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US IMPERIALISM'S ASSAULT ON CUBA

US imperialism's decades-long embargo of the Cuban economy has been like a jackboot to the island-nation's throat. But while it has been punishing, it has not succeeded in overcoming the resilience of the Cuban people.

However, now Donald Trump seeks to tighten the stranglehold. He has implemented a genocidal strategy aimed at cutting off the island's oil supply, which – if it succeeds – would quite literally roll back in excess of 60 years of progress and development achieved under Cuba's socialist regime.

In considering what is at stake, we would do well to consider present-day Cuba against the one which Fidel Castro and his "July 26 Movement" liberated in January 1959.

In the following extract from Castro's "History Will Absolve Me," which was the statement he read at his trial in 1953, we get a glimpse of the conditions under which the Cuban people laboured.

From "History will absolve me" by Fidel Castro

The problem concerning land, the problem of industrialization, the problem of housing, the problem of unemployment, the problem of education and the problem of the health of the people: these are the six problems we would take immediate steps to solve, along with the restoration of public liberties and political democracy.

Eighty-five per cent of the small farmers in Cuba pay rent and live under the constant threat of being dispossessed from the land they till. More than half of the most productive land belongs to foreigners.

We export sugar to import candy, we export hides to import shoes, we export iron to import ploughs. Everybody agrees that the need to industrialize the country is urgent, that we need steel industries, paper and chemical industries, that we must improve cattle and grain production, the technique and the processing in

our food industry, in order to balance the ruinous competition of the Europeans in cheese products, condensed milk, liquor and oil, and that of the United States in canned goods; that we need merchant ships; that tourism should be an enormous source of revenue. But the capitalists insist that the workers remain under a Claudian yoke; the State folds its arms, and industrialization can wait for the Greek calends.

Just as serious or even worse is the housing problem. There are 200,000 huts and hovels in Cuba; 400,000 families in the country and in the cities live cramped into barracks and tenements without even the minimum sanitary requirements; 2,200,000 of our urban population pay rents which absorb between one-fifth and one-third of their income; and 2,800,000 of our rural and suburban population lack electricity. If the State proposes the lowering of rents, landlords threaten to freeze all construction; if the State does not interfere, construction goes on so long as the landlords get high rents; otherwise, they would not lay a single brick even though the rest of the population should have to live exposed to the elements. The utilities monopoly is no better; they extend lines as far as it is profitable, and beyond that point they don't care if the people have to live in darkness for the rest of their lives. The State folds its arms, and the people have neither homes nor electricity.

Our educational system is perfectly compatible with the rest of our national situation. Where the small farmer is not the owner of his land, what need is there for agricultural schools? Where there are no industries, what need is there for technical industrial schools? Everything falls within the same absurd logic: there is neither one thing nor the other. In any small

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European country there are more than two hundred technical and industrial arts schools; in Cuba, there are only six such schools, and the youths who graduate have no place to use their skill. The little rural schools are attended by only half of the school-age children — barefoot, half-naked and undernourished — and frequently the teacher must buy necessary materials from his own salary. Is this the way to make a nation great? Only death can liberate one from so much misery. In this, however, early death, the State is most helpful. Ninety per cent of rural children are consumed by parasites which filter through their bare feet from the earth. Society is moved to compassion upon hearing of the kidnapping or murder of one child, but they are criminally indifferent to the mass murder of so many thousands of children who die every year from lack of facilities, in agonizing pain. Their innocent eyes, death already shining in them, seem to look into infinity as if entreating forgiveness for human selfishness, as if asking God to stay his wrath. When the head of a family works only four months a year, with what can he purchase clothing and medicine for his children? They will grow up with rickets, with not a single good tooth in their mouths by the time they reach thirty; they will have heard ten million speeches and will finally die of misery and disappointment.

Public hospitals, which are always full, accept only patients recommended by some powerful politician who, in turn, demands the electoral votes of the unfortunate one and his family so that Cuba may continue for ever in the same or worse condition. Against this background, is it not obvious why from May to December over a million persons are jobless and why Cuba, with a population of five and a half million, has a greater number of unemployed than France or Italy with a population of forty million each?

