughter Yulia were poisoned by a nerve agent called Novichok, and that the Russian government was directly involved.

Added to this are the recent allegations that the Syrian government has launched chemical warfare attacks on its citizens in the city of Douma, an area about six miles to the north-east of Damascus, which the Syrian army has just liberated from "rebel" factions. Although the imperialists are targeting Syrian President Bashar Al Assad, as they have done for several years under their program of "regime change" and destruction of nations, here again Russian backing of Assad is what is being portrayed as the main culprit.

This is of course not the first time that the pretext of chemical weapons has been used to justify missile strikes and military intervention. In April last year, Trump used the alleged targeting of Syrian civilians with chemical weapons, which he blamed on Assad, to launch Tomahawk missiles from U.S. destroyers in the Mediterranean against Syria, following the deployment of thousands of U.S. ground troops. In December 2015, RAF Tornado jets also

carried out their first air strikes.[2]

When the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc countries fell in 1989-1991, after the period of the 1980s when the world entered a profound turning point, there was much talk of the end of the Cold War and the "peace dividend" this was going to bring. Of course, this "peace dividend" failed to materialize, and from the 1990s onward, the forces of reaction have held the initiative.

Nevertheless, the people's forces themselves have stepped up their resistance to neo-liberalism and the anti-social offensive. In particular, the people have constantly mobilized against the warmongering and militarization of the imperialist system of states.[3] This has pointed the way forward to the necessity to establish an anti-war government, and in Britain for the working class and people to settle scores with their pro-war governments.

This is what faces them now, as Theresa May and her Cabinet declare that they are ready, in tandem with France, to take their lead from the U.S. regime in committing aggression against Syria.

How is it imagined that bombing Syria as revenge or alleged punishment will sort out any problem whatsoever? How is it that Syria is selectively chosen for air

strikes? The U.S. and its allies have been bombarding what they call Daesh positions inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a UN mandate. The strikes have on many occasions resulted in civilian casualties and failed to fulfill their declared aim of countering terrorism. In fact undeclared warfare is taking place, particularly throughout the Middle East, and the U.S., Britain and other big powers are colluding and contending for influence and domination. This risks an escalation into a very dangerous conflict between the big powers and Russia in particular. The European Union is also being urged to establish a "military Schengen Area," at the behest of NATO, to counter "Russian aggression." Is this the ultimate aim of this warmongering? How is this of benefit to humanity?

This is what is meant by a Cold War mentality: pose those that threaten your domination as the enemy, declare that only those that share your values are worthy human beings, stage provocations that others are aggressive, allege that extremist ideology is the threat to humanity.

This poses the necessity for the people to constitute themselves as a power in

**Cold War Provocations • 9**

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## 7 • SYRIA WILL CONFRONT ANY AGGRESSION

prove their guilt and that of their terrorist pawns on the ground.

"I affirm the reality that the U.S., Britain, and France are the ones who caused the failure of what was called the Joint Investigative Mechanism due to their insistence on politicizing its work and exerting pressure on its leaders," Al-Jaafari said. He pointed out that what is happening in the Council during this session is similar to what happened a year ago when the U.S. used false and fabricated excuses about the use of chemical weapons in Khan Sheikhoun to attack al-Shairat Airbase.

He called on the Security Council's member states to shoulder their responsibilities in supporting international legitimacy and in protecting international peace and security from the terrorism that is being used by the aforementioned three permanent

member states who seek to undermine the stability of other states and to decide the fate of their peoples.

Al-Jaafari reiterated that the Syrian Arab Republic strongly condemns any use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances, and that it is fully committed to co-operating with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to uncover the reality of the allegations.

In a phone call with Syrian TV, Al-Jaafari described the Security Council session as "being similar to a play." He indicated that the West has suffered successive failures at the Security Council and it can neither achieve progress there nor in exploiting terrorism.

