

#1478 Refugees, Borders, War, and the Climate Crisis

Intro 3-24-22

[00:00:00] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Welcome to this episode of the award-winning Best of the Left podcast, in which we shall take a look at the desperate state of refugees, fleeing war, strife, and climate disruption; as well as the response of governments around the world that espouse liberal platitudes of humanitarianism while hardening their borders against those seeking refuge.

Clips today are from The Real Story; The Daily Show; Democracy, Now!; The Takeaway; Declarations-- the human rights podcast; and This Is Hell; with an additional members only clip from This Is Hell.

And we begin today with a look at European policies from just before the invasion of Ukraine was on the radar.

Fortress Europe: Who gets to come in? - The Real Story - Air Date 11-9-21e

[00:00:43] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** First to Michael Gahler, he's a German MEP for the country's governing CDU party and the spokesperson for foreign affairs for the center-right EPP group within the European parliament. I asked him what he thinks should be done with the migrants currently stranded just outside the EU's border.

[00:01:01] **MICHAEL GAHLER :** We still should demand from the regime to send these people back. I mean, we should, of course not forget these people are also human beings in the cold with women and children involved. So we should see to it that the supply could happen also through aid across the border from the Polish side or the [unintelligible] side.

[00:01:22] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** But given the, sort of the Polish response, the militarization of that response, how does that reflect on EU values and the EU's projection of itself as a liberal humanitarian organization?

[00:01:35] **MICHAEL GAHLER** : Indeed, that does affect this image. And that is one of the intentions of the regime. [Belarus president] Lukashenko thinks he's in a win-win situation. Either the EU doesn't live up to its own standards with regard to humanitarian issues and then he succeeds in blaming us, or we accept the refugees, these migrants over our border, and then he creates this pull factor and thereby divides us again over this question how we should deal with it and how to redistribute these people, perhaps. I mean, we should not allow that. It is very clear that these people there, they are instrumentalized by the regime for the purpose of dividing us and getting us into trouble. And those people who are paid thousands of dollars or euros for their trip also, they're not the poor risk and the most stupid ones. I think they knew the risk that they would be taking. So to an extent, they also have a responsibility to bear the situation. And I think what we could offer is for all those who agree to escape the situation to be transported back through the European Union to where they are coming from. I think that is what we could offer, but definitely not a situation where they have the option to stay and thereby create the pull factor for others to come.

[00:02:49] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY**: The thoughts of Michael Gahler, a German member of the European parliament. Now we can talk about the wider question of migration in a moment, but on the specific question of what's happening on the border of Belarus, Gerald Knaus, is this sort of political act that is exploiting the fact that Europe can't decide what it wants to do and how it's going to do it?

[00:03:10] **GERALD KNAUS**: Well, I think that is a very common cliché. And I think what we see now is that we should question it. Europe is united at the moment. It is just united around the policy that is in violation of its own laws. What we've seen in recent years has not been Europeans who couldn't agree with each other. It's been in a central political fight between two visions: one vision articulated in 2015 at the height of the Syrians coming in large numbers to Europe in autumn 2015 by Victor Orban, who had a very clear view. He said at that time, Europeans should do what they're doing now. He said the solution to big mass movements of people is to send soldiers, to build fences, to suspend the right to apply for asylum and to push them back.

And what we had the last six years was not some chaotic, confused debate in Brussels. It was a fight where Viktor Orban won over more and more and more governments to his vision. And what we've seen this week is 27 countries backing this vision on the border with Belarus. We are seeing nobody criticizing Poland, which passed the law on the 25th of October, which allows pushbacks.

Nobody says this is wrong, although everybody knows it's wrong. The European court of justice has given many judgments on this. And nobody says that Poland should let people who are on Polish, on EU territory, it should let them submit an asylum application. So, no the EU is no longer divided.

[00:04:39] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** So how do you set that against the fact that just a few weeks ago, many EU member states, most EU member states were united against Poland on rule of law issues? Does it suggest then that countries are coalescing around a view on migration, which they will separate from other issues that they may have with that country, be it Hungary, be it Poland?