In the decades since 1959, Cuba has made what many commentators would regard as astonishing strides. Just some of the indicators below would amply illustrate this:

- Illiteracy was eradicated within a year; 100 per cent of the country's children enjoy free education. At over 99 percent, Cuba has the highest "school retention rate" in the western hemisphere.
- Infant mortality has been reduced from 60 per 1000 live births to a rate that fluctuates between 6 and 6.5, which is the lowest in the hemisphere, from the United States to Patagonia. Life expectancy has increased by 15 years.
- Infectious and contagious diseases like polio, malaria, neonatal tetanus, diphtheria, measles,

rubella, mumps, whooping cough and dengue have been eradicated; others like tetanus, meningococcal meningitis, hepatitis B, leprosy, hemophilus meningitis and tuberculosis are fully controlled.

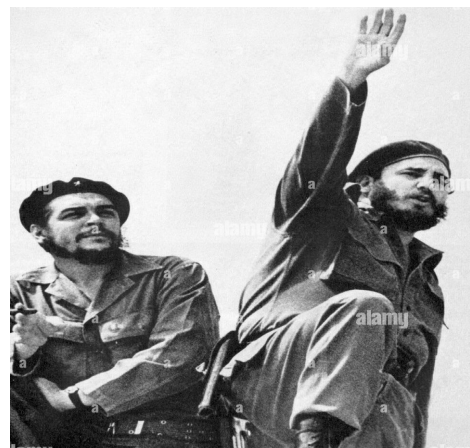
- In 2021, Cuba became the smallest country in the world to successfully develop and produce its own Covid vaccines.
- Cuba is today the country with the highest number of doctors per capita in the world, with almost twice as many as the countries which follow closest.
- Social security covers 100% of the country's citizens. 85 percent of the people own their homes and pay no property taxes on them whatsoever. The remaining 15% pay a wholly symbolic rent, which is only 10% of their salary.

Seen against the broader background of America's growing resort to naked imperialist aggression on a global scale, one immediately understands the fatal alternative confronting Cuba: *Submit or else*.

What has taken Cuba many painful decades of struggle to build is now in danger of being brought down by the criminal blockade imposed by American military might. Already horror stories are emerging of the devastating impact which the enforced energy-starvation is having on the Cuban social fabric (e.g. widespread electricity blackouts; hospitals unable to perform critical surgeries; rising mortality among the aged and those with chronic illnesses; a spike in infant mortality . . .)

If ever there was a time for the world to rally in support of the Cuban people it is now. Several appeals are circulating on social media, including appeals to contribute towards efforts to supply the country with vital food and medical supplies.

WE MUST SUPPORT THESE CALLS FOR SOLIDARITY!!!!



Che Guevara & Fidel Castro - 1960

SA'S APPROACH TO SO-CALLED "ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION"

Troops to patrol the streets of Cape Town a wall to protect traffic users on the N2 and (as disclosed in the 2026 SONA address) the following approach to "illegal immigration":

- Additional steps to be taken to secure the country's borders. Funding to strengthen border security to be prioritised, covering infrastructure, technology and people. Drones and other technology are already being used "to greater effect" along the country's borders.
- Illegal immigration affects security, stability and economic progress. As a result, the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) and labour inspectors will enforce immigration and labour laws. Employers hiring foreign nationals without visas will be prosecuted and enforcement measures will increase, with 10,000 new labour inspectors to be appointed. The intention is to increase and strengthen enforcement, protect vulnerable workers, and promote fair labour practices with more inspectors to tackle non-compliance and unlawful employment while supporting a stable labour market.

This approach will be music to the ears of reactionary xenophobic elements such as the Patriotic Front and Operation Dudula.

One is reminded of the treatment which zama zama miners, trapped underground, were subjected to about a year-or-so ago, when minister in the presidency, Khumbudzo Ntshavheni told reporters that government will not attempt to rescue illegal miners stranded underground in Stilfontein in the North West – but instead, would "smoke them out". In her words:

We are not sending help to criminals. We are going to smoke them out. They will come out. We are not sending help to criminals. Criminals are not to be helped. Criminals are to be persecuted.

This is the approach which our rulers are adopting with regard to foreign refugees, whom they label "illegal immigrants" – criminalising them.

In short, our formal political establishment is committed to a *symptomatic approach* to problem-solving – it's all about fire-fighting to appease a voter base, not about dismantling the system which created the problem in the first place.