The prejudicial nature of the proceedings to isolate Syria were underscored by UN Secretary-General António Guterres'

remarks prior to the meeting. Without evidence of a chemical weapons attack having occurred, Guterres called for the "norms against chemical weapons [to] be upheld." He appealed to the Security Council to "fulfill its responsibility and find unity on this issue." In this way, all the serious breaches of international law known to have been committed against Syria by the U.S, Britain, France and other countries are covered up and the U.S. imperialists set the agenda based on their own geo-politics, trampling international law in the mud. The Security Council becomes an instrument through which to use the United Nations not to defend the international rule of law and peace, but coalitions of countries who violate the peace, which was identified following World War II as the supreme crime against humanity.



**8 • COLD WAR PROVOCATIONS**

their own right. The apocalypse of war is not a necessity if the people constitute themselves as the power for peace. The issue is not one of taking sides for or against Russia, for example.

In the present situation, the resistance of the people, fighting against war, is characterized by doing everything possible now to stop a further attack on Syria by the U.S.-led big powers. Of crucial importance is to build the anti-war movement, to activate the human factor. There is an important campaign spearheaded by the Stop the War Coalition for everyone to lobby their local MPs to demand that a vote be taken on any proposal to use military arms to force a regime change in Syria. Demonstrations are taking place outside Downing Street, which we call on anyone who can to participate in. On April 13, a letter is being handed in at Downing Street signed by MPs, trade unionists, celebrities and academics to urge Theresa May to refrain from joining Donald Trump in escalating the war in Syria. Protests taking place over the weekend include those in Norwich, Nottingham, Sheffield, Edinburgh and Cardiff, as well as street stalls in many other places.

These are important actions, since although the U.S., Britain and other powers have been intervening in Syria for many years without authorization from the Syrian government and with no legal authorization from the United Nations, the recent hysteria has reached a high pitch in a short period of time. This contrasts with the events of 2003, when war criminal Tony Blair attempted to prepare the ground with fraudulent dossiers and other means to win public opinion behind armed intervention in Iraq. This has been farcically echoed by the Theresa May government with the anti-Russian accusations in the far-fetched Skripal poisoning case. Russia and chemical weapons are supposed to connect this and Syria in the public mind.

Tony Blair joined the “coalition of the willing” in invading and creating chaos and bloodshed in Iraq for which the people have been paying ever since. And this was



despite the millions that took to the streets to stop the war. The lesson for the people is that these rotten scenarios of warmongering by Blair and May who claim to be representatives of the people in a representative democracy, but actually represent private interests in the name of the state, must be consigned to the past. As was so prominent 15 years ago, it is fundamental that in their warmongering they do not act in our name! In fighting for peace, the people must get organized with a view to the necessity of political power to bring about an anti-war government that acts for peace, eschews the use of force in international relations, and transforms society in establishing relations that favor the people.

The Stop the War Coalition has been organizing a tour based on the necessity for an anti-war government. This is an important initiative. Local Stop the War committees based on the need for an anti-war government must be built. Demands must also be raised to end the militarization of the economy.

*No to Air Strikes Against Syria!*

*Oppose All British Military Intervention!*

*Not In Our Name!*

*All Out for an Anti-War Government!*

**Notes**

1. Sergei Viktorovich Skripal is a former Russian military intelligence officer who acted as a double agent for the UK's intel-

ligence services during the 1990s and early 2000s. In December 2004, he was arrested by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) and later tried, convicted of high treason, and sentenced to 13 years in prison. He settled in Britain in 2010 following the Illegals Programme spy swap. On March 4, 2018, he and his daughter Yulia, who was visiting him from Moscow, were found “slipping in and out of consciousness on a public bench” near a shopping center in Salisbury by a doctor and nurse, who were passing by.

2. Special Forces from Britain have been operating in Syria since June 2016, according to a BBC report from the time. They were equipped with long-range patrol vehicles, sniper rifles, heavy machine guns and anti-tank missiles.

3. Summary findings given on airwars.org of Coalition air and artillery strikes: August 8, 2014 to February 28, 2018, an overall total of between 17,348 and 25,800 civilian non-combatant fatalities had been locally alleged from 2,475 separate reported Coalition incidents, in both Iraq and Syria. Of these, Airwars presently estimates that a minimum of 6,238 to 9,582 civilians are likely to have died in Coalition actions. However, some caution is needed given the significant challenges of casualty verification at present.

