

Military Resistance 14D5



THE CASE FOR TED CRUZ

POLICE WAR REPORTS

How Militarized Police Are Turning American Communities Into War Zones, Death By Death:

“Mario Woods Was Executed In
Broad Daylight By Officers Of The
San Francisco Police Department
And The Event Was Filmed”

“The Police Claimed That Alejandro Nieto Pointed His Taser At Them And They Had To Kill Him”

“But Eyewitnesses Say That He Never Threatened Anyone”



February 23, 2016 By Rebecca Gordon, Tom Dispatch

In the photo above, five of Beyoncé's leather-clad, black-bereted dancers raise their fists in a Black Power salute.

The woman in the middle holds a hand-lettered sign up for the camera, bearing three words and a number: "Justice 4 Mario Woods." Behind them, the crowd at Levi's Stadium, home of the San Francisco 49ers, is getting ready for the second half of Super Bowl 50, but the game's real fireworks are already over.

The women in the photo had just finished backing Beyoncé's homage to the Black Panthers and Malcolm X during her incandescent halftime appearance, when two San Francisco Bay Area Black Lives Matter activists managed to grab a few words with them. Rheema Emy Calloway and Ronnisha Johnson asked if they'd make a quick video demanding justice for Mario Woods. "From the look on the faces of the dancers, they'd already heard about the case," Calloway told the Guardian.

Who was Mario Woods and why did Calloway and Johnson want the world to know that his life mattered?

The answer: on December 2, 2015, Mario Woods was executed in broad daylight by officers of the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) and the event was filmed.

Woods was a 26-year-old African American, born and raised in San Francisco's Bayview district, one of the city's few remaining largely black neighborhoods. (In 1980, right before I moved to San Francisco, African Americans made up almost 13% of the city's population. Today, the figure is around 6% and shrinking.)

Woods died when police attempted to arrest him because they believed that, earlier in the day, he had stabbed another man in the arm. Like many victims of police violence, Woods had mental health problems. Indeed, his autopsy's toxicology report showed that, when he died, his system contained a powerful mix of medications (both prescribed and self-administered) including anti-depressants, speed, and marijuana.

But it was the way he died that brought Mario Woods a brief bit of posthumous notoriety. His death was, like Beyoncé's dancers, captured on video. A crowd of people watched as what CNN described as "a sea of police officers" surrounded Woods and shot him dead.

At least two people recorded cell-phone videos of what looks eerily like an execution by firing squad.

Woods, his back to a wall, one leg injured from earlier rounds of non-lethal projectiles, attempts to limp past the half-circle of police. Arms at his sides, he sidles along, until an officer blocks his way and opens fire.

Three seconds and at least 20 shots later, he lies in a heap on the sidewalk. Police said he was carrying a knife, although this is not at all clear from the video. One thing is clear, however: Woods was not threatening anyone when he was gunned down.

San Francisco is known around the world for its gentle vibe, its Left Coast politics, its live-and-let-live approach to other people's lifestyles -- except when it comes to the police.

For many of them, "live and let live" does not seem to apply to everyone, especially not to communities of color, and in the not-too-distant past to LGBT folk either. I remember, for instance, the infamous October 6, 1989, "Castro Sweep," when police responded to a nonviolent Act Up demonstration for AIDS funding by occupying an entire gay neighborhood called "the Castro" (for its main commercial street). They ran into bars and restaurants, dragging patrons out to the sidewalks and beating them with truncheons.

I was working some blocks away at the headquarters of the "Yes on S" campaign, supporting what now seems like a quaint ballot measure (which failed) aimed at creating domestic partnerships in the City of Love.

A bleeding man came stumbling into our office shouting that the police were rioting in the Castro. For once, the SFPD had gone too far and the city ended up paying out \$250,000 (a pittance even then) to settle a class action suit by the victims. A couple of

police captains were finally disciplined, but Chief of Police Frank Jordan was not penalized at all and went on to serve as mayor from 1992 to 1996. The Castro Sweep might hold a bigger place in the city's memory and history, had the Loma Prieta earthquake not shaken San Francisco 11 days later.

Once a mostly white department -- at whom demonstrators used to chant, "Racist, sexist, anti-gay, SFPD go away!" -- the city's police force is now significantly more diverse. Today, women, people of color, and open LGBT folk all wear the blue, but a hard core of the old guard remains. With them remains a still-dominant culture of sexism, homophobia, racism, and impunity.

In 2015, a series of text messages involving at least 10 different SFPD members came to light during a corruption case against one of them, Ian Fruminger. Sent between 2010 and 2012, these messages revealed just how ugly the attitudes of that hard core are -- and how entitled they seem to feel to end the lives of people they believe deserve it.

Here's a sample: Fruminger texted a friend who was an SFPD officer, "I hate to tell you this but my wife (sic) friend is over with their kids and her husband is black! If (sic) is an Attorney but should I be worried?"

He wrote back: "Get ur pocket gun. Keep it available in case the monkey returns to his roots. Its (sic) not against the law to put an animal down."

Fruminger responded, "Well said!"

When the city moved to fire the officers involved, a judge ruled that the police department had missed a legal deadline for disciplinary action.

Mario Woods was hardly the first man shot by the police in my adopted hometown.

In fact, in the last couple of years two such killings happened in my neighborhood.

The Death of Alejandro "Alex" Nieto

Alejandro "Alex" Nieto died on Bernal Heights. It's a hilltop near my house where people go to run, often with their dogs, and take in glorious views of the city that San Francisco Chronicle columnist Herb Caen used to call "Baghdad by the Bay" to emphasize its exotic character, long before Iraq became part of the Axis of Evil. Alex Nieto, a community college student who made his living working as a security guard, came from the largely Latino and immigrant-populated Mission District.

