

# Middle East: global antiwar demo against imperialist domination

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## Iraq

After three years of occupation, life has deteriorated for the vast majority of Iraqis. A recent report by the IMF and United Nations said that living standards have declined since the invasion in 2003. A fifth of the population subsists below the poverty line, on less than a dollar a day. Half the population is unemployed and 60 per cent are dependent on government subsidised rations.

Meanwhile, a Corporate Watch ([www.corporatewatch.org](http://www.corporatewatch.org) <sup>[1]</sup>) survey reckons that British firms have made a £1.1 billion killing out of the three year occupation. Of course, the UK is just a junior partner; the latest Halliburton/KBR military contract alone is worth about £2.85 billion. But that's what you get with close links to US Vice-President Dick "Potshot" Cheney.

And this is before the most lucrative oil contracts are signed.

Death squads have been operating out of the Iraqi interior ministry for more than a year now, carrying out a wave of sectarian killings aimed dividing Shia and Sunni Iraqis, and weakening the resistance against the occupation and plunder of Iraq.

Bush recently said, "Iraqis have shown the world they want a future of freedom and peace and they will oppose a violent minority that seeks to take future away from them by tearing their country apart."

How true? but the violent minority trying to "take future away from them by tearing their country apart" is the US/UK occupation forces, who drafted the new constitution, designed to foster divisions. And the majority of Iraqis want to see them leave now!

That is why, in the elections last December, all the gains were made by those who were against the occupation of Iraq, and who believe that the withdrawal of foreign forces should be "the priority of the future Iraqi government".

This outcome was not to the imperialists' liking. The US and Britain are cynically using threats of civil war to ensure the new government continues to allow the plunder of Iraq's natural resources to line the pockets of the western companies.

As with the elections in Palestine, the US reserves the right to decide on the government, whoever the electorate votes for.

## Palestine

In January Hamas, the Islamist party, won a surprise landslide victory in the Palestinian elections, gaining

76 out of 132 seats, in its first election campaign for the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). As soon as the results were announced, the US and Israel began to do all they could to isolate Hamas and bring down the government.

The US and the EU want Hamas to do what the PLO did at the end of the 1980s: acknowledge the state of Israel and settle for a "two-state solution". It must in short do what the Palestinian electorate has just voted for it not to do. But, hey! That's democracy western style.

If they fail to do so in short order, then it is clear the Palestinians in the occupied territories will be subjected to what are, in effect, sanctions. US and European Union funds, which totally sustain the PNA and indeed the Palestinian economy, will be withdrawn. Israeli troops will continue their punitive raids on the West Bank and Gaza. And this is just what they did in Jericho.

Britain and the US, in collusion with the Israeli defence forces, withdrew their international monitors from Jericho prison. Almost immediately, Israeli soldiers took up positions around the prison. Helicopter gunships blew apart the outer walls, and tanks and armoured bulldozers did the rest.

The Israeli Defence Forces came to arrest Ahmad Sa'adat, leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Sa'adat, who has been in prison since 2002, is accused by Israel of ordering the killing of Rehavam Ze'evi, an Israeli cabinet minister in 2001.

The PFLP killed Ze'evi in retaliation for Israel's murder of its leader Abu Ali Mustafa (Mustafa al-Zibri) in August 2001, a political assassination, which contravenes international law, but for which no one has ever been charged.

Indeed, no charges have ever been brought against Sa'adat either, suggesting that he was targeted for yet another case of "collective punishment", a policy the Israeli state is infamous for. When the Palestinian Supreme Court ordered Sa'adat's release, this was the only excuse the Israelis needed to snatch their man.

Colonel Ronnie Blekin, who led the raid, gave the game away, when he told reporters, "I was ready for four years for someone to break the agreement. Today they broke the agreement. I was ready." In other words, there was never going to be any attempt to charge Sa'adat in a Palestinian court. He was to be held in legal limbo until a time when the Israeli government could benefit from springing him.

While on one hand Israel demands Hamas renounce the armed conflict, on the other it continues to assassinate leaders of the Palestinian resistance and declares war on the whole population by enforcing economic sanctions and blockades on Palestinian lands.

Israel smashed its way into Jericho, not because the newly elected Hamas government had announced it was going to release Sa'adat, but because we are two weeks away from an Israeli election.

Ehud Olmert's Kadima party, which he has led since Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffered a stroke in January, is ahead in the polls and is set to become the largest party in the next parliament. Olmert's biggest political problem is that his security credentials can never match those of Ariel Sharon. The assault on the Jericho prison was an attempt to boost them.

Israel is an apartheid state, which acts not only with impunity but also with the active support of British and US imperialism. Because of its refusal to recognise the democratic choice of a Palestinian government, and the US-sponsored attempt to bring it down, Israel must be isolated.

Trade unionists must respond to the imperialist sanctions on the PNA, by isolating Israel, with an international boycott of its goods and services. And break the US and Zionist siege on the Palestinians and the attempt to overthrow their elected government.

## Iran

Not content with trying to install a puppet regime in Iraq, or undermine an elected government in Palestine, the US is also planning an attack on Iran.

The US is currently engaged in a propaganda war, aimed at isolating Iran, and similar to the one it conducted against Iraq in the lead up to the invasion in 2003.

John Bolton, US ambassador to the United Nations said the US would use 'all the tools' at its disposal to stop Iran's nuclear programme. He threatened 'tangible and painful consequences' against the country, if it continues to resist Bush's diktats.

Just like three years ago, lurid headlines, distorted intelligence, allegations of weapons programmes, and a diplomatic charade at the UN are being orchestrated to create the climate and excuses for a US-led attack on an oil-rich Middle Eastern country.

In every hot spot in the Middle East, it is the intervention of the imperialists, either directly or indirectly through their ally Israel, that is the root cause of the poverty and oppression of millions of workers and youth. 18-19th March global antiwar demonstration

That is why the anti-war movement must get out on the streets across the world this weekend and demand:

The withdrawal of all imperialist troops from the Middle East

Solidarity with all those forces resisting imperialist domination of the Middle East

An end to the occupations of Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine

No attack on Iran

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### Links:

[1] <http://www.corporatewatch.org>