[00:04:59] **MICHAEL GAHLER :** Well, that is of course part of the strategy of Viktor Orban. What he said in 2015 is that if majorities of the European public -- and he was expecting this -- would be afraid and would say we need control and the only control you can have is control by suspending human rights and by pushbacks. That then European publics would also accept that universal human rights and liberal principles should go as well. Now the Polish government is using this refugee crisis and the unity of European governments around this issue to say, listen, yes, we know the European court in Luxemburg, the highest court in the EU, has said that this is not allowed, but we do it anyways. And everybody agrees with us. So it's an attack, not just on refugee protection. It's an attack on the very idea of the rule of law. And it is very successful, because the European Union is in a trap. It is in a hypocritical position. It blames Poland for not implementing -- and it should blame Poland for not implementing -- decisions by the European court on the rule of law. At the same time, it is accepting Poland and Hungary and other countries, ignoring decisions by the European court of justice when it comes to behavior at the border.

[00:06:09] **RITULA SHAH - HOST, THE REAL STORY:** Andrew Connelly, it's been described, I think, by [President of the European Commission] Ursula von der Leyen as "hybrid warfare." Is that how it appears to you?

[00:06:18] **ANDREW CONNELLY:** Look, it's unequivocal that the Belarusian dictatorship is facilitating the movement of asylum seekers. It's a cynical, it's cruel provocation. It's also true that Poland is trapping those people outside its border and surrounding them with barbed wire and troops and preventing them from accessing the asylum system, blocking humanitarian workers, even criminalizing locals from providing the most basic help for those people too. And banning journalists from observing the whole process. And I think it is

precisely because of that panic-stricken, war-like approach that much of Europe is increasingly taken towards a few thousand retched people on its doorstep means that that is an effective strategy to sow confusion and division.

I mean, don't forget that Russia bombed and is still bombing Syria and creating the refugees, some of whom come to Europe. And then at the other end is financing far-right movements in Europe, including political parties, including disinformation campaigns, that wage a hate campaign against refugees.

So, yes, it's true to say that it's a form of hybrid warfare, but it's also the product of real wars. I mean, the narrative that this is not a migration crisis or it's a manufactured one, yes. On the one hand, the physical movement has been accelerated to the east doorstep. And sometimes that has been done with an aggressive coercive smuggling strategy that convinces families to liquidate their assets and go to Europe.

But also the issues of poverty and conflict in Yemen and Syria and Afghanistan, in Iraq, they're preexisting. And they're the factors that push people to move. Too much of this conversation in general, it talks about the pull factor of Europe. I think the push factors are much greater. I've met people on the Lithuanian-Belarusian border that objected to their portrayal as weapons or political pawns. These were people from Somalia or Eritrea. Some had family in Europe, some were children. They admit they came legally over the border, but they quite reasonably state -- illegally, yes, over the border of Belarus -- but of course they reasonably state their legal avenues to access Europe are slim to none. So when they saw a path open, that meant they could fly to the edge of the EU rather than and getting a boat or cross numerous militarized borders in the Balkans, they took it. And the response of the European countries is to issue blanket inadmissible decisions on very complex asylum cases, mass detention and pushbacks.

War in Ukraine - Humane Ukrainians & A Major Refugee Crisis -The Daily Show - Air Date 3-4-22

[00:08:46] **TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW:** By doing this, they've unleashed one of the worst humanitarian crises that Europe has ever seen.

[00:08:53] **NEWS CLIP:** This Russian invasion is leading to another emergency unfolding at this hour, the humanitarian crisis just across Ukraine's borders.

The United Nations refugee agency says at least 1 million Ukrainians have fled to neighboring countries, and that millions more could soon join them.

Tonight, the crush to flee Ukraine. We were in this tunnel at the train station in Lviv, refugees packed so tightly they could only shuffle forward. Parents clutching their children's hands.

There've gotta be a thousand people in this tunnel right now, all of them pushing their way towards the last track here.

A railway spokesperson saying every hour, five to 10,000 more people arrive at the Lviv station in Western Ukraine.

Ukrainians are queuing for up to 20 hours trying to cross the border. Officials say this humanitarian crisis is only going to get worse.

This exodus we're seeing from Ukraine is the biggest number of people displaced in Europe in the shortest amount of time since World War II.

[00:09:52] **TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW:** God dammit, Vladimir Putin. Just imagine, just imagine: one day you're living a normal, peaceful, modern life, and the next day you're trekking to the Romanian border on foot.

Just think about that for a second. We think the world has ended when our wi-fi goes down. These people don't know if they'll ever get to go home. One of the major costs of war is how many people get displaced. They have their lives totally uprooted. Like we all think war is like *Call of Duty*. You know, you run in, you shoot, and then you reboot. But for most people it's more like *Oregon Trail*, less exciting, much harder and way more depressing. And I think we can all agree that it's a bad thing, man. It is a bad thing when anything comes close to World War II levels, whether it's refugees fighting or waste lines, it's always bad.