On the night of March 21, 2014, Nieto sat on a bench on Bernal Heights to eat a burrito before going to work. On his hip was the taser he carried on the job. An anonymous call to 911 reported a man sitting in the park with a gun on his hip and the SFPD responded.

In January 2016, his parents, Refugio and Elvira Nieto, would finally file a wrongful death suit against Chief of Police Greg Suhr, up to 25 as-yet-unidentified police officers, and the city and county of San Francisco.

The suit alleges that as their son, having finished his burrito, was “casually” walking down a jogging path towards the park entrance, the police arrived. Two officers took cover behind a patrol car, while several others, carrying what witnesses said looked like rifles, took up positions behind Nieto.

One of the officers behind the police car, yelled, “Stop.”

Here, in the words of the suit, is what happened next:

“Within seconds a quick volley of bullets were fired at Mr. Nieto. No additional orders or any other verbal communication was heard between the first Officer yelling 'stop' and the initial volley of gunfire that rang out.

Mr. Nieto fell to the ground. After a brief pause of just a second or two, a second barrage of shots were fired. The Officers’ bullets struck Mr. Nieto in his forehead and at least nine other places leaving his body grossly disfigured and mortally wounded.”

The police claimed that Nieto pointed his taser at them and they had to kill him.

But eyewitnesses say that he never threatened anyone.

Instead, as Sergeant Frurminger might have expressed it, those police officers evidently decided to “put him down” like a dangerous animal. The SFPD has never even released the names of those involved in Nieto’s death. (In the civil suit, they are referred to as John Doe 1 through 25.)

As far as anyone knows, none of them have ever been disciplined in any way. Alex Nieto’s parents continue to tend a little shrine on Bernal Heights where he died.

The Death of Amilcar Perez Lopez

On February 26, 2015, a few blocks from my house, two undercover police officers shot Amilcar Perez Lopez, a 20-year-old Guatemalan man, six times in the back.

The Mission District Episcopal church I belong to helped raise money for his family. As the members of my church community would come to understand from them, he was working in the United States without documents, the sole support for his parents and younger siblings back home in Guatemala. Through his efforts, he’d sent them enough money to bring electricity and running water to their thatched roof adobe house.

On the day he died, he was involved in some kind of altercation with a man who may have accused him of stealing his bicycle. After that ended, according to the civil suit his parents brought against the city, he was walking home along Folsom Street when accosted by those undercover police officers, named in the suit as Craig Tiffe and Eric Riboli.

The two “surreptitiously rushed at Amilcar from behind.” One of them got him in a “bear hug.” Amilcar spoke very little English. It’s likely he had no idea that they

were police officers. In any case, he managed to get free and started running down the sidewalk. That's when they shot him.

The official police story was that he lunged at them with a knife and the officers had to shoot him to save their own lives.

And that story might have stuck, had the family's attorney not commissioned a private autopsy, which was performed by Dr. A. J. Chapman, a forensic pathologist in Santa Rosa, California. The city had already done its own autopsy when Dr. Chapman received Amilcar's body, but had issued no report.

Chapman found that Amilcar had taken six shots in the back, five to the torso and right arm, and one to the back of his head. If he was shot while attacking the two officers, why did the bullets strike him from behind?

It took the city's Medical Examiner's Office five months to release its autopsy, which ultimately concluded the same thing. What might that report have said if activists had not arranged for a private, unbiased report? There's no way to know.

In the aftermath of Michael Brown's shooting death in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014, many white people woke up to a reality that was hardly news in most communities of color where death-by-police is all too common.

What's new is that the rest of us are suddenly hearing about the Eric Garners, Freddie Grays, and Sandra Blands who die literally every day in this country.

The rest of the U.S. is beginning to understand what the police already represent to so many communities from Ferguson to Baltimore to Waller County, Texas, to -- yes -- San Francisco. Far from seeing the police as a source of help and protection, many Americans feel the same way about them as people living under corrupt authoritarian regimes feel about their police or armies. They see them as an occupying force, not there to protect and serve but to frighten and extort.

Many Americans are not used to thinking of our police as agents of extortion, but a recent Justice Department (DOJ) report on the police and the municipal courts of Ferguson, for instance, tells a different story. The department found that "City officials have consistently set maximizing revenue as the priority for Ferguson's law enforcement activity. Ferguson generates a significant and increasing amount of revenue from the enforcement of code provisions." The Harvard Law Review reported that in 2013, Ferguson issued more arrest warrants than the city has residents -- one and a half for every citizen. The report adds:

"In Ferguson, residents who fall behind on fines and don't appear in court after a warrant is issued for their arrest (or arrive in court after the courtroom doors close, which often happens just five minutes after the session is set to start for the day) are charged an additional \$120 to \$130 fine, along with a \$50 fee for a new arrest warrant and 56 cents for each mile that police drive to serve it.

Once arrested, everyone who can't pay their fines or post bail (which is usually set to equal the amount of their total debt) is imprisoned until the next court session (which

happens three days a month). Anyone who is imprisoned is charged \$30 to \$60 a night by the jail.”

After the Justice Department released the report, the city spent six months negotiating with the DOJ on a complete overhaul of its police and courts. But when Ferguson’s own negotiators brought this proposed “consent decree” to the city council, the council members rejected it.

So now the Justice Department has announced that it will sue Ferguson to force it to make changes that the city insists will cost too much. “There is no cost for constitutional policing,” says Attorney General Loretta Lynch. She’s right. What she didn’t say, because she shouldn’t have to, is that the costs of unconstitutional policing include ravaged communities and a divided nation

In many places it’s hard to get information about what goes on inside police forces because a thicket of laws protects them. In California, a 1978 law, signed by Jerry Brown in his first go-round as governor, makes it almost impossible to learn anything about the individual police officers involved in the deaths of Alex Nieto and Amilcar Perez Lopez, or whether their records reflect significant prior complaints or charges.

