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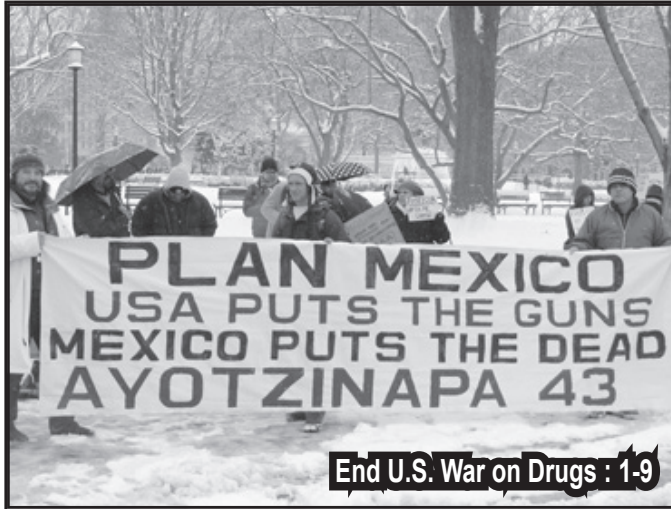


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DEMONSTRATIONS DEMAND

Obama Stop Funding Human Rights Abuses in Mexico! End U.S. “War on Drugs” and State Violence!

Demonstrations in Washington DC, St. Louis, New York City, Atlanta, Dallas, El Paso, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, Seattle and elsewhere on January 6 demanded that

President Obama end the “war on drugs” in the U.S. and Mexico. The actions marked the visit to the White House by Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto. **End U.S. War on Drugs • 3**

SAY NO TO SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Raising Quality of Public Schools Requires an Increase in Public Control

In cities across the country, like Buffalo, Chicago, and Baltimore, students, parents and teachers together are organizing to oppose efforts to close their public schools and hand them over to private

interests. There is growing recognition that the push to privatize and bring in charter schools is a push to remove the public from governance in matters of education. Instead, **Public Control of Public Schools • 10**



USING HUMAN RIGHTS AND SONY CYBER ATTACK AS JUSTIFICATION

Reject U.S. War Plans Against Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

The U.S. is stepping up its efforts to overthrow the government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), using the recent Sony Pictures cyberattack as

well as the issue of human rights. Every effort is being made to sow doubt about the DPRK’s right to exist and chart its own path forward **Reject U.S. War Plans • 15**



ORGANIZE FOR A PRO-PEOPLE, ANTI-WAR GOVERNMENT!

January edition of ***Voice of Revolution***

Editorials & Statements

- *Obama Stop Funding Human Rights Abuses in Mexico!*
End U.S. “War on Drugs” and State Violence! 1
- *Raising Quality of Public Schools Requires an Increase in Public Control* 1
- *Reject U.S. War Plans Against Democratic People’s Republic of Korea* 1

End U.S. War on Drugs and State Violence

- *Plan Mexico and the War on Drugs* 3
- *Parents of Missing Mexican Students to Occupy Military Barracks* 5
- *Immediately Suspend All Military and Police Aid to Mexican Authorities* 5
- *Led by Latinos, U.S. Actions Organize to End Plan Mexico*
and Support Ayotzinapa..... 7
- *Mexico President Peña Nieto’s Response*
to the Case of the 43 Missing Students of the Ayotzinapa School..... 8

Public Control of Public Schools

- *Governor Cuomo Calls “Education Bureaucracy” the Enemy*
and Targets Buffalo..... 10
- *Governor Cuomo’s Misguided Agenda is Harming Public Education* 12
- *Boston’s Reformy Olympics* 13
- *Hands Up, Don’t Test* 13

Reject U.S. War Plans Against DPRK

- *Obama Imposes More Sanctions Against DPRK* 16
- *U.S. Imperialism Stands Condemned* 17
- *North Korea Hacked Sony? Do Not Believe It, Experts Say* 17
- *The Interview: A Racist War-Mongering Film* 19
- *US Legally Obligated to Prosecute Senior Bush Officials for Torture Crimes* 20
- *UN Security Council Prepares to Lynch North Korea — U.S.*
Manipulation to Justify Aggressive War 20
- *Why the Human Rights Issue Is So Serious* 23
- *DPRK Rejects Double Standards and Promotes Dialogue*

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Peña Nieto.

Protesters opposed the state organized violence against African Americans in the U.S. and against students and women in Mexico, including the 43 Ayotzinapa students disappeared. The actions follow those December 3 in 54 cities and the on-going protests in both countries against state violence. Protesters called on Obama to stop funding and backing the drug war, here at home and in Mexico.

The united demand is for an end to government impunity and for all those responsible to be held accountable, beginning with the U.S. government. There are also strong connections being made reflecting the common fight for rights. This was seen not only in signs, like Ferguson = Ayotzinapa, but also in conference calls bringing together the mothers of youth killed or disappeared in both countries.

The U.S. organized and funded “war on drugs” has meant an increase in state killings and human rights abuses in both countries, including tens of thousands killed and disappeared in Mexico and hundreds of youth in the U.S. killed yearly by police. Through Plan Mexico (called the Mérida Initiative by the U.S.), the U.S. has provided \$2.4 billion dollars for training and equipment for Mexico’s armed forces and police. The U.S. has also used Plan Mexico to bring large numbers of FBI and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agents into Mexico, including establishing a joint center in Mexico City.

It is the U.S. and these agents that are arming, training and

funding the Mexican police and armed forces. The U.S. instigated “drug war” is largely responsible for the massive increase in violence and killings in Mexico since 2008 when Plan Mexico started. It is also the U.S. that is arming the drug cartels — as DEA gun-running scandals have shown — and fomenting the drug wars they claim to be opposing. Far from assisting the people of Mexico, it has guaranteed more violence, chaos, and justification for yet more U.S. policing agencies, including the Border Patrol, inside the country.

Plan Mexico is an integral part of efforts by the monopolies of North America, dominated by U.S. monopolies, to secure all of North America for themselves — its resources, territory and peoples. The “war on drugs,” especially in the U.S. and Mexico, has been an important part of both destabilizing communities and repressing the youth, especially national minorities.

The brutality and impunity reflect a situation where the rulers have shown they have no solutions to the growing problems of poverty and insecurity — making more violence and repression their only recourse. This is particularly true given the new arrangements in place of a United States of North American Monopolies. More state-organized violence, racist attacks and broad impunity mark this new arrangement and also show it is no solution.

Stepping up the organized resistance against the U.S. government and working to further unite in the course of defending the rights of all at home and abroad is the way forward.

Plan Mexico and the War on Drugs

USTired2

The U.S. gives hundreds of millions of dollars to Mexico each year. The vast majority of this aid is funneled into the disastrous and failed war on drugs.

Plan Mexico (also known as the Mérida Initiative) began as a three-year plan under the administration of George W. Bush in 2007 and was first funded by the U.S. Congress in 2008. Its stated goal is to support Mexico’s security forces, especially (but not exclusively) for counter-narcotics efforts, ostensibly aimed at disrupting the flow of drugs and dismantling drug trafficking organizations. President

Barack Obama has extended Plan Mexico “indefinitely.”

Plan Mexico: Some Facts

The Mérida Initiative has already cost U.S. taxpayers \$2.4 billion dollars.

- The Obama administration has requested another \$115 million for Mérida in its FY2015 budget.
- The Department of Defense has spent \$214.7 million on the Mexican drug war just since 2011 (the years for which data are

available).

- Additional public funds for Mexico's drug war come through the Department of Justice for extensive Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) operations in Mexico.

- The U.S. government has spent approximately \$3 billion dollars since 2008 on the war on drugs in Mexico alone.

- Between 2007 and 2012, the U.S. sold \$4 billion in arms to Mexico as well.

What Are Results of Plan Mexico?

More than 100,000 murdered in widespread drug war-related violence;

- More than 25,000 disappeared, hundreds of thousands forced to flee their homes, tens of thousands of orphans and incalculable psychological trauma;

- Numerous mass graves in Guerrero, Tamaulipas, Chihuahua and many other states – each with dozens, even hundreds of unidentified bodies;

- A dramatic increase in human rights violations committed by Mexican security forces, including thousands of documented cases of torture, disappearances and extrajudicial executions;

- A huge rise in violations of the rights and physical safety of transmigrants in the country; and an increase in violations of the rights of women and sexual crimes, including femicides.

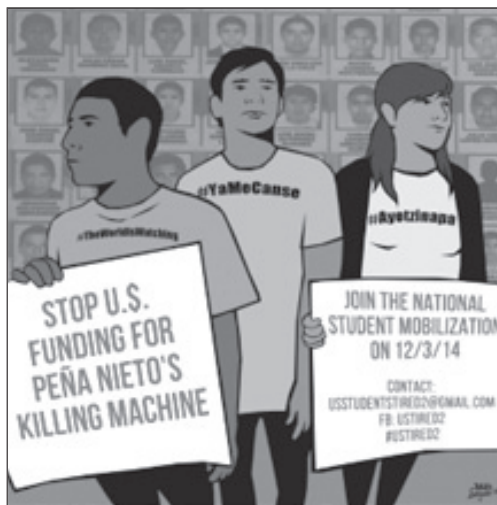
These devastating consequences are typical of militarized drug war strategies like we have seen in Colombia and other countries — strategies that are not only ineffective at reducing drug use or diminishing drug supply, but are also proven to increase violence related to the drug trade.

The number of homicides, disappearances and displaced people related to the drug war has skyrocketed as a direct result of Plan Mexico. And the actual numbers are likely far higher than those figures reported by government and media sources, since more than 90 percent of crimes in Mexico go unreported, uninvestigated, unsolved and/or unpunished, and the complicity of security forces (who are often perpetrators of violence) has had a chilling effect on people coming forward to report crimes.

The billions of dollars in military aid also runs counter to U.S. law – which, under the Leahy Amendment, prohibits U.S. assistance “to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country if the Secretary of State has credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights.”

Plan Mexico Fuels the Political and Social Crisis in Mexico

In Mexico, the increase in violence and lawlessness that has accompanied the drug war has led to a political and social crisis. The case of the 43 college students from Ayotzinapa forcibly disappeared by police in Iguala, Guerrero was the breaking point. That crime comes on the heels of the killing of 22 youth in Tlatlaya, Mexico State, by an Army battalion, most of whom were apparently executed at close



range after giving themselves up.

A group of Mexican human rights organizations described the situation in an official report to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture:

“During the administration of Felipe Calderon, the total number of homicides per year tripled. According to the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information, 95,646 homicides were reported between 2007 and 2011, an annual average of 19,129 or more than fifty people a day. According to these figures, it increased by an annual average of 24%.

“The violence has grown in clear relationship to the militarization, leading to at least 100,000 people assassinated

and more than 27,000 people disappeared, according to official figures. The indices of torture, false confessions, judicial errors and arbitrary arrests and displacement of at least 250,000 more people have shot up alarmingly in recent years. The war continues under the current administration, with more than 18,000 assassinations in its first year alone.

“According to Amnesty International, allegations of torture by Mexican military and police forces increased by more than 600% between 2003 and 2013.

“The number of army personnel occupied in public security tasks more than doubled during that same period, jumping from 45,850 in 2007 to 96,261 in 2011 (although it appears that that number may have been reduced in later years). The UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions has called for an immediate reduction in the use of armed forces.”

Plan Mexico has NOT prevented drug use or stopped the flow of drugs into the U.S.

Despite billions of dollars in military aid, Plan Mexico has been an unmitigated failure. It has done nothing to stop the amount of drugs entering or being consumed in the U.S. According to the U.S. government's own data:

- Overall drug use has increased since the beginning of the Mérida Initiative. In 2007, when Plan Mérida began, about 20 million people (or 8% of the population age 12 and older) reported using an illicit drug in the past month in the U.S.; by 2013 that number had increased to more than 24.5 million (9.4%).

Drugs are just as easily available on U.S. streets as before Plan Mérida. Policies aimed at reducing the supply of drugs – such as military aid packages like Plan Mexico – have failed for decades. A recent study published in the British Medical Journal found that, despite massive amounts of money spent by governments like the U.S. to reduce drug supply, most illegal drugs are cheaper, more potent and more widely available.