*(Workers' Weekly is a publication of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist).)*

STOP FUNDING WAR

## Average U.S. Taxpayer Gave \$3,456 to Pentagon and Just \$39 to the EPA

*Jake Johnson, Common Dreams, April 17, 2018*

As Americans rushed to pay their taxes on April 17 before the official deadline, peace groups reminded the public of the fact that an “astronomical amount” of the money sent to the IRS each year goes not to funding education or a single-payer healthcare system the U.S. supposedly cannot afford, but straight into the bloated coffers of the Pentagon.

“Congress appropriates more for U.S. military spending than the next eight countries combined, but year after year refuses to invest in quality education and healthcare for millions of Americans, infrastructure spending, and alternative energy,” Paul Kawika Martin, senior director for policy and political affairs at Peace Action, said.

“As a result, arms industry executives make out like bandits while programs that provide essential services for most Americans remain drastically underfunded, as do development and diplomacy programs that help end wars and prevent them in the first place,” Martin added.

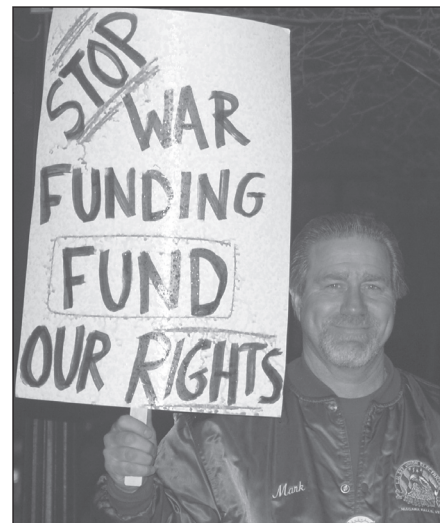
Highlighting America’s uniquely exorbitant military spending in a blog

post on Tuesday, Lindsay Koshgarian of National Priorities noted that it is particularly important to keep in mind who funds U.S.-led endless wars overseas following President Donald Trump’s illegal attack on Syria — an attack that “added nearly \$5 billion to missile-makers’ stock value.”

“It is devastating to know who paid for it: we did,” Koshgarian observed.

“The average taxpayer contributed \$3,456 to the military in 2017,” she noted, compared to \$80 that went to welfare programs and “just \$39 to the Environmental Protection Agency.”

In an analysis published last month, National Priorities estimated that 23.8 cents of every dollar in taxes paid in 2017 went to Pentagon and military spending. “Meanwhile, 11 cents goes to military contractors, including 1.7 cents for the Pentagon’s biggest contractor and maker of the F-35 jet fighter, Lockheed Martin,” the group found. “A 10 percent cut in spending on military contractors would provide enough money to hire 395,000 elementary school teachers or provide health insurance for 13 million



children.”

Americans could soon be dumping even more tax money into the American war machine while healthcare, food stamps, education, and other public programs are slashed. Trump signed an omnibus spending bill that contained \$700 billion in Pentagon funding, and he has asked for an even bigger military budget for next year.

## Some Tax Facts for 2018

*National Priorities*

### 1. Military contractors take eleven percent.

Of every dollar you pay in income taxes, 23¢ goes to the military – but only 5¢ goes to our troops in the form of pay, housing allowances and other benefits. That does not include the 6¢ that supports our veterans by providing health care, income support and job training, among other benefits. Meanwhile, 11¢ goes to military contractors, including 1.7¢ for the Pentagon’s biggest contractor and maker of the F-35 jet fighter, Lockheed Martin.

### 2. Interest on the debt

Interest on the debt, which hands

public dollars directly to the Wall Street financiers, takes 14¢ of every dollar.

### 3. Health care

Out of every tax dollar you (and your neighbors) pay, 29¢ goes to health care, and 23¢ goes to the military. The health care portion of your tax dollar is split almost equally between Medicare (11.4¢) and Medicaid (12.9¢). Together, these programs provide health care for one in three Americans. Medicaid has been shown to be more cost effective than private insurance.