And this is what people forget about war. You know, because sometimes you hear about a war in another country, right? You hear about a war in another country and you think, oh, well that's sad, but it's over there. So watch, should I care? But you should care. You should care. You know why? Because we are

all interconnected in the modern age. Yeah. And that means the fallout of that war spreads all over. Whether it's the refugee crisis or the rising gas prices or the stock market, the ripple effects are everywhere.

So in a way, Putin didn't just invade Ukraine. He's also invaded your gas tanks, right? He's invaded your grocery bill. He's invaded your social media feeds. Yeah. You just wanna scroll and look at thoughts. Now it's there, that's thoughts and prayers. Okay.

But one glimmer of hope, one glimmer of hope for these refugees is that all of Ukraine's neighboring countries are welcoming them with open arms.

[00:11:26] **NEWS CLIP:** Ukraine's neighbors welcoming the refugees with open arms, a warm drink, and a hug in Moldova. In Slovakia, a chance to watch cartoons.

Ukrainians welcomed by Hungarian officials and aid workers, a solidarity ticket, a free seat on another train to the Hungarian capital where more help waits.

You've got one European country after another saying that they will fast track applications for asylum.

The European Union is talking about giving them three years of temporary residency so they can work. They can access benefits.

In Poland, they have opened their borders, opened their arms to as many Ukrainian refugees as will arrive.

We keep our borders open. The nationals of all countries who suffered from Russian aggression or whose life is at risk can seek shelter in my country.

Poland's commissioner to the EU personally offered to host a family of refugees in his own home in Warsaw, but the refugees had found an alternative place to stay.

[00:12:28] **TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW:** This is amazing, people. All these countries in Europe have stepped up to take in all of these refugees. And what's also amazing is, if I heard correctly, the Polish commissioner to the EU offered to host a family of refugees in his home, but they said, no thanks, we found another place. And I don't care what you say, that's gotta hurt. Yeah. You think you helping refugees and they're like, wow.

So is, uh, is that your kitchen? Uh, it's only been eight days. My standards haven't dropped that much.

But still seeing these refugees being greeted with open arms and full hearts, it gives me, it gives me a glimmer of hope in this world, you know, to see like people helping people in need.

I mean, it is interesting though that Eastern Europe has been so willing and able to accept a million people coming into their countries in just a few days when just recently, just recently, it didn't seem to have any space for a different group of refugees.

[00:13:21] **NEWS CLIP:** The humanitarian crisis in Europe continues to grow. It increasingly exposed fault lines, hundreds of thousands of refugees streaming in from Syria and elsewhere. But as the arguing continues, so does the suffering.

As Europe struggles for a solution, refugees forced to zigzag from one country to another with no clear path.

The EU has effectively paid Turkey to keep Syrians from getting to Greece.

Poland had pledged to take in a number of the refugees saying now that it is not going to do that.

We will not be receiving migrants from the middle east and north Africa in Poland.

This is Hungary's solution to the flood of refugees pouring in: a 13 foot fence, topped with razor wire, running about 115 miles along its border with Serbia.

Police in riot gear told they can shoot rubber bullets at anyone who tries to cross.

Hostility here in Hungary: video shocking the world, the Hungarian camera woman kicking that girl as she runs from police. And this, as a man runs by carrying a small child, she trips him and he falls to the ground.

Hungary's prime minister, Victor Urban, had a message for the migrants themselves:

The moral human thing is to make clear, please don't come.

[00:14:31] **TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW:** Huh. That's really strange. When it's Syrians who are fleeing a war, it's all "We do not have space. Do not come." But now this space and people must come? What changed? I mean, when the Syrians needed refuge, even the camera crew was drop-kicking families.

Yeah. But now Ukrainians are getting accommodation. They're getting visas. They're getting work benefits. Which, by the way, is good. It is a good thing. But I'm just saying, where's their drop kick?

And look, we don't even have to speculate. We don't have to speculate about why they're treating Ukrainians so differently than refugees from Africa or from the middle east. It's because the prime minister of Bulgaria, he came out and said it, right? He said, these are not the refugees we are used to. These people are Europeans. These people are intelligent. They are educated people. Yeah. So kind of a shocking thing to say. But at the same time, I will say I'm impressed that the prime minister of Bulgaria has found the time to get to know all 1 million refugees that have fled Ukraine in the past week. He must be very efficient at making small talk. "So where you from, what you do, what you think? Aha I like you!"