U.S. spending on illegal drugs has remained unchanged since Plan Mexico was launched. In other words, the size of the U.S. illegal drug market – valued at more than \$100 billion dollars retail – has remained stable in spite of Plan Mexico.

Parents of Missing Mexican Students to Occupy Military Barracks

Telesur, January 4, 2015

The committee of family members and classmates of the 43 missing students announced Saturday January 4 that they intend to symbolically occupy military barracks throughout Mexico. The announcement came after an assembly held by the parents, classmates, and supporters of the forcibly disappeared 43 students. More than 180 delegates from various national and international organizations also participated in the meeting.

The parents of the missing students believe that the federal government is attempting to cover up their role in the disappearance of their children. They point to the fact that the federal police were monitoring the students right before the attack and that survivors claim that the federal police and military participated in the attack. On the night of the attack the students sought the help of the 27th Army battalion, housed in barracks in Iguala, site of the attack. The army denied them any assistance.

A report by Anabel Hernandez and Steve Fisher for *Proceso* magazine claims that the federal police and army deliberately targeted the students in order to break the back of their political organization. The Ayotzinapa teachers' school is known for radical activism in Mexico.

The parents further suspect that the students are being hidden inside military barracks. They have repeatedly demanded the barracks be opened up for inspection, a call supported by opposition politicians. The federal attorney general has denied this request, thus the decision to occupy barracks throughout the country. The action is set to take place on January 12. Groups have already occupied two dozen town halls throughout Guerrero state.

The committee of parents has called for another global day of action to be held January 26, concluding with a march in Mexico City. They are also working to organize what they call the "Grand National Convention for a Popular Constituent Assembly of the Proletariat and the Peoples of Mexico" to be held February 5. The aim of the convention will be to lay the groundwork for a general strike and the dismissal of the Peña Nieto government.

After meeting Sunday with family of the disappeared youth, Mexico's human rights Chief, Luis Raul Gonzalez of the National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH) declared that the organization will launch a probe into the military and federal police's role in the events.

U.S. SCHOLARS TO OBAMA

Immediately Suspend All Military and Police Aid to Mexican Authorities

U.S. Scholars

To: President Barack Obama

We are professors from universities and colleges across the United States who have been closely following the human rights violations occurring in Mexico. On September 26, 2014, students from a teachers college in the rural town of Ayotzinapa were headed to a peaceful protest when they were stopped and attacked by municipal police. These government authorities shot and killed 3 of these students, then forcibly disappeared another 43.[1]

According to eyewitnesses, the Mexican army battalion stationed close to the site of the attacks not only looked the other way, but also threatened the students.[2] While this was occurring, the battalion's commanding officer was at a party hosted by the wife of his close associate, the mayor of the town where the attacks took place.[3] The mayor and his wife are accused of being the intellectual masterminds of the murders.[4]

To date, the whereabouts of the students remain unknown, and the Mexican federal government has tried to sidestep its responsibility in addressing these human rights violations by declaring that corrupt local officials handed the students over to members of a Mexican drug cartel for slaying.

These students' disappearances are not an isolated incident

perpetrated by a few bad apples. Rather, their abduction makes clear that from the federal to the local level, Mexican political officials and government security forces are thoroughly enmeshed with criminal gangs and transnational drug cartels. Moreover, this case illustrates a systematic pattern of government security forces' collusion with criminal actors to violently repress peaceful attempts at reforming a corrupt and discredited political system. The efforts to silence the 43 student activists highlight the deep structural problems that pervade the core of the Mexican political establishment.

Currently, the United States government funds Mexico's security forces through "Plan Mexico" (The Mérida Initiative and other bilateral initiatives), providing over \$2 billion since 2008. This money has been used to fund the training of both Mexican military and police. Yet, as the U.S. State Department's own "Mexico 2013 Human Rights Report" acknowledges, "Significant human rights-related problems included police and military involvement in serious abuses, including unlawful killings, physical abuse, torture, and disappearances. Widespread impunity and corruption remained serious problems... in the security forces and in the judicial sector." [5] In fact, as recently as June 30, 2014, the Mexican National

END PLAN MEXICO AND THE U.S. WAR ON DRUGS

Commission for Human Rights issued a report condemning the Mexican army's direct involvement in the Tlatlaya Massacre, where 22 civilians were extra-judiciously executed.[6]

Given the high degree of Mexican government and security force complicity and participation in human rights abuses, we have reason to believe that U.S. aid has been used to perpetrate the very human rights violations it is supposed to prevent. Further evidence of this sad reality comes from two recent studies. In their 2011 investigation into the escalation of human rights violations in Mexico since the government launched its "war on organized crime," Human Rights Watch found that,

"The patterns of violations that emerge in the accounts of victims and eyewitnesses, an analysis of official data, and interviews with government officials, law enforcement officers, and civil society groups strongly suggest that the cases documented in this report are not isolated acts. Rather, they are examples of abusive practices endemic to the current public security strategy." [7]

In addition, according to a 2014 report by the Washington Office on Latin America,

"The failure to implement strong accountability mechanisms has meant that [military and police] agents are seldom sanctioned for the abuses they commit, enabling human rights violations to continue unabated. This has been illustrated in the case of the Federal Police...[which] received training and assistance from the United States... The Mexican government held up the Federal Police as a modern, professional, and well-trained force, and it grew significantly between 2006 and 2012. But with demands for 'results' and an environment permissive of abuse, an increase in the size of the force also led to persistently high allegations of human rights violations." [8]

Because available evidence indicates that Mexican police and armed forces are using U.S. aid, weapons, technology, and training to systematically commit human rights violations, we believe that continued U.S. political support of the Peña Nieto government would only continue to make mass murder in Mexico possible. We cannot and should not support governments who kill or are complicit in the killings and disappearances of their own people, such as the 43 students from Ayotzinapa.

The record of human rights violations in Mexico is clear, as is what our laws require we do in the face of state-sponsored terrorism. Specifically, U.S. law—especially what is commonly referred to as the "Leahy Amendment," Section 620M(a) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961—prohibits our government from providing military assistance to foreign governments who violate human rights. [9] Therefore:

1) We demand that "Plan Mexico" (The Mérida Initiative) and all bilateral aid to the Mexican armed forces and police be immediately suspended.

2) We recommend a federal investigation into how U.S. military aid is directly or indirectly used by Mexican authorities, especially as related to human rights abuses.

3) Based on the findings of the federal investigation, we recommend that the U.S. government condition all future military

aid on the Mexican government's ability to prove that it will not be used to directly or indirectly violate human rights.

These actions would send a clear statement condemning human rights violations in Mexico and signal that the United States will not accept any kind of government involvement, complicity, or tolerance of direct or indirect state-sponsored terrorism. The future of Mexico is at a crossroads. The same spirit of hope and change that marked your momentous election to the White House is now found in the desires of the Mexican people for a historic transformation of their country. The Mexican people are ready for this change and many are now risking their lives daily to demand a new and honest government that respects their human rights. The best way for the United States to play a positive role in this democratic process is by cutting off all military and police aid to the current government, ensuring that our tax dollars will not be used against the Mexican people.

Respectfully,

Signed by an more than 1450 scholars

Notes:

[1] Another 3 bystanders were also shot and killed during this attack.

[2] Noticias Telemundo. October 9, 2014. "Sobreviviente de Ayotzinapa." <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2yBb-4B5FI>>;

[3] The brothers of the mayor's wife are alleged to be top drug cartel members.

< <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/11/06/the-first-lady-of-murder-the-woman-who-allegedly-masterminded-the-abduction-of-43-mexican-students/> >

[4] Hernandez Navarro, Luis. 2014. "La matanza de Iguala y el Ejército." La Jornada, November 18. <<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2014/11/18/opinion/017a2pol>>;

< <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/11/06/the-first-lady-of-murder-the-woman-who-allegedly-masterminded-the-abduction-of-43-mexican-students/>>;

[5] U.S. Department of State. 2013. "Mexico 2013 Human Rights Report." <<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/220667.pdf>>;

[6] Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos México, October 21, 2014. "Recomendación No. 51/2014."

<http://www.cndh.org.mx/sites/all/fuentes/documentos/Recomendaciones/2014/REC_2014_051.pdf>;

[7] Human Rights Watch. November 2011. "Neither Rights Nor Security: Killings, Torture, and Disappearances in Mexico's 'War on Drugs.'" <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/mexico1111webwcover_0.pdf>;

[8] Meyer, Maureen. May 2014. "Mexico's Police: Many Reforms, Little Progress." <<http://www.wola.org/sites/default/files/Mexicos%20Police.pdf>>;

[9] United States Agency International Development. February 21, 2014. "FY 2014 Statutory Checklists: An Additional Help for ADS Chapters 200-203." <<http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1876/200sbs.pdf>>

Led by Latinos, U.S. Actions Organize to End Plan Mexico and Support Ayotzinapa

Nidia Bautista, Americas Program, January 5, 2015

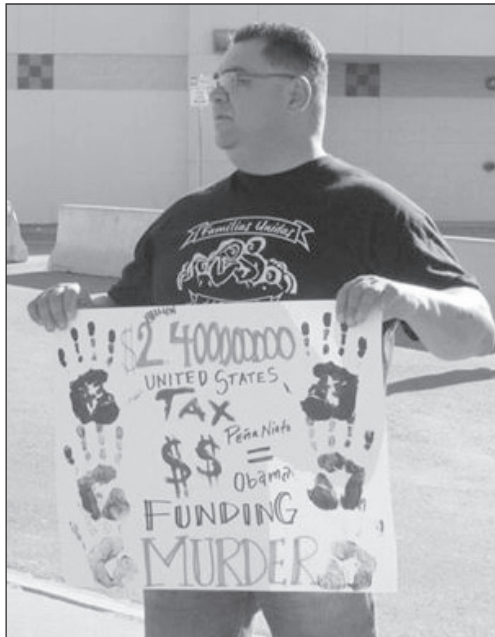
Thousands of people came out to protest on December 3 in fifty-four U.S. cities under the hashtag #USTired2. Based on the slogan used by Mexican protesters #YaMeCansé (I'm tired of it) following a remark by the Mexican Attorney General to cut off a press conference, #USTired2 has helped build momentum in the context of growing discontent with U.S. foreign policy toward Mexico and police brutality at home. [...]

The organization plans national protests January 6 when Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto visits the White House to meet with President Obama.

For over three months, Mexicans have organized demonstrations in the country's cities and towns, demanding justice for the disappeared college students from Iguala, Guerrero. Yet since October, protestors have not only called for the appearance of the 43 disappeared students (now presumably 42 since the remains of one student were identified among ashes found near the scene of the crime), but also the resignation of President Enrique Peña Nieto and justice for the tens of thousands of disappeared and hundreds of femicides nationwide that have occurred, especially since the war on drugs was launched [by the U.S.] in December 2006. At the core of their criticisms is the impunity and corruption at local, state and federal levels.

While protestors in Mexico have amplified their demands, multiple protests have been organized abroad in more than fifty countries. One of the largest and most notable is in United States, known by the hashtag #USTired2. The protests were organized in November to coordinate nationwide protests on December 3 in support of the Ayotzinapa families. The #USTired2 protests are geared toward pressuring the U.S. government to end Plan Mexico (Mérida Initiative), the bilateral security aid package that supports Mexican police and military forces like those implicated in the Ayotzinapa case.

Organized primarily by Latinos and Mexican communities in the United States, the #USTired2 protests emerged as a critique of President Obama's stance on Ayotzinapa. The new movement denounced Obama's offer to help the Mexican government resolve the Ayotzinapa case as a contradiction, considering the U.S. government has provided \$2.4 billion dollars in security funding to Mexico through Plan Mexico. Plan Mexico has been funding U.S. training and equipment for Mexico's armed forces, police, courts and prison system. Since 2008 when the bilateral



program began, human rights violations by security forces have soared, according to the National Commission on Human Rights.

On December 3, #USTired2 surpassed its goal of organizing protests in 43 cities, one for each disappeared student, by succeeding in inspiring protests in 54 U.S. cities. [...] In an interview with the Americas Program, Rocío Zamora, who took part in the #USTired2 protests in North County San Diego, California explained why she came out to demonstrate.

“We were there to stand in solidarity with the people of Mexico, to let the Mexican government know that the world is watching them, and to demand that the U.S. government stop military assistance to the Mexican government,” she said of the December 3 demonstra-

tion, which drew scores of people in her city.