The National Institutes of Health, which funds medical research into cancer, the opioid epidemic, Alzheimer’s disease,

influenza and more accounts for just 1.1¢ of every tax dollar.

### 4. Taxes are down for corporations and billionaires.

In 2018, the new tax plan that Congress passed in December 2017 takes effect. It favors billionaires and corporations, while leaving poor and middle income Americans essentially where they are. The richest one percent of Americans will receive a total of \$85 billion in tax cuts in 2019, while the poorest twenty percent – one in five Americans – will receive tax cuts totaling just \$3 billion. Foreign investors will benefit more

**Tax Facts • 12**



## Out of 26 Major Editorials on Trump's Syria Strikes, Zero Opposed

Adam Johnson, *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)*, April 18, 2018

A survey by FAIR of the top 100 papers in the U.S. by circulation found not a single editorial board opposed to Trump's April 13 airstrikes on Syria. Twenty supported the strikes, while six were ambiguous as to whether or not the bombing was advisable. The remaining 74 issued no opinion about Trump's latest escalation of the Syrian war.

This is fairly consistent with editorial support for Trump's April 2017 airstrikes against the Syrian government, which saw only one editorial out of 47 oppose the bombing (FAIR.org, 4/11/17). The single paper of dissent from last year, the *Houston Chronicle*, did not publish an editorial on last week's bombing.

Seven of the top 10 newspapers by circulation — *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Newsday* and *Washington Post* — supported the airstrikes. The headline for the *Washington Post* editorial was: "Trump Was Right to Strike Syria. But the Mission Is Far From Accomplished." The editorial said, "Only...with the departure of the Assad regime, will it be

possible to ensure that Syrians do not suffer more atrocities," (4/14/18). The *New York Daily News* and *San Jose Mercury News* offered no opinion, while the *New York Times* (4/13/18) was ambiguous — mostly lamenting the lack of congressional approval, but not saying that this meant the strikes were illegal or unwise. "Legislation should...set limits on a president's ability to wage war against states like Syria," is the *Times*' conclusion. (A complete list of editorials on the airstrikes can be viewed at FAIR.org).

Almost every editorial spoke in the same Official, Serious tone that demanded "action" be taken and "international norms" be "enforced." Some, such as the *Wall Street Journal* (4/16/18), went further, insisting on a wider war against the Syrian regime, Iran and/or Russia in vague but menacing terms.

"Barack Obama dealt Mr. Trump a bad hand by letting Russia, Iran and China believe they could advance their goals of regional domination without U.S. resistance," the *Journal* insisted. "In Syria as elsewhere, Mr. Trump has to decide if



he wants to ratify that American retreat or develop a strategy to stop it."

The mid-market *Toledo Blade* (4/15/18) punched above its weight class and delivered the most bellicose and jingoistic editorial of them all with "The West Stands Up;"

"Make no mistake, this was a warning  
**Zero Editorials Oppose Bombing of Syria • 13**

### TRUMP ACTS AS WEAPONS SALESMAN

## Buy American...Tanks, Drones, Bombs, and Guns!

Julia Conley

Though the U.S. is by far the biggest arms exporter in the world, the Trump administration has pushed the notion that restrictions on weapons deals need to be loosened — likely at the expense of human rights. The initiative will help ensure that deals are reached more quickly by loosening restrictions on exports of weapons including drones, firearms, jets, and ships.

Ahead of the unveiling of his "Buy American" initiative President Donald Trump has begun acting as a weapons salesman, directly appealing to foreign leaders to buy U.S.-made military equipment. According to Reuters, the president spoke with the emir of Kuwait earlier this year in order to push through a stalled \$10 billion

deal to sell fighter jets to the country.

"With this Oval Office intervention, the details of which have not been previously reported, Trump did something unusual for a U.S. president — he personally helped to close a major arms deal," Reuters reported. "In private phone calls and public appearances with world leaders, Trump has gone further than any of his predecessors to act as a salesman for the U.S. defense industry, analysts said."