The Modesto Bee reports that under this law: “peace officer personnel records are confidential, including personal data, promotion, appraisal and discipline records, and ‘any other information the disclosure of which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.’ Only a judge can order their release as part of a criminal case or lawsuit.”

This makes it difficult, for example, to know whether a particular officer has a record of brutality complaints, or indeed whether a whole police department has such a record. Civil rights attorney and former justice of the California Supreme Court Cruz Reynoso told the Bee that citizens seeking information about police killings face “a wall of silence.”

Here in San Francisco, we might finally shake some of that information loose. In January, the Board of Supervisors responded to organized grassroots pressure by voting unanimously to request a Department of Justice review of the police department. We can only hope that when the DOJ releases its report on San Francisco’s police, my city will respond better than Ferguson did.

We need more than a thorough housecleaning at the SFPD, starting at the top with Police Chief Greg Suhr. The whole community, indeed the whole country, would do well to rethink why we have police and what we really want them to do. Not shooting so many people might be a good place to start.

Maybe Herb Caen was more prescient than he knew when he called San Francisco Baghdad by the Bay. Maybe we should not be surprised when police forces claim impunity for crimes they commit against the communities of color they “serve.” They’re only doing on a small scale what the United States does on the international stage -- when it claims the right to bomb, invade, and occupy foreign countries, without accepting any responsibility for the human misery that results.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

**One way to stop the next war is to continue to tell the truth about this one.
-- Kathy Kelly**

**“Capitalism Becomes Caught In A
Fundamental Contradiction”**

**“The More Countries Develop A
Capitalist Industry Of Their Own, The
Greater Is The Need And Possibility
For Expansion Of Production”
“The Smaller In Relation To This Is The
Possibility Of Expansion Due To Market
Barriers”**

From: Rosa Luxemburg; Introduction To Political Economy; Ms. 1909-1910 [Excerpt]

It is the innermost need of capitalist production, as we have seen, the very law of its existence, that it should have the possibility of not remaining stable, but extending ever more widely and ever more rapidly, i.e. producing ever greater masses of commodities, in ever larger factories, and ever more rapidly, with ever better technical means.

This expansion possibility of capitalist production knows no inherent limits, since there are no limits to technological progress and hence to the productive powers of the earth.

But this need for expansion does come up against quite particular limits, i.e. those of the interest of capitalist profit. Production and its expansion only make sense if they yield at least the customary average profit.

Whether this is the case depends on the market, i.e. on the relationship between effective demand on the part of consumers, and the amount of commodities produced along with their prices.

The interest of capitalist profit requires an ever more rapid and greater production, thereby creating at each step the market limitations that stand in the way of the impetuous expansive pressure of production.

The result of this, as we have seen, is the unavailability of industrial and trade crises, which periodically balance the relationship between the inherently unbounded, limitless capitalist pressure of production and the barriers to capitalist consumption, and make possible the continued existence of capitalism and its further development.

Yet the more countries develop a capitalist industry of their own, the greater is the need and possibility for expansion of production, while the smaller in relation to this is the possibility of expansion due to market barriers.

If we compare the leaps by which English industry grew in the 1860s and 70s, when England was still the leading capitalist country on the world market, with its growth in the last two decades, since Germany and the United States have significantly displaced

England on the world market, it is clear that growth has become much slower in relation to the previous period.

But what was the particular fate of English industry unavoidably faces German and North American industry too, and eventually the industry of the whole world.

Incessantly, with each step of its own further development, capitalist production is approaching the time when its expansion and development will be increasingly slow and difficult.

The capitalist mode of production is still able to achieve powerful expansion by everywhere suppressing all more backward forms of production. In generally, the movement, as we have seen, is in this direction.

But precisely through this development, capitalism becomes caught in a fundamental contradiction.

The more that capitalist production takes the place of more backward forms, the more tightly the limits placed on the market by requirement for profit constricts the need of already existing capitalist firms to expand.

The matter becomes clear if we imagine for a moment that the development of capitalism has proceeded so far that on the whole earth everything that people produce is produced capitalistically, i.e. only by private capitalist entrepreneurs in large firms with modern wage-workers. Then the impossibility of capitalism clearly appears.

Blindfolded

Written by Dennis Serdel: Military Resistance 2010; Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th Brigade; United Auto Workers GM Retiree

Blindfolded

**I was born in March of 1947
when my Father came home from WWII
and married my Mother who worked
as a Secretary in Kalamazoo.
Yes, I am a true "Baby Boomer" or
in other words a "War Baby" born
from the "Greatest Generation."
I now know how they are going to handle
the influx of all the "Baby Boomers"
who are beginning to retire.
The Companies are going bankrupt,
They Say, and will Not pay me any**

Retirement pay or Health Care.