U.S. citizens have also shown their solidarity, both politically and artistically [by joining actions in Mexico City.]

Daniel Gonzalez, a graphic artist from Los Angeles, organized fourteen U.S. artists and poets under the hashtag #MexicoNo-EstasSolo to share their graphic art and poetry in solidarity with Mexican protests for justice in Ayotzinapa. Daniel explained that the project was born out of the urgency to manifest growing support for justice in Mexico.

“What is happening in Mexico now is not an isolated event. It looks a lot like the kind of violence that is happening in Palestine, Ferguson, and in many other parts of the world,” he said in a recent interview.

“It's important to build solidarity among all these communities, rather than just sympathy. Action through protest and cultural activities creates solidarity, a collective consciousness that brings to life the struggles of many people from around the world and connects their cause with us and us to them.”

Daniel, in collaboration with Casa de El Hijo de Ahuizote, a Mexico City-based cultural center dedicated to transnational collaboration, printed a broadside that featured a front-page graphic by a U.S. artist and poetry and literature on the other side. They distributed 2,500 flyers during the December 1 and December 6 marches in Mexico City.

He added, “Mainstream media in Mexico don't show the people the impact that this movement is having globally. Mexican mainstream media try to project an ugly face of the movement to the rest of the world, to try to discredit it. The truth is that

these protests include a large part of Mexican society; they're peaceful, well organized, and if the momentum is kept up, have the potential to achieve profound social change."

Daniel also reiterated the importance of developing transnational networks of communication and political activism. "This is one of the ways to connect and inform communities transnationally. It's like sending a note, both print and electronic, and delivering it to the people – a long-traveled message." [...]

As a university student and member of the Committee in Solidarity with Ayotzinapa, Erick Reyes believes that U.S. solidarity with Ayotzinapa is telling of the deep and historical ties that unite communities on both sides of the border.

"It's not for nothing that there are more than 20 million

Mexicans living in the U.S. and that people all over Latin America suffer and live this violence on a daily basis. This solidarity is not only symbolic — it's important and it's represented in the participation of more than 53 countries taking to the streets to protest, with the participation of a wide range of nationalities."

"Racism is a very big issue in the United States, so we must also address what's going on in Ferguson. We have to discuss the protests that are going on there as well. It's very important to call for a well-organized resistance that isn't just sporadic, but something that can transcend into a permanent discussion among Latinos, among African Americans and among Mexicans on the causes of systemic violence, poverty, and discrimination."

COVER-UP AND LIE

Mexico President Peña Nieto's Response to the Case of the 43 Missing Students of the Ayotzinapa School

USTired2

On September 26, six persons were assassinated and 43 students abducted by local Mexican police and forcibly disappeared in Iguala, Guerrero, a city of 110,000 located about 80 miles south of Mexico City. The case has sparked widespread demonstrations in Mexico and around the world calling for the safe return of the students, justice and the resignation of government officials involved, including Mexico's President Enrique Peña Nieto.

Background Events

Five busloads of students were attacked throughout the night of September 26 and predawn hours of September 27. Survivors, testimony of suspects and the Federal Attorney General's Office confirm that members of the Iguala police force opened fire on the students in the initial attack, followed by attacks with the apparent involvement of members of the organized crime group Guerreros Unidos.

The students were mostly freshmen from the Rural Teaching College "Raúl Isidro Burgos." The college trains young men from poor, rural, often indigenous communities to teach in communities like their own and has a history of radical politics, student activism and a curriculum based on revolutionary ideals from its founding in 1926. Many people, including the students, believe that the clear profile of the school as a leader in the opposition to recent economic and political reforms led by the Peña government is the reason behind the attacks.

The government has arrested members of the local police and claimed that the then-mayor, in collusion with organized crime, ordered the ambush. The mayor, José Luis Abarca; his wife, María de los Ángeles Pineda; local police and alleged members of Guerreros Unidos have been arrested. The Attorney General Jesus Murillo Karam put forth the hypothesis (based on testimony from the drug cartel members) that the students were turned over to the neighboring Cocula police force, which turned them over to Guerreros Unidos. This group allegedly murdered the students and

incinerated their bodies in the Cocula dump. Ashes found in bags in a nearby river have yielded a positive identification for just one student so far, according to the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF) and other independent forensics experts. The EAAF expressly stated, however, that its members were "not present at the moment the divers and the [attorney general's investigators] recovered the bag and did not participate in the finding," suggesting doubt about the government's claims and uncertainty about whether or not the government tampered or manipulated evidence in the case.

Federal Government Cover-Up: Contradictions, Doubts And Human Rights Violations

While there is general agreement on the events before the disappearance, the Attorney General's claims regarding what happened afterward have been contested by students, parents, forensic experts and a University of California-Berkely (UC-Berkeley) investigative report. Several forensics experts assert that 43 bodies could not have been burned at the dump due to the degree of heat required, the lack of metal debris and the state of surrounding plant life. The UC Berkeley report interviewed witnesses and reviewed documents from the day of the alleged incineration and none reported an inferno of the size necessary to incinerate the bodies. The parents have accused the government of providing false information to call off the search for their sons alive and close the case before it goes any higher up.

Motive: The Attorney General claims that the mayor feared the students would disrupt a political event held by his wife and ordered the police to stop them. The students claim they did not even know about the event. Subsequent investigations show the event ended before the attack took place at about 9:30 pm. Evidence from police logs also shows that the police were monitoring the students since they left the school for Iguala and that the attacks in separate locations targeted the original student buses.

Since local police, state police and the Army Battalion coordinate in the C4 Center that received the reports, these internal documents indicate a level of planning and coordination that calls into question the federal government hypothesis that the crime was the act of one angry and corrupted mayor and organized crime. As the motive of the mayor acting with the cartel to order the attack breaks down, it becomes more important to investigate the possibility of a political motive with knowledge and coordination at a higher level. This has seemingly been discarded by the government, leading to more suspicions and criticisms of the lack of transparency and good-faith effort to resolve the disappearances and the crimes.

Participation of Federal Police and Army: Survivor testimonies and the UC Berkeley investigation confirm that members of the Federal Police and 27th Army Battalion stationed very near the scene of the crime were present and had knowledge of the attacks before, during and after. Although the attacks lasted for hours and left dying and severely wounded youth, these forces did not intervene to stop the attacks or protect the students. Some testimony also indicates direct involvement of the Federal Police in the shooting.

Government response: President Enrique Peña Nieto's immediate response was to insist that the Ayotzinapa case was a matter of state jurisdiction. His federal government did not take the case until October 4. The state-level government failed to charge the mayor until September 30, allowing him time to escape although he was captured several weeks later.

Attorney General (PGR) Murillo Karam announced that drug cartel members arrested had led them to four mass graves on the outskirts of Iguala that held the bodies of the students, implying that the case was solved. After weeks of doubts and agonizing wait, forensics experts reported that none of the bodies matched the missing students. No explanation was given as to how — or why — the PGR had been given this misinformation and presented it as fact. Only a few of those bodies have been identified. Mistrust deepened and accusations of a cover-up increased as the parents continued to insist on a search for their sons alive, accusing the government of only seeking gravesites.

On November 7, the Attorney General announced a second version, also from arrested suspects, that the students were murdered and killed in Cocula. It has not been scientifically confirmed. Relatives demand the search continue.

The government has alternately remained silent, given incorrect information or shown insensitivity in the face of this terrible crime. At the November 7 press conference, PRG Murillo Karam cut it off with "I'm tired now," leading to the hashtag #YaMeCansé and USTired2. Peña announced that it was time to "get over it" on December 4, provoking indignant responses from parents and supporters who proclaimed they would not get over their sons' fate until they were home safe.

The UC Berkeley reporters cite documents showing that the Army base refused to allow an inspection as part of the investigation. As it is under President Peña, it is unclear why the battalion did not fully cooperate with the investigation.

Human rights violations, crimes and corruption

The above indicates the confirmed or suspected commission of

the following crimes and human rights violations by the government:

- Homicide and attempted homicide by local police
 - Homicide and attempted homicide by federal police (under the Secretary of the Government)
 - Complicity of the Armed Forces. The Army did not intervene to protect the students when police opened fire. Although they were ostensibly there to fight the drug cartels, the Army apparently had a close relationship with the narco-mayor, having donated part of the land for the construction of his shopping center and attended his political events. The Army also tried to prevent wounded students from receiving medical attention at a local clinic, evicting them reportedly with insults and accusing them of breaking and entering, according to testimonies.
 - Collusion of security forces and government officials with Transnational Criminal Organizations, including the mayor of Iguala, local authorities in neighboring municipalities and other officials that should be investigated.
 - The governor of Guerrero, Angel Aguirre was forced to resign following widespread accusations of his protection of the corrupt officials and possible involvement in the crime. It is unclear if current investigations include his role.
 - The Attorney General's office received charges against the former mayor Abarca previously and did not act on them.
 - Documents revealed in the UCB investigation showed evidence and formal accusations of torture used in interrogation of several alleged members of organized crime.
 - The Iguala chief of police has not been captured, nor several of the cartel leaders implicated in the crime. The mayor of Cocula was released for lack of evidence, despite the fact that his police force is accused of handing the students over to Guerreros Unidos. Although many people have been arrested, there is evidence of torture to obtain confessions. Eyewitnesses contacted in journalistic investigations report that they were never contacted by government investigators. Bodies found in mass graves have not been explained and in many cases not identified. The population has lost faith in the will and capacity of the government to enforce the law.
 - Enforced disappearance of at least 42 people
 - Arbitrary detention, lack of due process, and the criminalization of social protest
 - The direct involvement of security forces – local police and quite probably federal police and army forces – and likely political motive behind the massacre and disappearances, as well as the pathetic response of the federal government, have proved the tipping point for Mexican society. Demonstrations of tens of thousands of people have been held in Mexico City and other major cities. Human rights organizations are demanding a thorough investigation, the safe return of the students and the withdrawal of military outposts. Citizen groups are taking over local governments, citing corruption of authorities.
- Mexican society is demanding justice. The U.S. government can no longer turn a blind eye to cases like Ayotzinapa. The drug war policy of funding, arming and training corrupt police and armed forces has created widespread instability, violence and erosion of the rule of law and human rights.

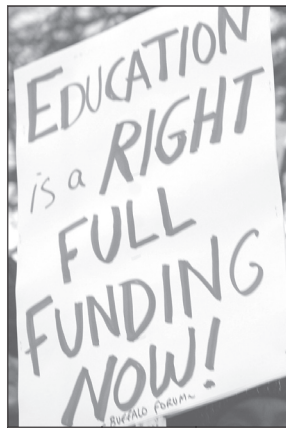
I • Public Control of Public Schools

teachers, staff, students and parents are fighting for *Public Control of Public Schools!*

Organizing efforts are involving students, teachers, staff, parents and various organizations in the struggle and urging all to join in improving the quality of education. Through their own efforts and in the face of huge pressure from state officials, people are organizing to develop redesign plans for their schools that includes making them an organizing center for the neighborhoods they are part of. Unlike state officials, who commonly operate behind closed doors and without providing information to the public, these efforts all engage the public in developing the plans, defending the right to education and fighting for public control.

In various areas, organizing has included distributing main highlights of the redesign plans to the public, putting content on facebook and webpages for public comments and public meetings where all concerned are able to voice their views. Organizing is including alumni and current students, teachers and principals, existing staff and community organizations ready to contribute to raising the quality of education.

Hundreds of people are participating in the various activities. What stands is the broad desire of the people to keep schools public and to have schools serve as centers for the community



— such as for organizing efforts, developing student unions, providing after school programs, space for meetings, evening classes, family sports and music, art, day care, and more.

Voice of Revolution all those who are working to defend the right to education and raise the quality of education by fighting for *Public Control of Public Schools!* The organizing everywhere is making clear people want to have more say and a *deciding say* in their schools, not closures and private takeovers where the public has no say.

The schools in these cities, including the buildings, belong to the public. Communities are best served by increasing the role and control of teachers, staff, students and parents together

in deciding matters of education. This includes designing the content of curriculum, how to include organizing with the community and for rights more broadly, investigating problems and debating solutions, how best to assess development by students and teachers alike, methods of teaching and learning as well as day and evening programs at the school that best suit the needs of the communities they serve.