And please don't get me wrong. Don't get me wrong here. I understand the arguments, right? I understand the arguments that these countries will make, right. That they have to think about how easy it is for refugees to integrate into their culture and society. I get that. I truly get that. It's just like, it's easier for you to take in a family member who's in trouble than a random person who needs help. You know, like lots of kids got in one little fight with a couple of guys who are up to no good, but there's a reason uncle Ful and aunt Viv only took in Will. I get it.

But it doesn't mean it's impossible. It doesn't mean it's impossible. And the problem I have is that when it's Syrians or Africans on a boat, these countries didn't even try to integrate them. They didn't even say "women and children only." No, they reject even the chance that anyone brown could assimilate. "Your skin is too dark. You couldn't possibly eat borscht."

And I know right now, I know right now there's somebody who's like, "Ah, Trevor, again with the racism. What is it with Black people and the racism? Always talking about ra-- you know, I go years at a time without even thinking about racism. It's easy. Why don't you try?"

Well, maybe the reason Black people always talk about racism is because racism is always happening to the Black people. And we're seeing it again now in Ukraine.

[00:16:51] **NEWS CLIP:** African and Indian students stuck in Ukraine are accusing officials of discriminating against them and pushing them back from getting to the border.

This video posted to Twitter reads, "Watch how they're threatening to shoot us," saying they're at the Ukraine-Poland border, the police and army are refusing to let Africans cross. They only allow Ukrainians.

Foreign students who faced segregation and racism at the border crossing to Poland. Some say they were told they can't board buses there because they were meant for Ukrainians only.

Videos have been posted on social media said to show black people being prevented from boarding a train and left stranded at a railway station in Lviv, as Ukrainians were allowed on.

One Congo native saying he was discriminated against while trying to board a train out of Ukraine.

David told us like, We are going to give you guns and you're gonna fight for Ukraine.

I say huh? We gonna fight for Ukraine? We are not Ukrainian. We are Black. So how can we fight? How can we fight for Ukraine?

[00:17:55] **TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW:** Yeah. Just think about this for a moment. Huh? Black people, students, tourists, visitors. Many of them are saying they cannot get out of the country. They can't get out because they're Black. They just get blocked at the border. And for this guy, I mean, this is wild. Imagine being prevented from leaving the country and not just that, but they say like, no, not only can you not leave, you have to grab a gun and fight. That is insane. People from other countries haven't been told that they have to fight. Why does he, huh? The British person gets to go. The African guy, no, no, you're staying. We've watched *Beasts of No Nation*. We know you guys know how to handle yourselves. This is what you guys do.

That's not fair, man. When you go to another a country, you don't expect that they might be conscripting you into a war.

Afghanistan in Freefall: Deadly U.S. Sanctions Blamed for Shocking Humanitarian Crisis - Democracy Now! - Air Date 1-14-22

[00:18:35] **AMY GOODMAN:** You just recently returned from Afghanistan. Explain exactly what's happening there and how that relates to U.S. sanctions.

[00:18:44] **DR. PAUL SPIEGEL:** What is happening is there's a country in freefall, economic freefall, which is affecting all aspects of their lives, and particularly on the health situation. All salaries stopped being paid on August 15th, when the Taliban took over the country. And while there has been some now salaries being paid for basic healthcare, the hospitals are not being — the salaries are not being paid. Healthcare workers are still coming, but there's no medicines, no — no medicines, no heat. And what we're seeing are people can't even afford to get to the hospitals, even if there were medicines to be had.

[00:19:27] **AMY GOODMAN:** And so, talk specifically about the West's approach to the Taliban right now.

[00:19:34] **DR. PAUL SPIEGEL:** Right. We call — we were told to call them the de facto authorities. And what has happened in the West is that they have very hard-hitting sanctions that do not allow any funds to go to the de facto authorities, but in a very broad way. And it means that government-run hospitals cannot receive money. Government-run schools cannot receive money. Ministries of health, for technocrats, they're not able to receive money. And so you have a healthcare system — particularly the higher levels, because there are some differences in the lower levels — that are not receiving funds whatsoever. Yet these are civil servants, just like in the U.S. and other areas, that are required to be able to ensure that healthcare services, educational services are running. And everything is falling down. And it's not just the sanctions, but it's also a huge issue in terms of the banking system, the central bank and a massive liquidity problem. So, even when I was there and we were paying polio workers and measles workers to try to get vaccines, there was insufficient money in the country to actually pay these people to do their jobs.