**But in the 1960's, it was my turn to serve
in the Army in Vietnam because
I was fighting Against the Idea
that a Country's wealth should be
evenly spread to All the Citizens
as fair as possible.**

**Instead, I was fighting for the Idea
that a Few people should own
the Wealth of a Country
and the rest of the Citizens
should be poor.**

**But when I came home from the War
I joined a Union and I was Not poor
but "Middle Class."**

**However, it looks like I shall return
to my proper place again
that being poor as the Unions are
being stabbed in the back by
Obama who represents the Few.**

**Did I mention that my Son is a
"War Baby" from America's
"Worst Generation ? "**

**So let him be especially
laid off fired let go and poor.**

**The Iraq and Afghanistan Soldiers
and Veterans are another
"Greatest Generation" who do
what they are told to do by the Few
but it looks like they will be poor
anyway because that is the way
America wants them to be.**

**A Few people have all the money
and the rest of the Citizens are poor.**

**So I have taken on the job of
convincing our new "Greatest Generation"
that when the Wars are over,
they will be tossed aside like
used toilet paper and their reward
will be to work hard at slave Worker
wages to raise their "War Babies."**

**The government blindfolds them
now with yellow ribbons,
parades with all the trimmings
all the welcome backs
and elaborate funerals to assure
them that their Country really
appreciates them for fighting
and dying for the Idea of America.
The greatest fear that the Few have
who own all the wealth have**

is giving guns and ammo to the poor people like our Iraq and Afghanistan Soldiers.

I mean, gee whizz Uncle Sam Few, you really do fear that after you keep stepping on their poor Mothers and Fathers, Aunts and Uncles, Brothers and Sisters Cousins and Neighbors and Friends that the Soldiers just might get together and march on Washington DC and NY City to eliminate the Few.

YOUR INVITATION:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or email contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

Al-Assad Family's Massive Stolen Wealth Exposed In Panama Papers:

“The Pinnacle Of Power And Wealth Was Bashar And His Immediate Circle”

“The Style Of Life Of The Palace Was Opulent And Cocooned”

“During The Worst Fighting Of 2011 And 2012, First Lady Asma Al-Assad Was

Obsessed With Ordering Gilt Furniture, Chandeliers And Jewelry Over The Internet”



Rami Makhoul & Bashar al-Assad

Apr. 6, 2016 By Juan Cole, juancole.com/

The revelation in the leaked Panama Papers that Mossack Fonseca and Swiss bank HSBC serviced the companies of corrupt Syrian billionaire Rami Makhoul (first cousin of dictator Bashar al-Assad) long after the US imposed sanctions on him is a reminder of why Syrians revolted against the regime in 2011 in the first place.

Makhoul was said to be worth \$5 billion (likely more than Donald Trump) before the revolution, and to have dominated 60% of Syria's economy.

In 1963 the secular, Arab nationalist and socialist Baath Party came to power in Syria. Conflicts within the ranks of the party, which had military and civilian wings, kept the country unstable until 1970.

In that year, an Air Force general, Hafez al-Assad made a coup. A member of the Alawite, Shiite minority that comprises about ten to fourteen percent of the population, al-Assad turned the Baath Party into a mechanism for dealing with Syria's transformation from a largely rural, peasant society to a majority urban one. He reversed earlier Baath hostility to the agricultural business classes, allowing a vigorous private sector in the countryside.

The public sector under his version of the Baath Part concentrated on organizing small-holding peasants and extending irrigation in the Ghab and the Euphrates Basin. The Baath building of dams and waterworks endeared it to small-holding rural Sunni Arabs, and over time incomes rose and cities expanded modestly. The regime was not universally popular, and in the small cities at the center of the country a powerful Muslim Brotherhood opposition flourished, with a class basis in businessmen, shopkeepers and artisans hostile to secular Baath socialism.

In 1982, al-Assad brutally crushed a Brotherhood uprising in Hama, killing thousands.[i]

By the 1980s the gains from the Baath Party's agricultural policies had reached a plateau. Economic and other discontents burgeoned. Syria's government embarked late in that decade on a privatization program, and during the 1990s the percentage of the non-oil industrial economy in private hands nearly doubled from 45 to 82 percent.

Syria entered the new millennium no longer a socialist economy.

The al-Assad clan benefited from the turn to a new entrepreneurial spirit.

The president's brother Jamil, for instance, went into the import-export business and came to dominate the Mediterranean port of Latakia. He developed a relationship with semi-criminal elements among the dock workers and underground of the city, and deployed them in a protection racket in the port.

Also drawn from his Alawite ethnic group, they were known as the "specters" (shabiha), and went on to engage in smuggling (especially tobacco) and occasionally to challenge the police.[ii]

Hafez al-Assad had designated his son Basil, head of presidential security, to be his successor, the first of the republican princes to prepare to come to power. Basil's death in an automobile collision in 1994 caused Hafez al-Assad to designate his second son, Bashar, as the next president for life instead. Bashar was then studying ophthalmology in Britain (he only lived there 18 months), and his soft-spoken, timid manner did not suggest he would be a decisive leader. He admitted he was a fan of Phil Collins's music, and had enjoyed making home videos as he came of age in Damascus.

He succeeded to power in 2000, in part because influential Baath generals and politicians preferred another al-Assad to seeing one of their rivals become president.[iii]

Bashar al-Assad was unable effectively to address the economic problems of the country.

Some of his difficulties were geopolitical. After a brief honeymoon with the United States from 2000 through 2002 (which included post-September 11 help in detaining, interrogating, and torturing al-Qaeda suspects), relations increasingly soured after Bush's invasion of Iraq. Al-Assad's Syria attracted the ire of Western hawks and the Neoconservatives. He was allied with Iran, with which Washington had increasingly bad relations after 2003. He proved unable or unwilling to police his long border with American-dominated Iraq (through which Sunni Arab, anti-American guerrilla groups infiltrated that country).

He paid lip service, at least, to supporting the Rejectionist forces in the Israeli-Arab conflict, i.e. Lebanon's Hizbullah and the more militant Palestinians. In December, 2003, Congress passed and Bush signed the Syria Accountability Act. Likewise, France joined the US on the UN Security Council in objecting to the continued Syrian occupation of and meddling in Lebanon.