Trump will roll out his "Buy America" plan April 19. The administration has portrayed the U.S. weapons trade as lagging — even though the country is the world's largest arms exporter, selling \$42 billion in military equipment last year and regularly selling twice as much in arms as its biggest

competitor, Russia.

One Trump official claimed in Reuters' report that the U.S. is "getting outplayed" by countries that send their government officials to international arms shows. Under "Buy American," Trump's Cabinet members will be expected to attend such events to act as "closers."

Last year, the president also finalized a deal — initiated by the Obama administration — with Saudi Arabia, selling \$100 billion in weapons including \$7 billion in precision-guided missiles. The deal went through even though the munitions would be used in the U.S.-backed Saudi-led assault on Yemen, where thousands of civilians have been killed according to U.N. estimates. (*Common Dreams*)

*HALF OF REFUGEES ARE MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN*

## Caravan Asylum Seekers Discuss Their Rights in Puebla, Mexico

*Pueblo Sin Fronteras, April 14, 2018*

Hundreds of Central American refugees have organized a caravan to protect themselves and defend their rights as they travel through Mexico, a testament not only to the severity of the human rights crisis in the Northern Triangle, but also to the tenacity and determination of its people. In addition to banding together for mutual support, safety, and protest in the face of repression, the members of the caravan are educating themselves on asylum law and the U.S. immigration detention system with the help of volunteer attorneys.

As the Refugee Caravan arrived in Puebla on April 6, hundreds of local community members, church volunteers and doctors joined forces outside Our Lady of the Assumption Church (La Parroquia) to welcome participants with food, clothing, medical attention and shelter under the leadership of Father Gustavo Rodríguez. Inside la Parroquia, a volunteer team of over 20 attorneys and legal assistants convened to prepare a weekend of activities for Caravan participants interested in learning about seeking asylum in the U.S. and refugee status in Mexico.

On top of rampant organized crime, gender-based violence, and environmentally destructive megaprojects, the

military repression unleashed against unarmed protesters after the US-backed Honduran electoral fraud last year sent a tremendous number of Honduran families fleeing in search of safety. The refugee families of the Caravan have now successfully traveled over 1500 kilometers (900 miles) by foot, hitchhiking, and train accompanied by the organization Pueblo Sin Fronteras. As the group continues north, they made a four-day stop in Puebla, Mexico to participate in a series of Know-Your-Rights workshops with a team of volunteer U.S. and Mexican immigration attorneys.

Over the next four days, the volunteer team delivered a series of presentations on legal rights guaranteed to refugees as well as the injustices of mandatory detention, family detention and family separation, surviving detention, seeking bond, and the

***Refugees Discuss Rights • 13***



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### 10 • TAX FACTS

from the tax cuts (\$48 billion) than the bottom sixty percent (or 3 in 5) American earners (\$41 billion, combined).

Corporations are mostly not passing their tax savings along to workers. Fewer than three percent of workers are getting a one-time bonus or wage hike tied to corporate tax cuts.

#### **5. Federal taxes provide 32% of state budgets**

Without federal resources, our communities would be unrecognizable. In 2015, state and local governments received

more than \$657 billion in federal funding. About \$67 billion of that went directly to city governments. On average, 32 percent of a state's budget will come from the federal government. These Federal funds go toward health care, schools, roads, veterans' benefits, and programs to help the poor and vulnerable in every city, town and state. All are underfunded and many are being cut.

#### **6. Some profitable corporations pay nothing in taxes.**

Corporations contribute only about nine

percent of federal revenues – and many profitable corporations use tax loopholes to pay nothing at all. From 2008 to 2015, one hundred Fortune 500 companies managed to pay nothing in federal taxes for at least one year, and sometimes more. Eighteen companies — including General Electric, Priceline.com and PG&E — paid nothing for all eight years despite making a profit every year. The new tax law lowered the official corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent, but as these facts demonstrate, many corporations were already paying less than that.



**12 • REFUGEES DISCUSS RIGHTS**

potential impact of recent U.S. immigration court and policy decisions. They also facilitated workshops to address the needs of unaccompanied minors and LGBTQI community members and offered one-on-one, private legal consultations.