Official hostility towards refugees appeases the petit bourgeois middle classes, who want their comforts safeguarded. (In other words, keep miserable and

suffering people out of our sight – hunt them down, invisibilise them).

There is also the more serious question of "defending the rights" of a domestic working class, whose livelihoods are adversely affected by the hyper-exploitation of down-and-out refugees, who will work for peanuts just to keep body and soul together. On this point: it is a reality within the capitalist order, generally, that competition is all about winning and losing, and whoever can produce at lower cost will be the winner. Thus, in the absence of defensive legislation, firms, foreign and local, will strive to undercut their competitors by employing the most exploitable fraction of the working class – the most powerless, such as foreign refugees.

In America, the "supply" of highly exploitable foreign refugees has now come to exceed requirements, so ICE is being mobilised to reverse the flow. This is not much different from apartheid-era social control in South Africa, in terms of which "surplus labour" was forced (back) to the homelands/Bantustans.

It is against this background which we have to view current "immigration control" strategies in SA. If foreign nationals serve the interests of capital, then they're welcome, otherwise not. (One also thinks of the height of the gold mining industry, when mining workers were recruited from surrounding countries to supplement inadequate numbers of local South African nationals. Then foreign nationals were welcome, albeit under slave-like conditions). One also recalls the infamous "residence permits" which people from outside of the urban areas had had to produce right into the 1980s. The Nationalist Party's version of ICE then went around seeking out those without such permits, arresting them, charging them criminally and sending them back to the homelands.

Among the root causes accounting for the influx of foreign refugees worldwide, is the mass flight of communities from war ravaged zones – Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Congo, Sudan . . . Another major cause includes disaster resulting from economic collapse. While this latter cause is often "blamed on" climate collapse, it should be remembered that the major factor in climate collapse is capitalist-based, as is war and imperialism.

In short, the dotted line from global capitalism runs through war, climate change and imperialist exploitation, through to (illegal) immigration/the refugee "crisis." Yet, governments across the world resort to violent, coercive measures to "solve" the refugee crisis, avoid-

ing any solutions which would hold the capitalist system and its backers accountable.

Capitalism is in crisis, so the rulers turn to fascism to prop it up. It is in this context that Operation Dudula (and ICE) will flourish – to play an attack-dog role in society.

Obviously there is no quick-and-easy solution to the refugee problem, since, as a condition of its solution, we're talking about nothing less than the overthrow of capitalism on a global scale.

What do we do in the meantime?

Sympathetic governments have few options within a capitalist dispensation. Solutions would entail humanitarian interventions, such as the provision of decent accommodation, food, education and health services. Such interventions do not solve the refugee crisis; they mitigate the ordeal suffered by the refugees.

According to a Google summary of the Marxist position:

Marxist solutions to the refugee crisis are rooted in the belief that forced migration is not an accidental humanitarian tragedy, but a direct consequence of capitalism, imperialist wars, and the exploitation of the Global South. Marxists argue that solving the crisis requires dismantling these economic systems rather than implementing humanitarian aid or stricter border controls

Thus, for Marxists, generally, what is required includes measures which are transitional in nature (i.e. solutions within a framework leading to socialism):

- **International Working-Class Solidarity:** Instead of viewing refugees as threats to jobs, we should promote the unity of local and migrant workers to struggle against their common "enslavers"—the capitalist class. This involves organizing migrant workers into unions and fighting for equal rights, pay, and conditions.
- **Expropriation of Capital to Fund Support:** Rather than austerity, the wealth of corporations, banks, and arms manufacturers (who profit from the wars causing migration) should be seized to pay for housing, healthcare, and education for refugees.
- **Expropriation of Empty Property:** To address housing shortages, the expropriation of empty properties and unused buildings should be undertaken, particularly properties owned by corporations or speculators, to house both refugees and local homeless populations.

It will be readily noted that these solutions should not be restricted to refugees, but should be the way forward for a substantial number of South Africans who suffer similarly under the capitalist order. This shows that the poor of all nations have a common enemy, and therefore a common interest in building a socialist alternative.

We have seen a rise in right-wing impunity in South Africa in recent times, possibly emboldened by the general rise of fascist-oriented regimes in the United States and Europe. We cannot rely on the GNU or any of the mainstream political parties, as most of them are in fact, major parts of the problem.