Al-Assad's Syria found itself blocked from favorable trading terms in Europe and the United States. The full impact of such sanctions can be seen if we compare Syria after

2002 to Turkey, a NATO member, where the Islamically-tinged government of the Justice and Development Party vastly expanded trade and industry from 2002 because of its special tariff treatment by the US and the EU.

Al-Assad was initially young and inexperienced, and faced an entrenched Baathist bureaucracy suspicious of his experiences in Britain (though these were quite limited).

He announced on coming to power that he would allow private banks to operate in Syria. He may have been influenced by his British-born wife, Asma al-Assad, who had worked as a broker at J.P. Morgan on Wall Street before she married.

It took years for this decree to be implemented.

Political scientist David Lesch interviewed her about the long delay in moving to private banking: “We have not had private banks in Syria for 50 years. Our public banks are not functioning.... We have staff who do not speak English, who do not have computers. So we are on a very, very basic level. ...We had no idea how to do this. We don't have the experience.”[iv]

Over time, private banks began operating, though the six public banks continued to be dominant, and Western sanctions hurt some of those.[v] From 2005, al-Assad implemented his New Social Market, which added on a private sector to previous socialist institutions and allowed a new class of boisterous entrepreneurs to transform downtown Damascus.[vi]

In 2009 a stock market was opened.

The new private sector was not enough, however, to create even a fraction of the new jobs demanded by Syria's Millennials, or to jumpstart the economy, and cronyism ensured that it functioned mainly to make wealth “trickle up” to the small elite.

From 2005, the regime increasingly reduced subsidies, which hit the poor and working classes hard. On top of all that, the zeroes witnessed the beginnings of a severe drought in Syria, which deeply harmed farmers and the small towns that served as their initial distributors. If the Baath Party had been relatively good at water management and incorporated the rural Sunnis in the 1970s, it increasingly failed on both of those scores under Bashar.

Either the challenge was too great, or the high Baath officials by then had other priorities (especially making billions through corrupt deals in the growing urban sector).[vii]

By 2004, Syria's per capita gross domestic product was, in nominal terms, only \$1,190 a year—half that of neighboring Jordan, a fourth that of Turkey, and a fifth that of Lebanon. Six years later, in 2010—on the eve of the outbreak of massive protests, the per capita GDP was still less than \$3000 a year (124th out of 183 countries ranked), whereas neighboring Turkey's was nearly \$11,000 (61st), according to the International Monetary Fund.

That is, in 2010 Syria was similar in this regard to Honduras and the Congo, whereas Turkey was more in the neighborhood of emergent economies such as Malaysia and

Brazil. By the outbreak of protests in 2011, the poverty rate in Syria had climbed to something between 11 and 30 percent, depending on how it was measured.[viii]

“A Syrian Newspaper Published A List Of Syria’s One Hundred Wealthiest Businessmen, Conveniently Omitting Some Prominent Relatives Of The President”

Syria, like many other Arab countries, has difficulty growing its economy faster than its population.

Its population growth rate remains relatively high, at 2.4 percent per annum, which will lead, if it remains unchanged, to a doubling of the national population in roughly 30 years, from 22 million to 42 million. That is, it will go from being about as big as today’s Florida to being more populous than today’s California (or in European terms, from being somewhat larger than the Netherlands to nearly as populous as Spain). Because the population growth rate was even higher in previous decades, Syria’s labor force grows 4.5 percent a year, adding nearly 300,000 would-be workers.

In the youngest cohort, from 15 to 24, unemployment ran as high as 70 percent before the revolution broke out. Because poverty has increasingly caused teenagers and even children to drop out of school to work, illiteracy has actually been rising in the past two decades.[ix]

Governance in Syria under the Baath Party resembled the rings of an onion. The outer ring was the party, which incorporated Sunni businessmen and farmers, Christians, Druze (an esoteric Shiite sect), and the Alawites (another esoteric Shiite sect).

The upper echelons of the party and the officer corps were disproportionately dominated by members of the minority Alawite sect. (The Alawite form of Shi’ite Islam has more folk elements and is less bookish, clerical and formal than the Twelver Shiite branch that dominates Iraq and Iran).

The very inner circle was the al-Assad extended family or jama`at al-Assad.

The al-Assad clan had opportunities to benefit from insider trading practices, given that they controlled government economic policy, and to receive business licenses and contracts.

Already in the time of Hafez al-Assad, his propensity for promoting his friends and relatives inspired other members of his junta to do likewise. His longtime foreign minister and then vice president, `Abd al-Halim Khaddam, the informal viceroy of Lebanon, developed front companies in that country.

He became a fixture in Beirut night clubs. He developed a close relationship to Lebanese-Saudi billionaire Rafiq al-Hariri, who made a gift to him of one of Aristotle Onassis’s former apartments in Paris and set him up in the telecommunications business. Hariri also brought Khaddam’s two sons into business ventures in Saudi Arabia, where he had made his money.[x]

Hafez al-Assad's Sunni minister of defense, Mustafa Talas (usually spelled Tlass in the Western press), had one son who became a big businessman, Firas. Firas had extensive holdings in real estate, food distribution, and banking, and was said to among the richest men in the country. The other, Manaf, became a general in the army (he defected to the opposition in July, 2012).[xi]

The rising business class in the Syria of the zeroes was hardly, however, confident or loyal to the regime that fostered it. The secretive and conspiratorial mindset of the Baath Party ensured that those who became wealthy were often under suspicion of corruption, that is, of stealing from the regime.

In 2009, a Syrian newspaper published a list of Syria's one hundred wealthiest businessmen, conveniently omitting some prominent relatives of the president, and even the names of the owners of the newspaper itself.

The edition was said by the US chargé in Damascus to have sent chills up and down the spines of the families profiled, who were sure that the Syrian tax authorities would use it as an excuse to look into them.