Public education that meets the needs of the youth is a social necessity and responsibility. By relying on our own efforts and defending the right to education and public right to have control, we can defend our public schools and raise their quality.

Governor Cuomo Calls “Education Bureaucracy” the Enemy and Targets Buffalo

On December 18, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo’s office sent a letter to Dr. Merryl Tisch, Chancellor of New York State (NYS) Schools, and Dr. John King, out-going NYS Commissioner of Education. The letter, sent by the Director of State Operations, says Cuomo intends to introduce an “aggressive legislative package” to “reform” public education. These reforms are consistent with efforts across the country to eliminate the role of the public in public governance. Examining the direction being taken is useful for all concerned about defending the right to education and raising the quality of our public schools.

What is needed for a modern education is public control of public schools and decision making by and for students, teachers, staff and parents together. What is needed is education to change the world, to investigate and address the social problems faced by society and find solutions so as to move society forward. Instead Cuomo, like executives nationwide, is planning an all-sided attack on the rights of teachers, students and the public.

His December 18 letter has a list of 12 questions for Tisch and King that show Cuomo will aggressively pursue eliminating the public school system and the role of the public in governance.

This is all done in the name of benefiting the students — who are not consulted or involved in any way!

This direction is made most clear at the end of the letter, which once again claims that public schools, with unionized public teachers, are a “monopoly” that must be broken up. The letter can be read to expand the forces being targeted to include principals, school boards and district administrators. This is particularly true given the content preceding it, such as more mayoral control and consolidation and regionalization of school districts. It is also reflected in the response to the letter from Tisch, which calls for an education “czar” to be appointed by the state with the authority to eliminate local governance and take over “troubled” school districts, with Buffalo top of the list.

The letter states: “Several weeks ago Governor Cuomo said that improving education is thwarted by the monopoly of the education bureaucracy.

The education bureaucracy’s mission is to sustain the bureaucracy and the status quo and therefore it is often the enemy of change. The result is the current system perpetuates the bureaucracy but fails our students in many ways.” While the letter shows the main focus of Cuomo’s attack remains teachers,

the use of “bureaucracy” also targets administrators and more generally public governance as the “enemy.” Why introduce such language?

Cuomo will not actually engage in a public debate on these issues and instead uses terms like enemy to try to silence discussion. King, similarly, was known for his refusal to hold public meetings. For example the meeting on the Common Core testing and teacher evaluation regime that King held in Buffalo (December 2013) was by invitation only and those invited were not permitted to speak. And while teachers, parents and students and organizations of various kinds have put forward, in public meetings, ways to defend the right to education and raise the quality of the schools, Cuomo ignores these efforts and proposals.

Buffalo Singled Out

Buffalo is directly targeted in the letter, just like other cities, like Chicago, Detroit and Philadelphia have been target by executives in their states. This is likely in part because of the firm resistance to attacks, for Buffalo by Cuomo and NYSED. This includes opposing their efforts to close Buffalo schools and hand them over to private charters, which are known for doing no better or even worse than public schools when it comes to educating students. Teachers and parents together are joining in independent organizing to defend their interests, as shown in recent public forums. The Buffalo Teachers Federation refused to endorse Cuomo for governor in the recent elections and instead stood up for pro-education Green Party candidate Howie Hawkins. The Buffalo schools slated for closing by NYSED are all resisting, developing redesign plans and involving the public in that process. Efforts to split parents and teachers are not succeeding. School Board members are joining the resistance too. These are among the factors leading to a concerted attack on Buffalo.

Cuomo, as a public official, takes no responsibility for the *government failure* to guarantee the equal right to education for all, including the funding and resources required for teachers to teach and students to learn. Instead, he blames the schools, and by inference the teachers, principals and district administrators. The letter asks, “What steps would you take to dramatically improve priority or struggling schools — schools that condemn a generation of kids to poor education and thus poor life prospects? Specifically, what should we do about the deplorable conditions of the education system in Buffalo?”

An economy that produces growing poverty and inequality can only produce “poor life prospects.” This is a function of an economy that does not meet the needs of the majority. The schools are not the source of the problem.

Further, it is significant that Cuomo refers not to particular schools but to the “education system in Buffalo.” This is code for a state takeover of Buffalo Public Schools and subsequently their closure or privatization, using privately controlled charters. Both serve to eliminate public governance and weaken or eliminate the teachers’ union. This approach also eliminates public school boards and administrators.

It is this public governance that Cuomo has in mind when he

says the “bureaucracy” is the “enemy.” It is also why he is calling for more mayoral control of schools and supports the concept of a czar. In this way, power is concentrated in executives at the state and local level and the role of the public and public governance is eliminated.

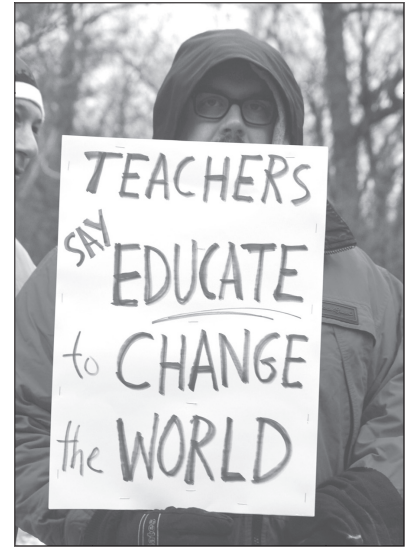
State Imposed Teacher Evaluation

Five of Cuomo’s twelve questions are directed at teachers. The “questions” — actually proposals — include having the state impose, in law, scoring for teacher evaluations. The letter specifically calls classroom observation — known by educators to be a more reliable and useful means of evaluation than test scores — “subjective,” while test scores are considered “objective.” Had he asked parents, students and teachers, he would know that the test scores are not at all an objective measure of a student’s abilities, development or contributions. He also must be deaf given the very loud rejection across the state of the Common Core testing and teacher evaluation regime by parents and teachers alike. More than 60,000 students refused to even take the state test last spring and many thousands more will do so at testing time in April 2015.

By having the state set evaluation scoring percentages in law, Cuomo wants to eliminate any negotiation by teachers on their evaluations — an instrument used to fire them. He wants to increase the weight given to test scores while decreasing the role of principals — human beings who know and work with the teachers. It is an effort to essentially be able to fire teachers at will and eliminate collective efforts by teachers to defend their rights.

This is further indicated in the additional attacks on teachers. Cuomo wants measures to more easily fire teachers. He wants to institute merit pay — “financial incentives” — which are known not to improve teaching while engendering a more insecure, competitive and divisive atmosphere. Teachers especially need a cooperative environment of mutual respect and assistance. Merit pay is designed to eliminate cooperation and collective resistance.

Cuomo also wants to change the teacher certification process, impose an additional competency test and extend the probationary period for teachers so it takes longer to get tenure. This is all done in the name of recruiting the “best and brightest.” But what bright teacher would want to work in such insecure, unjust and test-filled conditions where the state and not their peers and principals evaluate them and can fire them?! Cuomo’s demands likely pave the way for broad and increased use of un-certified,



non-union college graduates who only teach for 3-5 years, as is already being done through Teach for America.

As an additional means to limit public governance, the letter asks, “Do you think we should restructure the current system through mergers, consolidations or regionalization?” Regionalization and mergers generally are a means to decrease representation and the role of the public. This is being proposed at a time when the problems society faces require increasing the role of the public. Indeed, that role needs to be raised to one of decision making by the people themselves. This is the requirement of democracy today. It is what parents, teachers, staff and students are fighting for as essential to renew the public schools, raise their quality and actually secure the equal right to education for all. Fighting in this direction of defending rights and

demanding the public right to decide is precisely what Cuomo is trying to prevent.

Communities are best served by increasing the role and control of teachers, staff, students and parents together in deciding matters of education. This includes designing the content of curriculum, how best to assess development by students and teachers alike, methods of teaching and learning as well as day and evening programs at the school that best suit the needs of the communities they serve. Raising the quality of public schools by developing a modern education system that meets the needs of the youth — as those responsible for moving society forward and solving the problems of the day — needs the political empowerment of the people themselves. Now is the time to advance work in this direction, together. *Educate to Change the World!*

Governor Cuomo’s Misguided Agenda is Harming Public Education

NYS Allies for Public Education

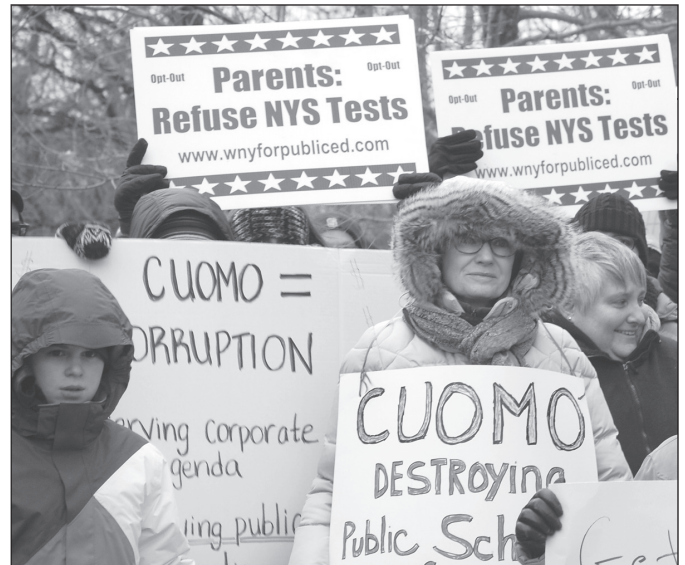
New York State Allies for Public Education (NYSAPE), a coalition of 50 groups statewide, has sent a letter to Governor Cuomo, responding to the questions posed in a letter from his office addressed to Commissioner King and Chancellor Tisch on December 18 and shared widely by the media.

It is evident that the Governor has a misguided agenda about the state of our public schools and what strategies should be used to improve them. In our letter, we challenge the current reform agenda and advocate for education policies that have been proven to work, based on evidence and experience.

“Governor Cuomo says his responsibility is to ‘represent the students’ and that he wants ‘to do the best we can for the students and for their education.’ If so, he should listen to parents throughout the state who truly want the best for their children and who believe that the policies he is proposing — to double-down on privatization, high-stakes testing, Common Core and data sharing — are severely undermining the quality of their schools,” said Eric Mihelbergel, Erie County public school parent and founding member of NYSAPE.

Jeanette Deutermann, Nassau County public school parent and founder of Long Island Opt-Out said, “The letter claims that during the campaign, the Governor ‘spoke to New Yorkers all across the state that [sic] had many questions about... what we could do to fundamentally improve public education.’ We do not know to whom he spoke, but he clearly did not speak to public school parents, who in surveys and polls overwhelmingly reject the top-down policies from Albany that are leading our schools in the wrong direction. We urge him to hold town hall meetings throughout the state, to listen to parents and hear directly their views about a better course of action, based on sufficient and equitable funding, local control, diminishing the focus on privatization and testing, and treating their children as the valuable unique individuals they are, rather than test scores or data points.”

In our letter to the Governor, NYSAPE addresses issues ranging from charter school expansion, mayoral control, teacher accountability system, and the Common Core, to consolidation of districts



and the selection process for the Board of Regents. Instead of harsh political rhetoric from Albany pushing privatization and high-stakes testing, New York students deserve support from elected and appointed officials who respect and understand what kind of support public schools need to succeed.

For example, NYSAPE’s response regarding charter schools notes that according to the 2010 amendment to the New York charter law, before charters are renewed or allowed to replicate, they must show they enroll and retain equal numbers of at risk students as the districts in which they are located, and yet neither the Board of Regents nor SUNY have ever rejected a charter proposal on these grounds – despite the fact that many charters have sky high student suspension and attrition rates. Neither SUNY nor the Regents have provided adequate financial oversight, and in 95 percent of charter audits, the State Comptroller’s Office has found corruption or mismanagement. Yet when the Deputy Comptroller wrote a letter to the state’s major charter-school regulators asking for stronger oversight, he received

no response.