Given that large numbers of the working poor are susceptible to anti-immigrant propaganda, there is a particular task confronting the progressive Left: which is both to counter such propaganda, and to demonstrate the need for solidarity with the working poor, globally – irrespective of artificial barriers such as national boundaries. Just as it suits the ruling class to divide the workers on the factory floor, so it suits them to divide communities across geographies



LANGUAGE POLICY AND NATIONAL UNITY

21 February is International Mother Language Day (IMLD). Mother Language Day is a day when advances are made for multilingual education. In South Africa, we have twelve official languages that include Sign Language. However, the Khoisan languages have been excluded from the official languages in our country. The Language Question is part of the larger and inclusive question that encompasses social inequality based on colour, class, religious beliefs, and sex or on any other basis.

Why is the language question important in South Africa?

Several countries around the world have multiple official languages, reflecting diverse cultural, colonial, and indigenous histories. In India, we have 121 major languages and approximately 19 500-mother tongues (including dialects). The Indian government recognises 22 major languages. Yet they are a united country. Many countries around the world have a number of official languages with Bolivia having 37 official languages, with Zimbabwe having 16 official languages. Some countries have official languages but also have regional and local official languages, notably Brazil and China.

The struggle in South Africa is to build a single undivided nation. The struggle in South Africa is against racism, ethnicity, sexism and tribalism. Nonracialism is the complete rejection of the theory of race. The evisceration of black political rights gave impetus to the struggle by the majority for a nonracist society. Non-racialism and multi-racialism are two distinct concepts. For too many, these concepts are synonymous and have become mere political slogans.

Racism as a product of the Colour-bar system arose in all earnestness after the military conquests in the Cape. This allowed for the recruitment of cheap labour on the mines in Kimberley and the former Transvaal. This in short was then the background against which the apartheid philosophy was conceptualised.

The introduction of Christian National Education and the enactment of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 and the then imminent transfer of "Coloured" and "Indian" Education to separate education departments led to English/Afrikaans being the dominant languages in SA.

In 1974 the South African Minister of Bantu Education and Development, MC Botha, issued a diktat that made the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools compulsory as from Std. 5 (Gr. 7) upwards. English and Afrikaans were to become the languages of instruction on a 50-50 basis. Mother Tongue instruction would only be permitted in Religious Instruction, Music and Physical Culture. Deputy Minister, Punt Janson, said: *"A Black man may be trained to work on a farm or in a factory. He may work for an employer who is either English-speaking or Afrikaans-speaking and the man who has to give him instructions may be either English-speaking or Afrikaans-speaking. Why should we now*

start quarrelling about the medium of instruction among the Black people? ... No, I have not consulted them and I am not going to consult them."

Shortly before 09:00 on that fateful morning of 16 June 1976, a senior student addressed a crowd of a few thousand students outside Orlando West Junior Secondary School with an appeal for calm as "police were on their way to quell the protests".

Within minutes after the arrival of the police, a canister of teargas was flung amongst the pupils followed by gunshots critically wounding Hector Peterson who was declared dead on arrival at a nearby clinic.

This sparked the 1976 revolts that rapidly spread throughout the country. Thousands of youths were wounded and died and this served as an awakening for the oppressed as uprisings spread throughout the country.

The sustained protests and action by students and the communities all over the country averted the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction.

Building the South African nation includes the promotion of a *lingua franca*. One thing is very clear, we are all agreed that 'building the nation' means, among other things, opposing racism in society, fighting against ethnicism, and tribalism. To be a nation, people have to communicate with each other, not particularly in a specific language, but they need to change to a common language in order for them to understand each other. Swahili was at first thought of as the "*Esperanto*" for Africa. However, the unification of the countries of Africa appears to be in the distant future.

The primary languages spoken in South Africa according to the 2022/2023 census (percentages of the population in brackets) is; isiZulu (24.4%), isiXhosa (16.3%), Afrikaans (10.6%), Sepedi (10%) English (8.1% - 9.6%), Setswana (8% - 9.1%), Sesotho (7.6% - 7.9%), Xitsonga (3,6% - 4,5%), Siswati (2,5% - 2,8%), Tshivenda (2,4% - 2,5%) and isiNdebele (1.6% - 2.1%).