Elena Alderman, a volunteer coordinator on the ground with Pueblo Sin Fronteras, explained that the workshops help clarify often-bewildering processes that can differ for individuals based on their particular circumstances. “These workshops provide a unique opportunity to reach individuals before they decide to request asylum in the U.S. or refugee status in Mexico, providing essential information on their rights as well as the harsh realities of the system so they can make informed decisions for their families,” noted Alderman.

Half of the refugees on the Refugee Caravan are mothers, fighting to protect their young children. Marie Vincent, an immigration attorney from Pangea Legal Services in San Francisco, California, gave multiple presentations for Caravan participants over the course of the weekend in Puebla and led smaller workshops for unaccompanied minors. “We only spent four days with the families, the children, the single mothers and the unaccompanied youths, but a day is enough time to fall in love with their resilience, their strength, their search for safety and dignity, and their solidarity,” Vincent noted. “We went to Puebla to provide legal support and information to asylum seekers, and we

met an incredible group with a life and community of its own.”

As the volunteer team learned, many of the refugees on the Caravan only recently escaped severe trauma, including brutal political oppression, domestic violence, death threats, murder of family members, rape, and torture. Now more than ever, after the electoral coup, the Honduran government has proven its unwillingness to defend its citizens from these horrors. After receiving a private legal consultation, one asylum seeking mother, who asked to remain anonymous, noted, “I feel as if a weight has been lifted off my chest. I’m still not sure what I will do. But that was the first time that I’ve shared what happened to me and it helped a lot.”

On Sunday afternoon, families lined up outside la Parroquia to eat lunch while the volunteer legal team gathered to touch base after a difficult presentation on the traumatic experience of mandatory detention for U.S. asylum seekers. “As the U.S. government continues to ignore the Central American humanitarian refugee crisis that it contributed to create, we must continue to support the right to move, especially the rights of asylum seekers,” Vincent noted.

Nicole Ramos, immigration attorney with the nonprofit organization Al Otro Lado and director of the Border Rights Project in Tijuana, noted the importance of providing legal information to persecuted individuals. “Title 8 Section 1225 of the U.S. Federal Code establishes that any noncitizen who fears returning to their

home country has a right to seek asylum in order to be protected from persecution and violence,” Ramos explained.

“The laws surrounding who is eligible for political asylum and why are incredibly complex,” noted Allegra Love, an immigration attorney from the Santa Fe Dreamers Project, who traveled to Puebla to participate in the workshops. “Generally speaking, people who turn themselves in at a U.S. Port of Entry are given the designation Arriving Alien, detained, and put through a fairly intense interview called a Credible Fear Interview.” After that, if they pass their interview, asylum seekers begin court hearings before an immigration judge.

Throughout the weekend, the volunteer legal team spoke with families and individuals about their goals for seeking protection. “Many of the Caravan families have decided to remain in Mexico and initiate petition processes with COMAR [the Mexican asylum office] despite its severe institutional shortcomings. Others have decided to continue on to request asylum at a U.S. Port of Entry,” Alderman noted. “The goal of the legal workshops is to provide information to participants regarding their rights and options for protection, but where and how they decide to seek refuge is ultimately up to them.”

As the Refugee Caravan moves north, Undocumedia, in Los Angeles, and Pueblo Sin Fronteras have launched a YouCaring.com fundraiser to support the caravan participants on the way and in U.S. immigrant prisons.

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**11 • ZERO EDITORIALS OPPOSE BOMBING OF SYRIA**

to Vladimir Putin as well as Bashar al-Assad.

“The United States and its two longtime allies redrew the red line that had been obliterated by a failure of nerve by the U.S. and the West generally: There will be cost for your barbarities....

“But in the larger sense, the West did what it should have done a long time ago. It stood up for decency and international law. It stood up for those who are defenseless. It stood up for itself, and for simple humanity, and redeemed some self-respect.

“If Assad regime officials find them-

selves catching up on news from the greater Northwest Ohio region, they will surely take heed.”