Most were probably nouveaux riches, with the old Baathist monied families excused from the ignominy of being discussed in public. The year before, a high security aide to the president had been killed in the port of Tartous by sniper fire while the president was out of country, and, when searched, the basement of one of his residences yielded \$60 million.

Periodic anti-corruption drives caught even those related to the president. A distant cousin of the president was arrested in 2009 for possibly abusing his position in the customs administration. The same year, a prominent Sunni client of the regime given the bid on key internet services was arrested after he made little progress in providing them, after pocketing the government's payment.[xii]

“The Pinnacle Of Power And Wealth Was Bashar And His Immediate Circle”

If the sons of courtiers could do well, denizens of the presidential palace were even more favored.

The brother of the president, Gen. Maher al-Assad, commander of the Republican Guards and of the Fourth Armored Division, was accused by dissidents of laundering money through agents in Lebanon for Iraqi Baathists. The “Youth of Rage” charged him in spring of 2011 with using businessman and media mogul Mohammad Hamsho as a corrupt silent partner (some alleged that Maher had a popular private television station closed so that Hamsho could open his own and garner the advertising revenue instead). They also accused him of hiding his ill-gotten gains in Swiss bank accounts.[xiii]

Foremost among the new generation of Syrian crony capitalists is Rami Makhoul, first cousin of Bashar on his mother's side.

The Makhouls are an Alawite family that initially served the al-Assads in the security forces. Then in the 1990s, the patriarch of that branch of the family, Muhammad Makhoul, had had to be brought in as a silent partner in the private Real Estate Bank

(REB), which by the late zeroes was said to earn over \$110 million a year – “largely from its monopoly on processing credit card and ATM transactions.” [xiv] At the height of his prominence, Muhammad’s son Rami Makhoul’s holdings included monopoly corporations or semi-monopolies in construction, oil, airlines and airport concessions, real estate, telecoms and import-export. He was known to use his connections to the regime to close down others’ lucrative projects, using thugs, and then buy them for a song. [xv] He and his clan were alleged to be worth \$5 billion in a country where the annual gross domestic product in nominal terms in 2011 was \$59 billion.

One dissident member of the al-Assad family, Ribal, characterized him as owning three-fourths of Syria.[xvi] Makhoul is famed for sharp business practices that depended on his access to power. For instance, he went into the wireless telephone business with Orascom, an Egyptian concern, and when he decided to take over Orascom’s shares, he allegedly had the company chased out of the country.[xvii] The “Youth of Rage” charged that the resulting company, called “Syriatel,” proved a bonanza that was shared with Gen. Maher al-Assad, the president’s brother.

The pinnacle of power and wealth was Bashar and his immediate circle. The style of life of the palace was so opulent and cocooned that during the worst fighting of 2011 and 2012, first lady Asma al-Assad was obsessed with ordering gilt furniture, chandeliers and jewelry over the internet.[xviii] Her buyer confirmed in July of 2011 that she had acquired: “-1 Turquoise with yellow gold diamonds and small pave on side; – 1 Cornaline with yellow gold diamonds and small pave on side; – 1 Full Black Onyx with yellow gold diamonds and small pave on side; – 1 Amethyst with white gold diamonds and small pave on side.”[xix]

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DANGER: CAPITALISTS AT WORK

“We Are Witnessing A Tale Of Two Americas That Are Growing More Distinct By The Day”

“Downscale Communities Are Everywhere In America, Not Just Limited To Appalachia And The Rust Belt”

April 6, 2016 by Chris Arnade, The Guardian [Excerpts]

Downscale communities are everywhere in America, not just limited to Appalachia and the Rust Belt – it’s where I have spent much of the past five years documenting poverty and addiction.

To say that “nothing happened to them” is stunningly wrong.

Over the past 35 years the working class has been devalued, the result of an economic version of the Hunger Games.

It has pitted everyone against each other, regardless of where they started.

Some contestants, such as business owners, were equipped with the fanciest weapons.

The working class only had their hands. They lost and have been left to deal on their own. The consequences can be seen in nearly every town and rural county and aren’t confined to the industrial north or the hills of Kentucky either. My home town in Florida, a small town built around two orange juice factories, lost its first factory in 1985 and its last in 2005.

In the South Buffalo neighborhood of Lackawanna, homes have yet to recover from the closing of an old steel mill that looms over them. The plant, once one of many, provided the community with jobs and stability. The parts that haven’t been torn down are now used mainly for storage.

In Utica, New York, a boarded-up GE plant that’s been closed for more than 20 years sits behind Mr Nostalgia’s, a boarded-up bar where workers once spent nights.

Jobs moved out of state and out of the country. The new jobs don’t pay as well and don’t offer the same benefits, so folks now go to the casino outside of town to try to supplement their income.

When you go into these communities and leave the small bubbles of success – Manhattan, Los Angeles, northern Virginia, Cambridge – and listen to people who work with their hands, you hear a uniform frustration and a constant anxiety. In a country of such amazing wealth, a large percentage of people are trying not to sink.

In Blossburg, Pennsylvania, Arnie Knapp walks five miles into town every morning, trying to keep his body in shape and not succumb to the various injuries he suffered working the mills.

He started working at 14 and once they closed, he worked a series of lower-paying jobs. Unlike the characters profiled in the National Review article, he isn’t looking for a

handout: “I haven’t asked for anything but work from anyone. Problem is, there aren’t a lot of jobs around here any more.

”In Appleton, Wisconsin, Tom Lawless, who has been driving long-haul trucks all his life and measures his success in millions of miles safely driven, is frustrated: “I am getting squeezed, my pay gets lower, and my costs go higher.”