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The Nguni languages then seem to be the dominant languages with isiZulu and isiXhosa being closely related, averaging in excess of 40% of the population. Would it then not be practicable that Nguni and the Sesotho languages 'unite/build' the nation?

What is urgently needed is that the Nguni and Sesotho languages be made compulsory in schools, that textbooks be written and translated into these languages.

Multilingualism significantly enhances children's cognitive development, memory and problem solving skills. It acts as a "gymnasium for the brain".

Our immediate task is then to build the nation by creating the society for which we stand and developing our own *lingua franca*.

Let us get down to that task.



It's time for a change!

BOYCOTT THE FIFA WORLD CUP

Throughout the history of sport for the oppressed, political opposition was experienced. This eventually culminated in the establishment of the South African Council on Sport (SACOS) in 1973 that was later known as the “*sports wing of the liberatory movement*”.

In 1976, over 25 African nations (eventually 33, led by Tanzania, Kenya, and others) boycotted the Montreal Olympics to protest the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) refusal to ban New Zealand. The New Zealand rugby team (All Blacks) had toured apartheid South Africa, violating the international sporting isolation of South Africa.

Sport in South Africa:

The forerunner to the South African Rugby Union (SARU) was the South African Coloured Rugby Football Union established in Kimberley in 1897. Robert Grendon was its first president with Isaiah Bud-M'belle the secretary.

- Grendon was secretary of the Griqualand West Agitation Committee and was an outspoken critic of the racist and discriminatory franchise in the then ‘colony’.
- On his relocation to Natal, he became the first editor of *Abantu-Batho*, the newspaper of the South African Native National Congress, later to become known as the African National Congress.
- He received his teacher training at Zonnebloem Native College and before his punitive dismissal from teaching, he had become the principal at Edendale Teacher Training College in Natal. (*Grendon is possibly the first teacher in SA to be dismissed for political reasons from teaching in South Africa*).

Both Grendon and M'belle had appealed for unity in sports circles. Grendon believed that “inter-ethnic” relations would improve as more interaction on the playing fields and the related social events took place.

Throughout the early part of the 20th century, the oppressed established national sporting codes and even played games, particularly in cricket against the internationally recognised “White” sports bodies. In the early 1900's, Krom Hendricks and Robert Grendon were even considered for the national cricket side to tour England, but were omitted from the team when it was realised that they were not “White”.

After 1943 the Teachers' League of South Africa (TLSA), the All African Convention (ACC) and the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), adopted the policy of non-racialism and realised that the struggle in sport and society were synonymous. A further spurt was given in 1955 when the ANC in their Freedom Charter adopted multi-racialism as policy. (**Note – multi-racialism and non-racialism being two diametrically opposed concepts**) It was realised from a very early stage that the struggle in sport and education was linked to the struggle for

political emancipation and democracy as shown by Grendon in 1897.

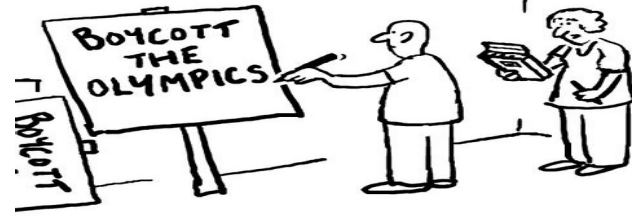
Those that were involved in the non-racial sports struggle can be justifiably proud of the fact that they always emphasised the social function of sport. They were fighting a system that was a threat to the very humanity of the oppressed majority in this country. Therefore, sport became a means of fostering those human values that all of us hold dear, and to which the over-powering, dominant capitalist culture was a serious threat.

At Loskop Dam in 1965, Prime Minister H.F. Verwoerd delivered a hard-line, segregationist speech dictating that New Zealand rugby teams (All Blacks) touring South Africa could not include Maori players. He insisted on respecting the SA laws that forbade the mixing of sporting teams on the sports fields. The ideological goal was used to entrench the apartheid policy in all spheres of life, including social and sporting interactions. As a result, the 1967 (All Black) tour was cancelled and this just deepened international sporting isolation.