On the question of improving teacher quality, NYSAPE responds that since 2012, due to “reform,” teacher morale is at a 20 year low. New reports have shown that there have been dramatic drops in enrollment in teacher preparation programs—New York State experienced a 22% drop in two years. It is likely that the majority of that 22% were highly qualified candidates who had other career options. It is clear that the rhetoric of teacher evaluation and the assignment of blame to teachers have made teaching a less attractive profession. Moving teacher evaluation systems from the control of local boards of education to politicians in Albany has resulted in a dysfunctional evaluation system that goes against current research. Worst of all, it has created unintended consequences for students, as teachers are incentivized to drill students for the tests.

The parents and educators of New York want strong and appropriate learning standards with a focus on classroom learning not testing.

Without equitable funding throughout the state, schools will continue to be at a disadvantage and not have the essential resources to help students meet their full potential. Local control has been eroded by those who want to privatize public education and destroy the most vital cornerstone of our democracy. NYSAPE and its allies around the state stand together for proven strategies to help all children succeed.

NYSAPE’s full response to the Governor’s questions was sent not only to Governor Cuomo but to every legislator in the State of New York as well as to the Board of Regents. You can find the full NYSAPE response here: <http://www.nysape.org/nysape-response-letter-to-governor-on-public-education.html>

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NYS Allies for Public Education (NYSAPE): www.nysape.org

Boston’s Reformy Olympics

Curmudgucation Blog, January 9, 2015

The US Olympics bosses have chosen Boston to make the US bid for hosting the 2024 Olympics. This would be the first time the US has hosted the games since the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City (for which I, true story, was a torch runner) and a real coup for the Massachusetts port city.

But I have learned, through some of my more advanced fake journalism techniques, that the US plans to use the games to showcase our awesometastic Common Core reformy initiatives. Therefore, principles of Core and reform will be applied to these games. Here are some of the CCSS-flavored nougats we can expect to enjoy:

- All athletes for all sports will be assessed for running and swimming skills. Cut scores will be set to insure a 35% failure rate. All athletes who are not ranked as proficient will be sent home. We anticipate that this may thin the field in some sports considerably (e.g. badminton and weightlifting), but sometimes you have to break a few eggs.

- To show full understanding of the concepts behind their sports, athletes will complete their tasks using multiple techniques. For example, table tennis teams must complete rounds by holding their paddles in their teeth or strapped to their foreheads. Swimmers will be required to complete one lap with feet strapped together, another lap carrying a small farm animal, and a lap wearing those foam #1

fingers on their hands. Shot putters will complete at least half of their throws without using their hands. If they really understand how the sport works, it shouldn’t make any difference.

- Athletes will be required to display critical thinking in their competition. We’re not really sure what that means, so we’re going to lock their equipment in a box, show them four boxes, and make them pick the correct one, and we’ll just go ahead and call that a test of their critical thinking.

- Athletes will be required to display grit. Instead of sticking to cushy, comfy mats, gymnasts will be required to complete routines on concrete, beach sand, a giant vat of eels, and a giant air mattress covered with mousetraps. Rowing teams will compete in the open sea, in the middle of shipping lanes, during a gale, dragging shark bait behind their skulls. If they really have grit, it won’t matter.

- Costs will be kept low by getting multiple uses out of resources. The court used to assess volleyball skills can also be used for finding the best cyclist. You just have to be creative, and believe. After all-- a court is a court. One size fits all, and a tool

- If an athlete fails to win a medal, his coach will be fired. Also, the athlete’s kindergarten teacher will be penalized. Also, the colleague that his kindergarten teacher attended will be fined.

All ribbons will, of course, be provided by Pearson. And they will all be exactly the same size.

Hands Up, Don’t Test

(Interview with Jesse Hagopian on recent protests against police violence and struggles against the Common Core testing regime. He is an African American teacher at Seattle’s Garfield High School, where there have been student walkouts opposing testing and police brutality.)

EduShyster: You happened to be in Boston recently giving a talk about the new uprising against high-stakes testing on the same night that thousands of people here were protesting police violence and institutional racism. Here’s the people’s mic

— explain how the two causes are related.

Jesse Hagopian: If I could have, I would have moved the talk to the protest to connect the issues. I would have said that the purpose of education is to empower young people to help solve problems in their community and their society. The purpose of standardized testing is to learn how to eliminate wrong answer choices rather than how to critically think or organize with people around you or collaborate on issues you care about. These tests are disempowering kids from the skills they really need to solve

the big problems that our society and kids themselves are facing—like rampant police brutality and police terror. What’s the point of making our kids college and career ready if they can be shot down in the street and there’s no justice? You look at how testing and the preparation for testing now monopolizes class time — that is the American school system. [...] We face huge problems as a society: mass incarceration, endless wars, income inequality. Our education system has to be about empowering students to solve those problems.

EduShyster: I can think of one key difference between the two movements. All of the people who are protesting testing are white suburban moms who are unhappy that their kids are not as brilliant as they thought.

Hagopian: That comment is offensive for lots of reasons but one of the biggest is that it dismisses the parents and teachers of color who are leaders of this movement. Look at Castle Bridge Elementary in New York where more than 80% of the parents opted their kids out of the test. The PTA leaders who helped spearhead that movement are both parents of color. Look at Karen Lewis in Chicago, who has led a civil rights struggle for the schools Chicago’s students deserve, which includes a fight against high-stakes testing. In Seattle we organized a multi-racial coalition, and some of the most vocal opponents of the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) state test were Black teachers, myself included. We were able to partner with the NAACP and it was a really powerful coalition.

At one point the NAACP held a press conference and said “Look: the MAP test is the tool that’s used to decide who is in Advanced Placement (AP) classes which are overwhelmingly white. This is a tool of institutional racism and tracking and the MAP tests have long played that role. If this is the metric that we use to decide who is advanced and who is not, and only white children end up being identified as advanced, then something clearly is not working.”

EduShyster: In your new book, *More than a Score*, you argue that the movement against high-stakes testing actually started with civil rights activists. Explain.

Hagopian: The first major test resisters were Black intellectuals. Horace Mann Bond has a beautiful passage where he describes how these tests are used to rank and sort our children and how, when you test the kids in the rich neighborhoods who have access to all of the resources of course they do better. It has nothing to do with intelligence — it has to do with access to resources. What he wrote in the 1930’s is what we see happening in our schools today. Or W.E.B. Dubois, founder of the NAACP, who spoke out against early standardized tests because they were grafted onto the public schools via the eugenics movement, the idea being that it was possible to prove white supremacy through “scientific” methods. He knew from the very beginning that these tests were designed to show Black failure, and they are still showing that. The fact that there has been such a stability of test scores — that rich white students score the best — shows that these are a tool for ranking and sorting. And increasingly these tests are being used to shut down schools in poor neighborhoods that serve predominantly students of color.

EduShyster: Here is where I have to channel one of my favorite critics. He teaches at a Boston charter school, and as he’ll be quick to ask, if those schools are failing to teach kids at the most basic level, should they be kept open?

Hagopian: That is a great question. As much as I vehemently defend our public schools against corporatization and what I call the testocracy, I think that we have to acknowledge that our schools have long played the role of ranking and sorting students into different strata of society, and students of color in particular have been sorted into the bottom. There is a tension in public schools because on the one hand they play that ranking and sorting function, but on the other hand they hold radical democratic possibilities to empower people with the knowledge that they need to transform society. That is why schools are contested spaces and why every civil rights movement in our history has been focused on the schools in some way. We need to transform our school system. The question is “who are the best people to do that?” And the best people to do that are teachers and parents—not billionaires or the one percent. The sorting process worked out just fine for them. [...]

EduShyster: Garfield High is associated with rabble-rousing teachers because of the successful MAP boycott, but students there are really active too. In addition to walking out to protest the Ferguson decision, students also walked out over budget cuts. Are all of these walkouts getting in the way of their test prep?

Hagopian: Garfield High is going through an incredible season of student activism. I am the adviser to the Black Student Union at Garfield High School, whose members were recently recognized by the Seattle Human Rights Commission as being rising human rights leaders. After the Darren Wilson decision, they called a meeting in the cafeteria, held a speak-out, then 1,000 students marched out of Garfield and to a rally at the NAACP. I happened to be driving down the road and had to pull over because all of a sudden here come 1,000 students chanting *Hands Up, Don’t Shoot!* The students will tell you that the problem is not just in Ferguson or on Staten Island, but with institutional racism. They look around and it is there in the Seattle Public Schools with, for example, disproportionate suspension rates for minority students. They feel like it is their responsibility to highlight these issues and to act on their own behalf. [...] They are teaching a whole city about the depths of racism in our society and what it means to stand up for what you believe in. That is exactly what education should be about.

These students did not just become activists overnight, by the way. The last few years, students protested against budget cuts at Garfield High, followed by the successful MAP boycott that galvanized our whole community, and really demonstrated to students and teachers the power of standing up. I think what I am most proud of is that we are actually showing what the alternative to rote memorization and standardized curriculum looks like.

(Jesse Hagopian teaches history and advises the Black Student Union at Seattle’s Garfield High School. He is the editor of More Than a Score: The New Uprising Against High-Stakes Testing.)

I • Reject U.S. War Plans Against the DPRK

— a right defended by the peoples and recognized in international law. The U.S. is whipping up antagonism toward the DPRK, while painting U.S. crimes of planning aggressive war as a noble defense of human rights and free speech. It is a serious situation, where calm and looking into the facts are warranted.

Despite widespread doubt that the DPRK had anything to do with the Sony cyberattack (see p.17), on January 2 President Obama, in an executive order, used it to justify very broad sanctions against the DPRK and those who lend it “support” (see p.16). The sanctions are directed not only against the government and people of the DPRK but also people and institutions and companies anywhere who the U.S. determines are supporting the DPRK. As White House officials put it, the executive order provides “A very broad authority that will allow us at the time and place of our choosing to impose sanctions.”

There is no basis for any of the sanctions against the DPRK. It poses no threat to the U.S., has never attacked it, has called for the signing of a peace treaty with the U.S., for negotiations to achieve it, and for a nuclear-free zone on the Korean peninsula. Far from stepping up its war plans, the U.S. would do well to instead use its new policy toward Cuba — where dialogue and negotiations achieved results. Obama declared the decades-old policy of efforts to isolate Cuba were a failure and that the U.S. cannot “continue doing the same thing for five decades and expect a different result.” The same is true for the DPRK.

Similarly, the U.S. is attempting to use human rights violations in a situation where it cannot present itself, at home or abroad as the defender of human rights. The broad and on-going protests in Ferguson and elsewhere against racist police killings and government brutality and violence; the separation, killings and detention of immigrants and their families; the genocide of mass incarceration of African Americans; the U.S. drug war that has backed and funded massive violence, killings and disappeared students in the U.S and Mexico — also widely protested in both countries — are a few examples of U.S. human rights abuses here at home. Adding those abroad, such as civilian massacres and use of chemical weapons like depleted uranium munitions and white phosphorous in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Palestine, as well as Guantánamo and all the torture centers and more, it becomes clear that the U.S. is the worst human rights offender and backer of such crimes.

Yet the U.S. uses its power and blackmail to ensure the UN does not address the Senate’s torture report and the U.S. crimes it verifies. Instead it is the DPRK that is targeted. And worse, for the first time, the UN Security Council, which has no authority



to deal with human rights issues, was used as an arena for a fraudulent discussion about human rights to justify attacks against the DPRK. At the same time the U.S. blocks efforts by Palestinians to hold Israel responsible for its well-documented crimes.

These double standards have no place and make U.S. claims about human rights illegitimate, while also tarnishing the UN. They bring to the fore the need for new

governing arrangements, at home and in international institutions like the UN, so the will of the world’s peoples for peace and security and in defense of rights can find full expression.

The U.S. efforts at overthrowing governments in the name of high ideals have been exposed as imperialist takeover that has nothing to do with democracy and human rights. The situation shows the U.S. is desperate to hold onto its rule, in a situation where they have no solutions. One can predict that U.S. impunity and violence against the peoples will increase and become more aggressive.

While the U.S. is going to great lengths to convince people that impunity to do as it pleases is acceptable, they are convincing no one.

Indeed, the rulers are expressing their fear that people in the U.S. are rejecting U.S.-style democracy and seeking alternatives. This was evident in recent comments by New York Governor Cuomo, which echo concerns raised by Obama and others: “When Americans are questioning our economic system. When they question whether or not they have economic mobility. When they are questioning whether or not their children are going to do better. When they are questioning whether our public education system is working for them. When they are questioning our justice system and whether or not our justice system is fair. They are questioning the essence of everything we believe in, those are the primary democratic institutions of this country. That was the essential compact we made and that is what they are questioning.”