In Ohatchee, Alabama, Larry, taking a day off work to take his son fishing, is gracious but frustrated: “I have worked in foundries all my life, since I was 15. Hard work, and I don’t got a lot of money to show for it.”

The frustration isn’t just misplaced nostalgia – the economic statistics show the same thing.

Over the past 35 years, except for the very wealthy, incomes have stagnated, with more people looking for fewer jobs.

Jobs for those who work with their hands, manufacturing employment, has been the hardest hit, falling from 18m in the late 1980s to 12m now.

The economic devaluation has been made more painful by the fraying of the social safety net, and more visceral by the vast increase at the top. It is one thing to be spinning your wheels stuck in the mud, but it is even more demeaning to watch as others zoom by on well-paved roads, none offering help.

It is not just about economic issues and jobs. Culturally, we are witnessing a tale of two Americas that are growing more distinct by the day.

The differences are manifest in education. The pathway offered out of the working class is to get a college education. Yet at the best colleges there are very few low-income students, except for a few lucky enough to grow up in New York City, Los Angeles or Boston.

Differences are also stark around health issues, as well as social issues such as marriage, family and where people live.

The growing differences have made it easier and seemingly acceptable to ridicule the white working class, further marginalizing and isolating them.

Go into an office in New York City (I worked in them for 20 years) and you will hear people joke about “white trash”, “trailer trash”, “rednecks”, “round people from square states”. Turn on the TV and you hear more cheap jokes about how they dress, talk and behave.

As the isolation has increased and opportunity diminished, some have turned to drugs. America, and particularly the white working class, is dealing with a drug epidemic that is killing more people each year at a startling rate.

Just in the past decade deaths from drugs has doubled.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Zionists Demolishes Palestinian Home In Occupied Jerusalem, As Usual: The Soldiers Invade Without Prior Notice And Force The Family Out:



April 4, 2016 IMEMC News

Israeli soldiers demolished, Monday, a Palestinian home in Jabal al-Mokabber village, southeast of occupied East Jerusalem, without prior notice.

The Wadi Hilweh Information Center in Silwan (Silwanic) said the soldiers invaded Jabal al-Mokabber, and forced the family out before demolishing their property.

Abdul-Basset Abu Rmeila said he built the home with bricks, five months ago, and recently moved in with his family.

Abu Rmeila added that he lived in the property with his wife, and his four children; the oldest of them is 25 and the youngest 14.

On Monday morning, the soldiers invaded Khirbit al-Marajem village, south of Nablus, and demolished three Palestinian homes.

Furthermore, the soldiers invaded Qabatia town, south of the northern West Bank city of Jenin, and demolished homes of three Palestinians, who were killed in occupied Jerusalem, two months ago.

In addition, the soldiers invaded Khallet Ein al-Hamam area, in Surif town, northwest of the southern West Bank district of Hebron, and demolished a Palestinian home.

Also on Monday, the soldiers invaded various communities in the Hebron district, stormed and searched many homes, kidnapped one Palestinian, attacked and injured another, and searched many homes.

The soldiers also invaded the West Bank district of Bethlehem, broke into and searched homes, and kidnapped three Palestinians.

**The Occupiers War On The
Bedouin People Of The Negev:
“Confiscation Of Land,
Displacement Of The Palestinian
Bedouins Who Own The Land”
“Plans To Establish Jewish Towns
And “Individual Farms” In The Negev
After Its Inhabitants Are Expelled And
Their Buildings Demolished”
“Bedouins Are Historically The
Rightful Owners Of The Land In The
Negev. For Hundreds Of Years, This
Was An Accepted Fact”**

Mar 31 2016 By Bilal Daher, Palestine Chronicle

Forty years after the Land Day strike announced by Palestinians in the territories occupied in 1948, the issue of land is still very strongly present today, in 2016, and there

is still a conflict ongoing between the Palestinians owners of the land and the Israeli authorities.

After confiscating the overwhelming majority of the Palestinian land in Galilee and the Triangle, the issue of the land now focuses on the Negev area.

Twenty-eight years after the Nakba, on March 30, 1976, the Land Day clashes erupted in the aftermath of a large campaign by the Israeli authorities during which they confiscated the overwhelming majority of Palestinian land. This land was agricultural, as well as land reserves that could serve the Palestinians' population growth.

This land was confiscated in order to build Jewish settlements during the 1950s and 1960s. The largest of these settlements are Illit Nazareth, near Nazareth, and Karmiel near Al-Shaghour.

In addition to this, small settlement towns were established on mountain tops overlooking the surrounding Arab villages. This project aimed to Judaize Galilee, i.e. making its Jewish population larger than its Arab population. However, this goal still has not been achieved.

On the other hand, the project of “Judaising the Negev”, contrary to the project of “Judaising Galilee”, is linked, according to all the plans made by the Israeli government and Zionist organisations, such as Keren Kayemet LeYisrael, Israel’s permanent fund, not only to the confiscation of land, but to the displacement of the Palestinian Bedouins who own the land and to gather them in other villages.

In alignment with these plans, over the past few years, the Israeli government approved plans to establish Jewish towns and “individual farms” in the Negev after its inhabitants are expelled and their buildings demolished.

The Negev Bedouins’ land, that the Israeli authorities want to confiscate, encompasses 38 villages that the Israeli authorities refuse to recognise despite the fact that they existed even before the establishment of Israel and are populated by over 90,000 Negev Bedouins.

Therefore, these unrecognised villages lack all the services that the state is obliged to provide to its citizens, such as linking it to the water and electricity networks, paved roads, and establishing educational institutions and medical clinics, etc.