[00:20:47] **AMY GOODMAN:** So, in terms of the population, the U.N. reports Afghanistan's population, nearly 23 million people, are facing extreme hunger. At least a million children are at risk of dying of starvation?

[00:21:02] **DR. PAUL SPIEGEL:** Yes, yes. And I would add that it's not — the crisis is already happening. It's not as if we can stave off or we can prevent this from happening. What we need to be able to do is minimize the incredibly negative effects that we're seeing. There's been a drought. There's food insecurity. And all this has been exacerbated due to this economic crisis and due to the lack of U.N. and NGOs being able to pay people in the field, particularly anyone related to the de facto authorities, because of the very strong U.S. sanctions.

[00:21:45] **AMY GOODMAN:** I want to bring Jan Egeland into this conversation, secretary general of the Norwegian Refugee Council. You have been to Afghanistan scores of times since, what, back to 1996, when you were deputy foreign minister of Norway in Afghanistan. Can you talk about how the situation today compares and what you think needs to happen?

[00:22:08] **JAN EGELAND:** Well, there hasn't been this kind of a dramatic collapse in the economy of Afghanistan within months ever before, I think. What happened, really, in August, when the Taliban took over and the NATO countries went for the door, was that they left behind 40 million civilians, the same 40 million civilians whom they had defended with a trillion-dollar military campaign over the last 20 years. Those were left behind, the same women and children, the same doctors and nurses and teachers and so on.

So, what we've seen — and I have 1,400 colleagues on the ground. Norwegian Refugee Council has 1,400 relief workers on the ground. What we see now is that it's not the Taliban that is holding us back. It is the sanctions. It's that there is no banking at all and that the teachers and nurses and doctors and so on are not being paid because their salaries are sitting in Washington, and it's with the World Bank. And the U.S. and all of the other members of the World Bank are not releasing this money. So, a lot of things has to happen tomorrow, unless we will see epic loss of life.

[00:23:38] **AMY GOODMAN:** On Thursday, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres called for a suspension of rules blocking the use of international funding in Afghanistan. Some \$9.5 billion in Afghan central bank reserves remain blocked outside the country, mainly here in the United States, in response to Taliban rule since August. Guterres addressed the Taliban also.

SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTÓNIO GUTERRES: As I appeal to the international community to step up support for the people of Afghanistan, I make an equally urgent plea to the Taliban leadership to recognize and protect fundamental human rights, and, in particular, the rights of women and girls.

Across Afghanistan, women and girls are missing from offices and classrooms. A generation of girls is seeing its hopes and dreams shattered. Women scientists, lawyers and teachers are locked out, wasting skills and talents that will benefit the entire country and, indeed, the world. No country can thrive while denying the rights of all of its population.

To be clear, he was calling for the lifting of the blocking, of the sanctions against Afghanistan. Jan Egeland, if you can talk about the Taliban and also the U.S. approach?

[00:25:03] **JAN EGELAND:** Well, number one, I mean, the Taliban, we need to actively engage on all levels, so that there is gender equality in Afghanistan commensurate with that of other Islamic countries. We are doing that. I met with the Taliban top leadership at the end of September. This was only a few weeks after they took over. I brought up the need for our female staff to have the same freedom of movement as the male colleagues have. No male guardian should ever be needed to accompany that. And I got a yes and a yes in my meetings in Kabul, and then we have negotiated with the 14 provinces where we operate, the same. We have started with schools for girls and female teachers now in all the 14 provinces, but we have not yet gotten the secondary and tertiary education. And we need to fight for that, really. But it would be the ultimate insult to these girls and their mothers if they have to starve and freeze to death before we are getting through to all of the local Taliban commanders on all of these issues.

So, that's the message also to the U.S. We've never held money back from starving people because there has been discrimination from the authorities. I constantly hear the phrase "not a penny, not a cent to the Taliban." I agree with that. It's not the Taliban that are receiving this funding. It's going through international organizations, the United Nations, the international nongovernmental organizations, the local nongovernmental organizations, NRC, my own organization, directly to the people. We have full operational freedom at the moment.

Resettlement Support and Legislative Challenges Facing Afghan Refugees - The Takeaway - Air Date 2-18-22

[00:26:59] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY - HOST, THE TAKEAWAY:** Remind us again about the reason it was so important for so many Afghans to flee the country amid the US troop withdrawal.