None of the top 100 newspapers questioned the U.S.’s legal or moral right to bomb Syria, and all accepted U.S. government claims to be neutral arbiters of “international law.” Many editorials did hand wringing about a “lack of strategy” or absence of congressional approval, but none opposed the bombing. Strategy and legal sanction are add-on features — nice but, by all accounts, not essential.

The total lack of editorial board dissent

is consistent with major papers’ tradition of uniform acceptance of U.S. military action. The most influential paper in the country, the *New York Times*, has not opposed a single U.S. war — from the Persian Gulf to Bosnia, to Kosovo to Iraq to Libya to the forever war on ISIS — in the past 30 years.

The scope of debate among major editorial boards is not if Trump should bomb the Syrian regime, but how much bombing he should undertake — and when, roughly speaking, he should maybe get around to letting Congress know.

## Statement of the National Student Walkout

The National Student Walkout is a movement powered and led by students across the country. We're protesting congressional, state, and local failures to take action to prevent gun violence. America is the only country in the world where so many people are killed by guns, and yet our leaders do nothing about it. In many states it's more difficult to register to vote than it is to buy a rifle. Apparently to some

politicians, a vote is scarier than a gun.

We are changing that.

On Friday, April 20, students will walk out of their classrooms at 10 am. There are currently 2487 walkouts planned, at least one in every state. We are walking out for those who lost their lives to gun violence, to talk about the real problems our country is facing, and to find solutions to the problems that our leaders have

failed to address.

The National Student Walkout is the launch of a forward looking youth movement that has a strategy, a plan for action, and is not going away.

We have a three-part goal:

- Hold elected officials accountable
- Promote solutions to gun violence
- Demystify and engage students in the political system

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### I • APRIL 20 WALKOUTS

As with the March 14 student walkouts, actions are planned for 10am, with many walking out for the day. Protests include rallies and actions where many schools will converge together to take their stand for change. Students are refusing the dictate of many administrators calling for assemblies to keep students in school.

April 20 marks the anniversary of the Columbine shooting where 13 people were killed, one teacher and twelve students. Columbine students initiated this walkout. They are encouraging students to walk out and rally, taking 13 seconds of silence for each of the 13 victims and then have an open mic, inviting students to voice their thoughts and solutions. They are also building on the April 20 efforts by establishing National School Walkout Chapters, organized by and for students.

Below are high schools and universities in the Buffalo area that are among those holding walkouts, with additional actions of various kinds expected. Teachers and parents are also participating in various ways.

**Amherst Central High School**  
4301 Main St.  
Amherst

**Canisius High School**  
1180 Delaware Ave  
Buffalo

**Kenton Middle School**  
155 Delaware Ave  
Kenmore, NY 14217

**KenWest Rebel Walkout**  
Kenmore West High School  
33 Highland Pkwy  
Kenmore

**Maryvale High School**  
1050 Maryvale Drive  
Cheektowaga

**Mount Mercy Academy,**  
Walkout in Solidarity  
88 Red Jacket Pkwy  
Buffalo

**Tonawanda High School**  
600 Fletcher Street  
Tonawanda

**Williamsville South High School**  
5950 Main St  
Williamsville



**University at Buffalo, North Campus**  
SUNY @ Buffalo Walkout

**Villa Maria College**  
240 Pine Ridge Road  
Buffalo  
Link to event information: [facebook.com/events/1575313795916540/](https://facebook.com/events/1575313795916540/)





### I • KILLER COPS AND KILLER DRONES

California police who shot him eight times in his grandmother's backyard; six times in the back, once in the side and once as or after he was falling down, according to an autopsy done by the young Black man's family. It is another example of vicious use of force against someone police "suspected." Police act as judge, jury and executioner in a situation where the young man involved is unarmed and can easily be detained. Instead, police made the usual claim of "a gun," which was a cell phone.

- March 27: The Louisiana attorney general announced that the Baton Rouge police who killed Alton Sterling in 2016 would face no charges. The federal Department of Justice had already announced it would press no charges. After these police and all those from the top down responsible for the killing were not punished, a video that had never been shown to the public was released. It shows the police cursing, tasing and threatening to kill Sterling from the moment they arrived on the scene. Then they wrestled him to the ground and shot him to death. Impunity for police to kill people, many unarmed and guilty of no crime, occurs in part because police are given special

privileges. If they claim they their life was threatened, even when facts show otherwise, charges will not be brought.