And that questioning is leading more and more to the conclusion that new arrangements — where we the people govern and decide — are needed. It is up to all of us together to create such an alternative, where the rights of all at home and abroad are put center stage. It is an alternative that advances the need for an anti-war government, so dialogue and negotiations and relations of mutual benefit and respect can go forward with the DPRK and all countries worldwide. We urge all to stand in support of the right of the DPRK, Cuba and all countries big and small to chart their own path. Join in contributing to world peace and security by developing our own new arrangements of people’s empowerment here in the U.S. Now is the time!

DIALOGUE NEEDED, NOT SANCTIONS

Obama Imposes More Sanctions Against DPRK

On January 2, President Barack Obama, using an executive order, imposed yet more sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). These add to years of brutal U.S. sanctions against north Korea, such as those from 2008, 2010 and 2011.

In this latest effort, Obama stated the executive order (EO) "Is a response to the Government of North Korea's ongoing provocative, destabilizing, and repressive actions and policies, particularly its destructive and coercive cyber attack on Sony Pictures Entertainment. The E.O. authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury to impose sanctions on individuals and entities associated with the Government of North Korea. We take seriously North Korea's attack that aimed to create destructive financial effects on a U.S. company and to threaten artists and other individuals with the goal of restricting their right to free expression."

At the same time that Obama issued the order, the FBI again "stood firmly behind" their claims that the DPRK is responsible for the Sony cyber attack. These claims are occurring despite serious doubts raised by a growing number of experts, who provide numerous facts about why it is "highly unlikely" that the DPRK is involved (see p.17). They also are taking place despite repeated statements by the DPRK that they are not responsible and their call for a joint investigation to determine who is responsible. The U.S. has refused to engage in such an investigation.

The FBI has provided very little in the way of factual information to back up its claim, even though it is a very serious charge. Indeed, the initial term used by the U.S. was cyber warfare, something they have since retreated from.

The FBI claims that the information involved is "classified" and releasing it would endanger "national security." As an administration spokesperson put it, "Some of these cyber-security firms don't have access to the same classified channels of information [that] we do."

People here and worldwide have substantial experience with these U.S. claims — from the FBI, CIA, NSA, Pentagon and others — about having evidence but needing to keep it secret. Such are commonly shown to be untrue, while facts about U.S. aggression, interference and massive spying are shown to be true. Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction," claims that the U.S. "does not torture," and that those held at Guantánamo and elsewhere are the "terrorists," that the U.S. "does not spy" on allies and U.S. citizens, are a few of the more obvious examples. This experience also shows that U.S. claims about threats are used to justify more aggression and spying, when what is needed is respect for sovereignty and dialogue and negotiations.

Broad Authority for Sanctions Against Any Lending Support

The sanctions imposed have initially been directed against three Korean facilities, including the Korea Mining Development

Trading Corporation and the Korean Tangun Trading Corporation and ten individuals. The White House admits that the ten individuals are not in any way involved in the Sony attack or any other threat to the U.S. In this manner the U.S. is making clear that there is not a relationship between the supposed threat, the cyber attack, and the sanctions.

The executive order is very broad. It gives the White House the ability to target any North Korean government official, government entity, Korean Workers Party official, or any person or entity that is providing support to the north Korean government. Thus it is a mechanism to broadly punish the DPRK, her people and the political party the Workers Party of Korea, whenever the U.S. chooses. "Support" can be financial or otherwise and such designation could be used not only for sanctions against the DPRK, but also banks and other institutions that do business with the DPRK. As a White House official put it, "This is a very broad authority that will allow us at the time and place of our choosing to impose sanctions." The official added, "This really expands the aperture of our authorities."

The executive order itself states sanctions could be imposed against any person or entity anywhere that the U.S. decides has: "Materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, the Government of North Korea or any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to this order; or to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the Government of North Korea or any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to this order."

In this manner, as it has done with Cuba blockade, the U.S. is threatening not only the DPRK but any country, company or institution that engages in commerce or even diplomatic relations with the DPRK. And the U.S. alone will determine this "support." Thus the executive order is a warning to all from the U.S.: We will do as we wish, to whomever we wish, whenever we wish. It is an indication that U.S. impunity will increase and broaden, a serious danger for all.

Given the DPRK has relations with the large majority of countries in the world, that it is not engaged in aggressive wars and has no history of being an aggressor, has no troops on foreign soil and does not use drones for illegal attacks on civilians, such a threat also reveals more about the desperation of the U.S. as it attempts to impose its dictate on the world.

It is not the DPRK that is the threat to world peace and security. A change in policy toward the DPRK is in order, much like the recent change in U.S. policy toward Cuba — a policy also involving sanctions and one that Obama called a failure. Respect for sovereignty, dialogue, negotiations are needed to resolve conflicts. The DPRK has called for and is prepared for such dialogue. In the interests of peace and security, the U.S. should end the sanctions and engage in discussions.

U.S. Imperialism Stands Condemned

The U.S. attacks against the DPRK, on issues of human rights and the Sony cyberattack, are a continuation of the Korean War in another form. The U.S. has never accepted its defeat in the Korean War — an unjust war that began when the U.S. manipulated the UN Security Council in June 1950 to interfere in a civil war in Korea, which had erupted in the course of bringing to account those who had colluded with the cruel decades long Japanese colonization of Korea. The U.S. war against Korea resulted in the deaths of more than 4 million Koreans and the total destruction of the infrastructure of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Far from making amends for these crimes, the U.S. continues to use its positions of power to demonize the DPRK and organize to overthrow the government there.

By confounding the issues on the Korean Peninsula using the so-called human rights agenda, and making a mockery of serious matters with constant propaganda and anti-Korean racist pro-war films like *The Interview*, the U.S. wants to sow doubt about the DPRK and generate support for an agenda of U.S. aggression, war and regime change. It seeks to ensure nobody rises in defense of the just cause of the Korean people.

In opposition, the people should defend the principle that no power has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign nations, and all nations should uphold the principles of peaceful coexistence, equality of nations, and prohibition of the use of force to sort out conflicts between nations. On the Korean peninsula, the demand is that the U.S. removes all its troops and weapons now and signs a permanent peace treaty. Also, the situation underlines the need for the renewal of the UN and the UN Security Council to guarantee the equality of nations and peoples, non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign



nations, and the right of all nations and people to independence, self-determination and peace.

The recent example of the normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States as a result of dialogue and diplomacy and the non-use of force is proof positive that conflicts between nations and peoples can be resolved peacefully. No matter what differences exist over matters that concern political, social, economic and other affairs, problems can be resolved through high level-talks and diplomacy, which the DPRK has consistently invited the U.S. to do.

In the interests of peace, in 2015 the demands for the U.S. to stop its criminal activity against the DPRK, bring all troops home now and sign a peace treaty with the DPRK must be escalated. A consistent pro-rights, anti-war stand is needed by all peace and justice-loving people in the U.S.

North Korea Hacked Sony? Do Not Believe It, Experts Say

Paul Wagenseil, December 19, 2014, Tom's Guide

UPDATE December 19: “The FBI announced today, and we can confirm, that North Korea engaged in this attack” against Sony Pictures Entertainment, President Barack Obama said Friday, December 19, in a televised national address.

However, the evidence the FBI cited in its press statement — that some of the malware, and some of the network infrastructure, used to hit Sony Pictures resembled those used in previous suspected north Korean attacks — was not enough to convince skeptical experts.

“All of the evidence [the] FBI cites would be trivial things to do if a hacker was trying to misdirect attention to DPRK,” tweeted Brett Thomas, chief technology officer of Redwood City, California-based online-services company Vindicia, referring to north Korea by the acronym of its formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

“The U.S. security-intelligence complex is running amok once again,” Sean Sullivan, a security adviser at Finnish anti-virus firm F-Secure, tweeted. “Washington, D.C., is incapable

of saying ‘we don't know.’”

“It's complete nonsense,” wrote Rob Graham, CEO of Atlanta-based Errata Security, on his blog. “It sounds like they've decided on a conclusion and are trying to make the evidence fit.”

“While the United States government seems convinced by technical analysis and intelligence sources that the north Koreans were behind the attack,” widely respected independent security blogger Brian Krebs posted following the FBI statement, “skeptics could be forgiven for having misgivings about this conclusion.”

The FBI did mention that “the need to protect sensitive sources and methods precludes us from sharing all of [the] information” it had providing evidence of North Korea's involvement.

Below is our original December 18 story, without alteration.

* * *

Many computer-security experts doubt the validity of the claim that north Korea is behind the Sony Pictures Entertainment hack, citing a lack of strong evidence and the possibility of alternate scenarios.

“There’s no direct, hard evidence that implicates north Korea,” Sean Sullivan, a security adviser at Finnish security firm F-Secure, told Tom’s Guide. “There is evidence of extortion (the November 21 email [to Sony executives which demanded money]) and the hackers only mentioned [the movie] *The Interview* after it was brought up in the press, which they then used to their advantage.”

“There’s no evidence pointing to north Korea, not even the barest of hints,” Robert Graham, CEO of Atlanta-based Errata Security, told Tom’s Guide. “Some bit of code was compiled in Korea — but that’s South Korean (banned in north Korea, [which] uses Chinese settings). Sure, they used threats to cancel *The Interview* — but after the FBI said they might.”

“Is North Korea responsible for the Sony breach?” wrote Jeffrey Carr, founder and CEO of Seattle cybersecurity consulting firm Taia Global. “I can’t imagine a more unlikely scenario.”

Rather than an international incident of “cyberwar,” the Sony hack looks like an inside job, several skeptics say.

“My money is on a disgruntled (possibly ex) employee of Sony,” Marc W. Rogers, a security researcher at San Francisco-based Web-traffic optimizer CloudFlare, wrote on his personal blog. “Whoever did this is in it for revenge. The info and access they had could have easily been used to cash out, yet, instead, they are making every effort to burn Sony down.”

For the most part, the doubters are undeterred by newspaper and television reports yesterday (December 17) that a U.S. government agency, so far unnamed, would present its evidence for a north Korean connection today (December 18). Kim Zetter, a longtime security reporter for *Wired*, posted a piece picking apart the Pyongyang hypothesis just before the leaks broke, yet continued to stand by her story.

“At risk of launching another Tweet storm, I’ll point out that intel[ligence] sources also claimed Brazilian blackouts were caused by hacker extortion,” Zetter tweeted yesterday, referring to a since-debunked allegation that was aired on CBS News’ “60 Minutes” a few years ago.

Skeptics pointed out that the hackers seem very familiar both with Sony Pictures’ internal network and with American news media — two things that would be unlikely in hackers operating from north Korea.

“To handle this sophisticated media/Internet campaign so well would require a handler with strong English skills, deep knowledge of the Internet and Western culture,” wrote the

pseudonymous vulnerability broker The Grugg. “I can’t see DPRK [the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea] putting this sort of valuable resource onto what is essentially a petty attack against a company that has no strategic value.”

Even the few tidbits of evidence pointing to north Korea — malware with Korean encoding, and a server in Bolivia, that had been previously used in north Korean attacks — do not convince seasoned cybersecurity experts.

“It just doesn’t feel right,” wrote independent British security blogger Graham Cluley. “Trying to determine the location of Internet hackers can be as hard as nailing jelly to the ceiling. It’s not uncommon at all for attackers to use compromised computers in other countries as part of their attack to throw investigators off the scent.”

“So far, the information that’s come out has pointed the finger at North Korean proxy groups, but it’s been context-based,” political scientist Peter W. Singer, a senior fellow at the Washington, D.C.-based think-tank the New America Foundation, told the tech blog *Motherboard* yesterday. “It wouldn’t meet the level needed in a court of law.”

To Singer, it certainly does not warrant the dramatic reaction by Sony Pictures, which canceled the release of the James Franco / Seth Rogen caper *The Interview* yesterday after an online posting attributed to the hackers obliquely threatened attacks on theaters that showed the movie.

“The attackers wonderfully understand the American psyche,” Singer added. “This was a hack, but call it ‘cyber’ and ‘terrorism,’ and we lose our [stuff]. There’s no other way to put it.”