In 1968, Dennis Brutus spearheaded a successful campaign to have South Africa banned from the Summer Olympic Games in Mexico City. As the founder and president of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC), Brutus argued that apartheid, which forced segregated sports, violated the Olympic Charter. Despite being jailed for 18 months on Robben Island, for his efforts, which began with the formation of the South African Sports Association in 1958, he succeeded in having South Africa barred from the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

In 1973 the Durban dockworkers strike ended a period of quiescence in the labour movement. The burgeoning labour movement and the independence of Angola and Mozambique lent impetus to the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa.

On 17 March 1973, SACOS was established in Durban. SACOS served as the sports wing of the liberation movement. SACOS became famous for the slogan “*No Normal Sport in an Abnormal Society*”. Initially SACOS consisted of nine national nonracial sports bodies and developed into an august body of 23 national sports codes and 8 provincial councils of sport. SACOS followed



earlier anti-apartheid sports organizations like the South African Sports Association (1958) and the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC, 1963).

SACOS, still a fledgling organisation in the mid-seventies, opposed all national sports and cultural tours to and from South Africa. In 1976, the All Blacks toured South Africa, with the blessing of the then newly elected New Zealand Prime Minister, Rob Muldoon. The All Blacks, that included 5 Maori players, also played against the SA Proteas ("Coloureds") and the SA Leopards ("Blacks"). The majority of the oppressed people in SA boycotted these matches, considered as part of the collaborator class by the non-racial fold. The 5 Maori players were given "honorary white" status for the period of the tour.

In a controversial and contested tour that led directly to the boycott of the Montreal Olympics by 25 African countries as well as Afghanistan, Burma (now officially called the Republic of the Union of Myanmar), Guyana, Iraq, Sri Lanka and Syria protested against this by boycotting the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal. The All Black tour, they reasoned, gave tacit support to the apartheid regime in South Africa.

No one can deny that seeing the thousands of athletes during the march past on the opening day is a remarkable sight, even on our television screens. Athletes cannot control their exuberance in the march past when they become part of the world sports fraternity. At the Olympic Games spectators show pride in the performance of their home teams, but at the same time they cannot help being awestruck at the magnificent achievements of the other athletes. At the Olympic Games, the social function of sport is emphasised. The African athletes in 1976 however had political courage and made a huge sacrifice to abandon their Olympic dreams and be part of that momentous occasion. Some of the teams were actually in Montreal when they decided to withdraw from the Games.

The 2026 FIFA World Cup

The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA; lit. 'International Association Football Federation') 2026 is to be hosted by the USA, Mexico and Canada.

At present, the USA continues to supply Israel with weapons and logistical support. Israel was found guilty of genocide after South Africa lodged a judicial case at the International Court of Justice, the United Nations' top judicial body in December 2023. Israel was found guilty of violating the 1948 Genocide Convention during its military operations in the Gaza strip.

Schools, hospitals and the displacement of families are taking place in Gaza. By attending the FIFA extravaganza, citizens will be giving legitimacy to the violation of human rights (Apartheid) in Palestine. The current scale of barbarousness by Israel against the people of Palestine must be seen as part of an ongoing historical process of plunder and dispossession from 1948 onwards.

In Minneapolis in the USA, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents fatally shot Alex Pretti during a confrontation. Pretti's death comes less than a month after the fatal shooting of Renee Good and only a few days after a five-year old boy Liam Ramos and his father were detained after returning from his preschool. Whilst these two deaths attracted worldwide attention, it cannot be compared with the thousands of civilians including children being massacred in Palestine.

Football cannot be played on the graves of the thousands of Palestinians killed since the Nakba of 1948. During the Nakba, village wells were poisoned in a biological warfare programme; properties were looted to prevent Palestinian refugees from returning. The Nakba involved the annihilation of more than 500 villages and the expulsion of 800 000 civilians from their homes.

The New Unity Movement calls on the governments of the African Union, that include Morocco, Senegal, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, the Cape Verde and in particular South Africa (teams participating in the FIFA World Cup) to withdraw their teams from participating in the United States as a sign of protest against the genocide being perpetrated in Gaza and the support given by the USA.

THE WORKER IS PRODUCED BY THE PUBLICATIONS COLLECTIVE OF THE NEW UNITY MOVEMENT

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