- April 4: Police shoot down unarmed Saheed Vassell in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. Saheed was unarmed, mentally ill, and well-known throughout the neighborhood — including by police. According to witnesses, he was shot dead in a hail of bullets within 30 seconds of police arriving.

People in Sacramento and Brooklyn protested and demanded justice. African Americans continue to be gunned down by police in large numbers and police killings of more than 1,000 people each year continue with impunity. In Sacramento demonstrators took over the interstate highway and twice shut down the entrance to the basketball arena. Some NBA players put Stephon Clark's name on their jerseys and paid for his funeral. His brother and others organized to disrupt the meeting city authorities held, to appear concerned while insisting everyone wait for the process to play out. The stand instead is *Justice Now!*

People have repeatedly been told to wait for and rely on federal or state investigations, only to be told no charges would

be filed. This occurred with the deaths of Aiyana Stanley-Jones, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice and many others.

Given these killings are also occurring at a time when drone strikes abroad and massacres of people in Syria, Yemen and Palestine are increasing, one can see the systematic impunity for government use of force abroad and at home. As signs in demonstrations have brought out, *Killer Cops and Killer Drones Are Government Genocide — We Say NO!* The system is sustained based not only on impunity to use force against the people, but also on the coercion of robbing people of their own thinking and outlook. We are only to look at things from the perspective of the rich and be reactive to their actions. What we need is a vantage point that is to our advantage, that arms us to look at all the existing human relations and draw conclusions from that. One such conclusion is that the people are currently deprived of political power and have to address the struggle to win political power. Organizing together today for political empowerment provides a way forward.

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### I • OUR SECURITY LIES IN OUR FIGHT FOR RIGHTS

border, make clear that more use of force and violence is the government's response. Systematically, governments at all levels are putting forward this direction. This includes bills in New York and California calling for armed police in every public school, measures in Florida to arm teachers, a sniper tower on the grounds of the Parkland school, Marjory Stoneman Douglas (MSD), more cameras and fences, more searches and arbitrary suspensions of students and prison-like conditions. Overall it can be said that students are treated like criminals and teachers are to be police. Everywhere students and teachers are saying No!

Students are putting forward solutions that reject more violence. This includes demands for *Counselors Not Cops*, *Demilitarize the Police*, *Art Not Artillery*, *Books not Bullets*. They oppose having teachers as police. As demands put it, *Arm Teachers with Resources, not Guns*. They are also emphasizing that it is their voice that

must be heard and that it is through their organized resistance that change in their interests can be achieved. On this basis, local National School Walkout Chapters are being developed, to provide solutions and involve students in political activity.

What comes to the fore is what kind of politics and in whose interests? As organizing continues, there are significant efforts to block the forward drive of the students by emphasizing acceptance of the existing electoral process. According to various officials, the role of students is not to strengthen their independent organized resistance for their rights, but rather to vote for or against particular representatives. For those that cannot yet vote, they are to assist in these campaigns. The rest of 2018 is to be used for this purpose.

Students have made clear that *Enough is Enough* and *No Means No* when it comes to acceptance of the status quo. This applies to the existing representative democracy,

which provides no solutions to the social violence all contend with and no accountability for the politicians.

A system that has long kept the people out of power and the rich in power does not change on the basis of changing a few representatives. So an important part of developing politics that serve the youth and their fight for a bright future is looking into this electoral set up and what is needed to change it so the voice of students is heard and implemented. Deciding the agenda, choosing the candidates, ensuring they represent students, parents and teachers, providing public funding of the process so there is equal footing, all are part of such discussions. Engaging the electoral process needs to be looked at from the perspective of how and whether it contributes to advancing the fight for rights. The people's politics starts with the perspective that our security, and our future, lies in our fight for the rights of all.

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*BUFFALO MARCH 24 STUDENT RALLY*

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