Even the language used by the hackers seems to contain tongue-in-cheek references. The group’s self-determined name, Guardians of Peace, may be both a dig at the Republican Party and a nod to the summer hit *Guardians of the Galaxy*.

Cinema owners were scared by the threat to “remember the 11th of September,” but that sounds like an allusion to “remember, remember the fifth of November” from the 2006 movie *V for Vendetta*, which spawned the craze for Guy Fawkes masks among supporters of the hacktivist movement Anonymous. [...]

“My advice to journalists, business executives, policymakers and the general public is to challenge everything that you hear or read about the attribution of cyberattacks,” Carr wrote. “Demand to see the evidence Be aware that the FBI, Secret Service, NSA, CIA and DHS rarely agree with each other, that commercial cybersecurity companies are in the business of competing with each other and that ‘cyber intelligence’ is frequently the world’s biggest oxymoron.”

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The Interview: A Racist War-Mongering Film

The Sony Pictures film, *The Interview*, is a product of joint efforts by Hollywood and the U.S. government to both demonize north Korea and widely promote the notion that assassinations and aggressive war, both crimes, are acceptable — if they are in the service of free speech and human rights. The film itself has been reviewed as “exceedingly juvenile,” and “almost utterly lacking in wit,” with many concluding it is not worth seeing. Absent the uproar created about it — in large part stemming from FBI claims connecting the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to the Sony cyber attack supposedly as a response to the film — it is likely few people would have even seen it. Now, just watching it has been presented as



defending free speech. And the Sony release on the internet and pay-per-view was the quickest way to ensure millions would see it and sit through its racist, pro-war content - full of hatred towards the DPRK, its leadership and people and ending with the open assassination of the current leader of the DPRK.

A few facts are in order. The first is that if a similar film were made depicting the assassination of a sitting U.S. president, it would not be permitted in the U.S. and would no doubt incur its wrath if shown anywhere else. Indeed, any threat of any kind against a sitting U.S. president is considered grounds for arrest. For example, in 2001 students with posters of then President Bush with a target imposed on his face were visited by the FBI, told to remove the posters and were given warnings that any similar actions could bring arrest. It is well known that one cannot even joke about terrorism, such as assassinations, or anything close to that when in airports or passing through security to board a plane. There is no such thing as free speech in these circumstances.

Calls for assassinations of sitting heads of state and acts of aggression are against international and U.S. law. So this content of the film, however much wrapped in satire, is criminal.

Secondly, the Sony hackers did not even mention the film to start with. That was done days later, through government rumor that it could be a reason for the hack by the DPRK. This rumor was promoted despite the fact that the DPRK had already registered its objections to the film through normal channels at the UN. The DPRK has said it was not responsible for the cyber attack and rejected U.S. accusations as groundless attacks on the dignity of the country and its leadership. The DPRK proposed a joint investigation to find who is responsible — a proposal

rejected by the U.S.

Thirdly, the State Department knew of the content of the film in advance and fully supported it — even though it is a crime to promote assassinations of a sitting head of state and aggression against another country. The film does both.

The *Daily Beast* revealed communications between Sony Entertainment chief executive Michael Lynton and the State Department, which told him that *The Interview* had the potential of securing the overthrow of the government, which the U.S. has long been attempting to achieve.

Lynton had already run the project by a specialist at the Rand Corp. (where he sits on the board of trustees). [Rand Corp is a pro-military, pro-war think tank and

research company directly tied to the Pentagon] In a June e-mail, Rand defense analyst Bruce Bennett wrote to Lynton: “I have been clear that the assassination of [the DPRK’s leader] Kim Jong Un is the most likely path to a collapse of the North Korean government. Thus while toning down the ending may reduce the North Korean response, I believe that a story that talks about the removal of the Kim family regime and the creation of a new government by the North Korean people (well, at least the elites) will start some real thinking in South Korea and, I believe, in the North once the DVD leaks into the North (which it almost certainly will).”

Lynton subsequently wrote back: “Bruce — Spoke to someone very senior in State (confidentially). He agreed with everything you have been saying. Everything. I will fill you in when we speak.”

Here one can see the U.S. government using and backing Hollywood as part of its efforts to overthrow the DPRK government, including making sure the film is “leaked” into the DPRK. It is using the entire affair to impose more sanctions and spread lies about “human rights abuse” in the DPRK. There is every indication that the U.S. government and Sony Pictures orchestrated this entire fraud, to whip up hatred against the Korean people and promote the idea that sanctions and potentially war are justified in defense of free speech.

The film and U.S. use of it, the entire Sony cyber attack, to promote war should be denounced and rejected by all peace-loving people in the U.S. The DPRK has the right to pursue its own path and the U.S. has no right, through Hollywood or otherwise, to promote aggression and assassinations. These are war crimes to be condemned and punished.

UN HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERT

US Legally Obligated to Prosecute Senior Bush Officials for Torture Crimes

Raw Story

A United Nations human rights expert said the report that the U.S. Senate released on December 9 revealed a “clear policy orchestrated at a high level within the Bush administration” and called for prosecution of U.S. officials who ordered crimes, including torture, against detainees.

Ben Emmerson, United Nations special rapporteur on human rights and counter-terrorism, said senior Bush administration officials who planned and authorized crimes must be prosecuted, along with CIA and other U.S. government officials who committed torture such as waterboarding.

“As a matter of international law, the U.S. is legally obliged to bring those responsible to justice,” Emmerson said in a statement issued in Geneva. “The U.S. Attorney General is under a legal duty to bring criminal charges against those responsible.”

The CIA routinely misled the White House and Congress over its [torture of] terrorism suspects, and its methods, which included waterboarding, were more brutal than the agency acknowledged, a Senate report said on Tuesday.

Emmerson, a British international lawyer serving in the independent post since 2010, welcomed the belated release of the report. [...]

“It is now time to take action. The individuals responsible for the criminal conspiracy revealed in today’s report must be brought to justice, and must face criminal penalties commensurate with the gravity of their crimes,” he said.

International law prohibits granting immunity to public officials who have engaged in acts of torture, he said. [Something that Obama has done — VOR Ed. Note]

“The fact that the policies revealed in this report were authorized at a high level within the U.S. government provides no excuse whatsoever. Indeed, it reinforces the need for criminal accountability,” Emmerson said.

Torture is an international crime and perpetrators may be prosecuted by any other country to which they might travel, he added.

The U.N. Human Rights Committee, which reviewed the U.S. record in upholding civil and political rights in March, called for the release of the report then. Independent experts on that U.N. rights panel say the CIA program set up after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States included harsh interrogation methods that constituted torture banned by international law. (December 9, 2014)

UN Security Council Prepares to Lynch North Korea — U.S. Manipulation to Justify Aggressive War

Carla Stea, December 27, 2014

Probably the most serious and alarming recent development at the United Nations (UN) is the deadly process by which north Korea was referred to the Security Council for “human rights abuses,” and this subject was adopted for the agenda of the Security Council, against the opposition of Russia and China. Meanwhile the Senate torture report is dismissed.

The double standards are glaring, in this, but even more dangerous is the probable motivation for the demonization of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). It is imperative to expose the reasons for this focus on the DPRK, and its relevance for US/NATO’s aggressive agenda toward Russia, and especially China.

What is at stake is another example of the surreptitious manipulation of the UN to facilitate (and if possible, justify) aggressive war.

Double Standards: Security Council Dismisses US Torture

United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Counter-

Terrorism, Ben Emmerson, stated that senior Bush administration officials who planned and authorized crimes must be prosecuted, along with CIA and other U.S. government officials who committed torture. “As a matter of international law, the U.S. is legally obliged to bring those responsible to justice,” Emmerson said in a statement issued in Geneva. “The U.S. Attorney General is under a legal duty to bring criminal charges against those responsible.” To date, the United Nations has taken no action whatsoever in response to Emmerson’s charges.

On Wednesday, December 10, 2014 the front page headline of *The New York Times* stated: “Senate Panel Faults CIA Over Brutality And Deceit In Terrorism Interrogations.”

At no point in the United Nations Third Committee’s debates on human rights was the United States held responsible for now documented institutionalization of the most heinous torture of human beings, although newspapers worldwide reported the most horrific criminal actions committed by the CIA against helpless, defenseless prisoners, many of whom they knew to be innocent. [The United Nations Third Committee of the General Assembly

deals with a range of social, cultural, humanitarian affairs and human rights issues that affect people all over the world — *VOR* Ed. Note.]

The Torture Report further acknowledges that no terrorist act was prevented by the use of torture, and that torture is a failed method of obtaining accurate information. According to *The New York Times* on December 10, (and multiple other sources): “At the Salt Pit, outside Kabul, a junior officer ordered a prisoner, Gul Rahman, shackled to the wall of his cell and stripped of most of his clothing. Mr. Rahman was found dead of hypothermia the next morning, lying on the bare concrete floor. Four months later, the junior officer was recommended for a cash award of \$2,500.00 for his ‘consistently superior work.’”

On October 4, 2005, *The Washington Post’s* Dana Priest reported that Mandouh Habib, pulled off of a bus in Pakistan, and eventually delivered to Bagram and Guantánamo, “during interrogations, Habib was sometimes suspended from hooks in the wall, and repeatedly kicked, punched, beaten with a stick, rammed with an electric cattle prod and doused with cold water when he fell asleep. He was suspended from hooks, with his feet resting on the side of a large cylindrical drum attached to wires and a battery. When Mr. Habib did not give the answers his interrogators wanted, they threw a switch and a jolt of electricity went through the drum. The action of Mr. Habib ‘dancing’ on the drum forced it to rotate, and his feet constantly slipped, leaving him suspended by only the hooks on the wall. This ingenious cruelty lasted until Mr. Habib fainted. Habib says he gave false confessions to stop the abuse.”

In his book, “The Reluctant Spy,” (published in 2007) CIA officer John Kiriakou confirmed that Abu Zubaydah was waterboarded 83 times in a single month, “raising questions about how much useful information he actually supplied.” (p. 191). Kiriakou states (p. 140) “Even if torture worked, it cannot be tolerated – not in one case or a thousand or a million. If their efficacy becomes the measure of abhorrent acts, all sorts of unspeakable crimes somehow become acceptable.”

Kiriakou is currently serving a prison term for having leaked information to the press about the U.S. systematic use of torture.

One prisoner was waterboarded more than 183 times, “The report said the agency had evidently forgotten its own conclusion, sent to Congress in 1989, that ‘inhumane physical or psychological techniques are counterproductive because they do not produce intelligence and will probably result in false answers.’ The Democratic Senate staff members who studied the post-September 11 program came up with an identical assessment: that waterboarding, wall-slammings, nudity, cold and other ill treatment produced little information of value in preventing terrorism. The report spends little time condemning torture on moral or legal grounds. Instead, it addresses mainly a practical question: Did torture accomplish anything of value? Looking at case after case, the report answers with an unqualified no.

U.S. Obligated to Charge Those Guilty of Torture

For perhaps the first time, the Obama Administration acknowledged that the U.S. Government was responsible for

institutionalizing torture. According to the spokesman for United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, “The prohibition against torture is absolute.” Under no circumstances is torture permissible or justifiable. The December 10, 2014 *New York Times* report, of U.S. perpetrated gross human rights abuses, states:

“In exhaustive detail, the torture report gives a macabre accounting of some of the grisliest techniques that the CIA used to torture and imprison terrorism suspects. Detainees were deprived of sleep for as long as a week, and were sometimes told that they would be killed while in American custody. With the approval of the CIA’s medical staff, some prisoners were subjected to medically unnecessary ‘rectal feeding’ or ‘rectal hydration,’ a form of rape, – a technique that the CIA’s chief of interrogations described as a way to exert ‘total control over the detainee.’ CIA medical staff members described the waterboarding of Khalid Sheik Mohammed as a series of ‘near-drownings.’”

Although efforts were made by other UN member states, including the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), to raise the matter of systemic torture perpetrated by the U.S. government, these efforts were completely ignored.