In addition to the land on which the unrecognised villages are established, the Negev also consists of land that the Bedouins and others have planted and other land used for their livestock to graze. The area that the Israeli authorities are trying to confiscate is estimated at about 198,000 acres.

Israel’s policy of failing to recognise the Negev Bedouins’ ownership of their land aims to turn the Bedouins from rightful owners of the land to “criminals” and “invaders”. Based on this policy, the Israeli authorities are demolishing their homes, spraying their crops with pesticides, confiscating their livestock, etc.

However, the truth of the matter is that the Bedouins are historically the rightful owners of the land in the Negev. For hundreds of years, this was an accepted fact,

evidenced by the fact that during the British mandate and before the establishment of Israel, the Jews purchased land in the Negev from the Bedouins to build their kibbutzim.

Why has the Israeli government demolished the village of Al-Araqeeb a hundred times, and how does the “government” view the Bedouins?

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu answered this question in July 2010: “We are a nation state, which means that the overall sovereignty of the country is reserved for the Jewish people. Today, an international campaign is being waged against the definition of Israel as a Jewish state. I do not want to leave things as is, because we are under attack on this matter. The significance of these attacks is that various elements are liable to demand their own national rights and the rights of a state within the state of Israel – in the Negev, for example, if it becomes a region without a Jewish majority. This happened in the Balkans and constitutes a real threat.”

With the 40th anniversary of Land Day approaching, Israel’s war against its Palestinian Arab “citizens” is still ongoing in order to control their resources.

Israel has continued to wage such a war for about 50 years against their brethren in the territories occupied in 1967 in order to seize their resources via their settlement project.

While Netanyahu’s successive governments over the past seven years have brought the conflict back to the period pre-1948 by means of these policies and the other hostile policies they adopted, it is not strange for us to see the Palestinians in ‘48 Palestine as playing an effective role in the current Palestinian movement. Israel is waging a war against all that it Palestinian.

MORE:

Genocide

Wikipedia [Excerpt]

Raphael Lemkin, in his work *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944), coined the term "genocide" by combining Greek *genos* (γένος; race, people) and Latin *cīdere* (to kill).

Lemkin defined genocide as follows:

"Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation.

It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.

“The objectives of such a plan would be the disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups.”

Thousands Of Palestinians March On 40th Land Day To Protest Decades Of Zionist Land Thefts: “Palestinians Are Entitled To Their Land And They Will Give Up Not One Inch”

**“The Netanyahu Government Continues
With Its Racist Plans To Deport The
Palestinians And Build Israeli
Settlements And Separation Walls”**



Mar 30 2016 MAAN

Thousands of Palestinians across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory marched Wednesday to commemorate the 40th Land Day, protesting decades of Israeli land grabs.

“Palestinians are entitled to their land and they will give up not one inch,” Hamas official Yehya Mousa said at a rally in Gaza City to remember the Palestinian protests against Israeli land seizures that were violently suppressed on March 30, 1976.

Hundreds of Gazans marched from the city towards the Erez crossing in the coastal enclave's north, waving Palestinian flags and demanding the right of return of Palestinian refugees forced to leave their land when Israel was established in 1948.

Senior Fatah leader Zakariyya al-Agha also addressed Gaza's rally, telling protesters: "The martyrs who fell on that day embodied national unity," in reference to the six unarmed Palestinians gunned down 40 years ago.

"As the Palestinian people mark Land Day, they are still facing an (Israeli) policy based on ethnic cleansing and land confiscation, and the Netanyahu government continues with its racist plans to deport the Palestinians and build Israeli settlements and separation walls," he said.

In the occupied West Bank's Ramallah district, Palestinian students from al-Quds Open University and Modern University College who were marking Land Day managed to cut through a barbed-wire section of Israel's separation wall east of al-Bireh.

The PLO for its part slammed Israel's "racist" policy of allocating land solely for its Jewish population at the expense of the land's indigenous Palestinian population. "Rather than supporting the two-state solution on the 1967 border, the Israeli government continues to consider all of historic Palestine as part of Israel with the aim to impose two different systems, an Apartheid regime," PLO Secretary-General Saeb Erekat said in a statement.

There were mass rallies inside Israel too, including in Umm al-Hiran, a Bedouin community in the Negev which Israel plans to displace in order to expand the suburbs of Beersheba city.

Both Palestinians and Israeli activists took part in the protest, including the head of Israeli group Rabbis for Human Rights, Rabbi Arik Ascherman.

This year's Land Day commemorations follow a new wave of land grabs in the occupied Palestinian territory that rights groups say mark a return to an Israeli government policy not seen since the pre-Oslo period in the 1980s.

Condemning these confiscations, Israeli settlement watchdog Peace Now has said that "instead of trying to calm the situation, the government is adding fuel to the fire and sending a clear message to Palestinians, as well as to Israelis, that it has no intention to work towards peace and two states."

Despite repeated condemnations by the international community, Israel has come under little actual pressure to halt its settlement program, land seizures, or the forced displacement of Palestinian communities.

To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation commanded by foreign terrorists, go to:

**<http://www.maannews.net/eng/Default.aspx> and
<http://www.palestinemonitor.org/list.php?id=ej898ra7yff0ukmf16>**

The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves "Israeli."

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



Military Resistance www.militaryproject.org

*This is how Obama brings the troops home,
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE.*

*Military Resistance is a near-daily news bulletin for service members
www.militaryproject.org*

A promotional graphic for Military Resistance. It features the text 'Military Resistance' and the website 'www.militaryproject.org'. Below this is a quote: 'This is how Obama brings the troops home, BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE.' The quote is positioned above a photograph of soldiers in a field. Below the photograph is another line of text: 'Military Resistance is a near-daily news bulletin for service members' followed by the website 'www.militaryproject.org'.

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