By stark contrast, the resolution adopted by the General Assembly, on December 18, 2014, after referral by the Third Committee, not only condemns the DPRK for human rights abuses, but this condemnation is based almost entirely on an unreliable report by the “Commission of Inquiry,” led by Michael Kirby. The “Commission of Inquiry” based its dubious report on interviews with some defectors from north Korea. Kirby never actually entered the DPRK, nor interviewed any citizen currently living in north Korea. Indeed, Assistant Secretary-General Simonovic admitted, following the December 22 Security Council meeting, that the Kirby report did not meet the threshold of admissible evidence, and would not hold up in a court of law.

On December 18, and in the subsequent December 22 Security Council meeting, the double standards within the United Nations are shockingly visible, and one can only gasp at the arrogance of the blatantly biased and politically motivated resolution A/69/488/Add.3 which “condemns the long-standing and ongoing systematic, widespread and gross violations of human rights in the DPRK.” The resolution condemning the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is clearly an attempt to eviscerate the socialist government of north Korea.

The use of allegations of human rights abuses by the United States, the world’s most powerful country, and the powerful country whose own documented record of criminal human rights



abuses has just been published — causing revulsion and horror throughout the world — constitutes an assault on justice which so dishonors the United Nations that the adoption of this resolution condemning the DPRK can only be described as shameful. Operative paragraphs 7. and 8. of this resolution are infamous:

7. “Acknowledges the commission’s finding that the body of testimony gathered and the information received provide reasonable grounds to believe that crimes against humanity have been committed in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, pursuant to policies established at the highest level of the State for decades.

8. Decides to submit the report of the commission of inquiry to the Security Council, and encourages the Council to consider the relevant conclusions and recommendations of the commission and take appropriate action to ensure accountability, including through consideration of referral of the situation in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to the International Criminal Court and consideration of the scope for effective targeted sanctions against those who appear to be most responsible for acts that the commission has said may constitute crimes against humanity.”

Cuba Proposes Dialogue and Cooperation

On November 18, 2014, in the Third Committee, Cuba proposed an amendment to draft resolution A/c.3/69/L28 which stated:

“Delete operative paragraphs 7 and 8 and insert a new operative paragraph reading as follows:

“decides to adopt a new cooperative approach to the consideration of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea that will enable (a) the establishment of dialogues by representatives of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea with States and groups of States interested in the issue; (b) the development of technical cooperation between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; and (c) the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to the country.”

The government of the DPRK had already agreed to all these conditions which would have provided reliable, factual evidence of the reality of the human rights situation within the DPRK, and would have defused a potentially combustible problem. Clearly neither the European Union nor Japan nor the U.S. had an actual interest in resolving these questions. Human rights is merely a subterfuge concealing their actual agenda.

The Cuban delegate, representing the Non-aligned Movement, stated that politicization and double standards motivated resolutions against countries belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement. Many delegations, including Cuba expressed alarm at the “trigger mechanism by which the Human Rights Council was becoming a tool for some countries, who were not interested in dialogue, to use to attack other countries. The resolution was being used to establish a pattern that would permanently endanger all developing countries. We are trying to insure that a precedent is not being set here.”

China was opposed to making human rights a pretext for political gains, and stated differences on human rights issues

should be resolved through constructive dialogue, and the Security Council was the wrong forum for dealing with such issues.

The Cuban amendment was rejected. The representative of the U.S. hypocritically opposed the Cuban amendment, stating the Cuban amendment would “strip the resolution of crucial language regarding accountability.” [...]

India voted in favor of the Cuban amendment and stated:

“India was unable to sign the statute of the International Criminal Court because the statute did not allow the court to be free from political interference. It also gave the Security Council powers that went beyond international laws. In the current resolution, operative paragraphs 7 and 8 were the very reasons that prevented India from joining the Rome Statute.”

Pakistan stated:

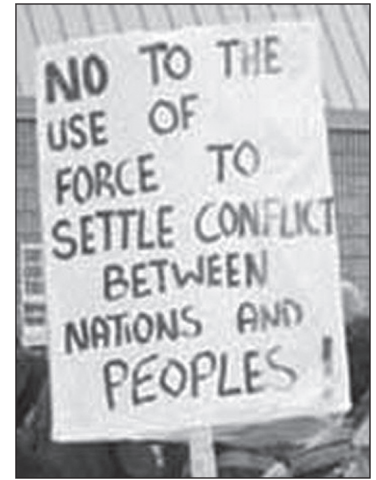
“As a firm believer in the universality of human rights, Pakistan emphasizes that efforts to advance the agenda of human rights at the global level should be pursued in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation. Human rights violations are not confined to a single country. Pakistan is opposed to the practice of ‘naming and shaming’ through country-specific resolutions. Referring matters to the International Criminal Court would further complicate the situation.”

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea stated:

“The report of the Commission of Inquiry (the Kirby report) was based on fabricated testimonies by a handful of defectors who had fled the country after committing crimes. The report is a compilation of groundless political allegations and has no credibility as a U.N. document.”

His country has consistently prioritized dialogue, but the EU and Japan are provoking confrontation by pushing ahead the draft resolution. People around the world remember how the United States unleashed a “war against Yugoslavia” in the name of “humanitarian intervention.” The sponsors of the draft should be held responsible for destroying the opportunity for human rights cooperation.

The resolution was adopted by the Third Committee: 111 in favor, 19 opposed, 55 abstained. Those opposed included Ecuador, Bolivia, Cuba, Vietnam, Venezuela, China, the Russian Federation, Syria, Sudan, Iran, Belarus and Egypt. On December 18, the UN General assembly adopted this resolution 69/188: in support 116, opposed 20, abstaining: 53. With incredible speed, four days later, on December 22, 2014 “The Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea” was placed on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council, against the opposition of China and Russia. [...]



Why the Human Rights Issue Is So Serious

DPRK Permanent Mission to the UN

Today the U.S. and other Western countries are increasingly cracking down on the human rights of the peoples of their countries, including on their socio-economic and cultural rights as well as on political freedom and rights.

In the U.S., whose population accounts for 5% of the world's population, prisoners there account for 25% of the total number of prisoners in the world. Today, when the world is rushing to scale a new peak of human civilization, medieval torture and other kinds of human rights violations are being committed in the prison camps of the U.S.

Racial discrimination in the U.S., a self-proclaimed model country in the field of human rights, is cutting a wide swath with official and open sanction.

The chain of murders of innocent young black people committed by white policemen recently threw the whole world into a state of consternation.

Many working people, denied the rights to an existence and work, are wandering the streets as unemployed in the U.S. and other Western countries.

Extreme selfishness, misanthropy and such crimes as murder, robbery, rape, prostitution, racial discrimination, and discrimination and maltreatment of American Indians and immigrants are prevalent in American society, and people live in constant fear and misery.

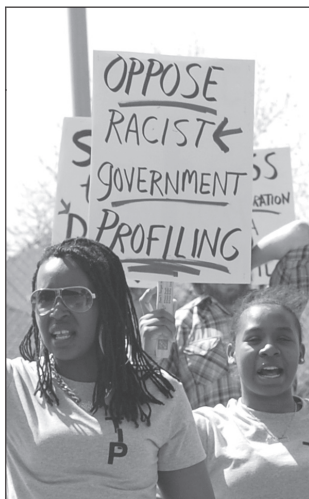
Under the signboard of "defending human rights" the U.S. launches aggressive wars, enslaving peoples of other countries and openly interfering in their internal affairs, and thus violates their human rights. These aggressive wars not only trample on their sovereignty but also claim the lives of their peoples, threaten their right to existence and restrict their socio-economic and cultural progress. Typical examples are the armed aggression against Grenada, the air campaign against the former Yugoslavia and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The U.S. has set up secret prison camps in various parts of the world, abducting people and torturing them in these camps. In the prison camp at the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo Bay 160 persons still languish.

The drone attacks committed by the U.S. are claiming many lives in Pakistan, Yemen and other countries.

The indiscriminate phone tapping and e-mail theft by the U.S. that have been exposed recently are illegal acts of espionage and, at the same time, a brazen-faced violation of human rights. Up to now the U.S. has set up phone-tapping facilities in more than 80 places across the world, and wiretapped the telephone conversations of not only presidents and other high-ranking officials of their allies but also ordinary citizens by enlisting the National Security Agency and other intelligence organs.

Picking a quarrel using the "human rights issue" with the countries that are following the road of independence, the U.S. and other Western countries are interfering in their internal affairs, toppling



their legitimate governments and suppressing human rights in these countries. These days the U.S. and other Western countries are egging on international organizations to kick up a fuss about the "human rights issue" in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This, in essence, is a serious act of aggression aimed at overthrowing its system and government. This is aggravating the situation on the Korean peninsula and the region surrounding it.

Many countries in the world still suffer from internal conflict and unrest, their peoples' right to life is seriously threatened. One of the major reasons for this is that the U.S. and other Western countries are aggravating the situation and attempting to fish in troubled waters capitalizing on the conflict and unrest. Many countries are experiencing economic

difficulties and their peoples' right to existence is being seriously threatened because of the economic sanctions and blockade imposed by the U.S. and other Western countries.

The human rights issue is becoming more serious and complicated as the days go by owing to the U.S.'s high-handedness, arbitrariness and double standards. These days dialogue and collaboration for the promotion of genuine human rights on an international scale have disappeared, and high-handedness, arbitrariness and double standards produced by the political interests of some countries are cutting a wide swath. Disregarding the principles of mutual respect, trust and benefit and noninterference in the internal affairs of others, they are unilaterally demanding "cooperation" and "collaboration" in the field of human rights so as to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.

It is a matter of course that cooperation and collaboration among countries are needed to resolve the human rights issue. However, this cooperation and collaboration must be subject to the commonly recognized principles of international law and must not be used as a precondition for interference in others' internal affairs.

The U.S. and other Western countries are making this issue more complicated by bringing it not only to the UN and other international political organizations but to international economic and trade organizations. International economic and trade organizations are discussing the human rights issue, which is irrelevant to economic and trade issues, and this causes sharp antagonism among countries. This is a stark reality today.

The fact that the U.S. releases a "human rights report" every year and adopts federal laws against other sovereign states shows how far its high-handedness, arbitrariness and double standards have gone. It has made public such a report again this year, in which it claimed that China, Russia, Cuba, Iran and some other countries violated the human rights of their people and that no other country now makes efforts to defend human rights as the U.S. does.

The international community laments the present reality in which the greatest human rights violator itself behaves as the "human rights judge."

DPRK Rejects Double Standards and Promotes Dialogue and Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to the United Nations issues the following press statement with regard to the Security Council meeting held on December 22, 2014 under the agenda item entitled "Situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea."

The United States and some other member states of the Security Council forcibly opened the Security Council meeting, despite the strong warning of the DPRK, to consider the "human rights issue" in the DPRK, in disregard of the latter's sincere efforts to promote dialogue and cooperation in the field of human rights.

Clearly, it stems from the sinister political purpose to impair the image of the DPRK and to destroy its ideology and system.

Even though the United States and its subservient countries forced the tabling of the "human rights issue" of the DPRK [for possible future discussion] on the Security Council agenda, they could not produce any outcome.

The Security Council is not an appropriate forum to consider human rights issues.

The title of the agenda item, which is called "Situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," recognizes by itself that the Security Council is not the forum for discussing human rights issues and shows that the United States and its subservient countries have tried their utmost to avoid such self-contradiction.

The Security Council's consideration, in contravention of its

mandate, of the so-called "Report of the Commission of Inquiry," which is unverified and fabricated, represents an insult to the Charter of the United Nations and its member states.

The United States and its followers, though attempting to defame the DPRK under the pretext of human rights, are in fact the major violators of human rights which evoke serious international concerns by conducting, among other things, various forms of racial discrimination, maltreatment of indigenous peoples and refugees and tortures.

The DPRK has requested the Security Council on 15 December 2014 to consider the atrocities of CIA torture crime committed by the United States.

The Security Council should duly address such a grave human rights violation as the large-scale CIA torture atrocities recognized even by the U.S. Administration.

We will never overlook the partiality and double standard of the Security Council which turns down the grave violations of human rights committed by the United States and discusses only the "human rights issue" of the country towards which the United States pursues hostility.

The more the hostile forces attempt to destroy our system and defame the dignity of our people under the pretext of human rights, the more pride and confidence we will have in our socialist system which has been chosen, developed and consolidated by the faith of our people and the more firmly we will defend our genuine socialist system and the independent rights of our people.