[00:27:09] **KRISH O'MARA VIGNARAJAH:** We're talking about combat interpreters who served alongside our troops, embassy personnel who supported our diplomats, women's rights activists, NGO workers, journalists, other vulnerable minorities. They were our close friends and allies for 20 years. They supported our mission, and many of them were endangered precisely because they championed our shared values. For these people in their families, there just wasn't ever going to be any safety or future under a Taliban regime.

We obviously saw that in the fear and the desperation, the chaos of the evacuation, families passing babies over barbed wire fences to get them to safety, people clinging to moving aircraft who ultimately fell to their deaths. For them, they were desperate to get out of the US and it's been incredible. First, it was airlifting 124,000 out of Afghanistan, and 76,000 were at-risk Afghans who moved to the safety of American soil.

[00:28:09] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY - HOST, THE TAKEAWAY:** Tell me how this settlement process here in the US actually works for these families.

[00:28:16] **KRISH O'MARA VIGNARAJAH:** We call it Operation Allies Welcome. They ultimately arrived at eight military bases here in the US where they were screened for medical issues, vaccinations. Once they then move to their final destination, resettlement organizations like Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service helped them adjust to life in the US. We help them with things like housing, employment, school enrollment, English classes, cultural orientation, and then provide basic necessities like clothes and food.

Really proud to report that there are only a couple of hundred left on one of the last military bases, and so they'll leave in the next several days, but we know that successful resettlement and integration doesn't happen in a matter of days or weeks. Our new Afghan neighbors are going to need friendship and support for months and years to come.

[00:29:06] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY - HOST, THE TAKEAWAY:** There must be value to resettling in a community where there are other members of your home nation where you speak similar languages where you know one another, so I'm wondering if Operation Allies Welcome was settling families absolutely individually or in communities?

[00:29:24] **KRISH O'MARA VIGNARAJAH:** Great question. The way refugee resettlement traditionally happens is there's actually a number of factors that all go into this complex algorithm of deciding where a family or an individual will ultimately resettle. Two of the most important criteria are is there a strong concentrated community that could provide a support structure and/or are there US ties? Because states like California, Texas, Virginia have some strong Afghan communities that have grown over a number of years, those are certainly areas where you will see a significant number of new Afghan arrivals.

[00:30:03] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY - HOST, THE TAKEAWAY:** Talk to me a bit about what it's like for Afghan families who are resettling in the US. What are some of the biggest challenges they face?

[00:30:12] **KRISH O'MARA VIGNARAJAH:** The challenges are many both for refugees themselves and for resettlement organizations caring for them. I've met with families, and in every case, they're coming with almost nothing but the clothes on their backs, trying to start over from scratch in a new country after the trauma of losing the only home that they've ever known. We're talking about people who are expected to build a new life in a new country and oftentimes in a new language. We particularly care for vulnerable groups like new mothers with nursing infants, as well as unaccompanied Afghan children.

That's why the resettlement effort is so important because we can respond to the most urgent needs, but also try to get them on a path to self-reliance. As an organization, we've had to rebuild our capacity almost overnight. After the resettlement infrastructure was essentially decimated over the four years of the previous administration, we saw record-low refugee admissions, which meant that resettlement organizations had to shut down more than 100 local offices nationwide, LIRS, ourselves, we had to close 17.

We've had to aggressively rebuild by hiring new staff, opening new locations. For the Afghans, another major challenge has been housing. We help these families get a roof over their heads, but we're having to do that amid a nationwide shortage of affordable housing. It's complicated in places like California or Northern Virginia especially, where reasonably priced accommodation has been extremely scarce.

[00:31:44] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY - HOST, THE TAKEAWAY:** I'm wondering about where the other resources come from to raise these structures to stand them up swiftly enough.

[00:31:53] **KRISH O'MARA VIGNARAJAH:** There has been an amazing outpouring of community support from churches, veterans, volunteers. Just yesterday, we received a check from a church that was going to use a \$50,000 contribution for a capital campaign to expand the church and they said, "As a result of the pandemic, that's not where we need to put these resources right now, we need to help launch an emergency fund for Afghan families."

Then we've also had private partners, Airbnb. Uber is another example. As we're trying to get families to doctor's appointments, to meet with their lawyers, to meet with their caseworkers, Uber, for example, has donated thousands of rides to help them. People have stepped up and said, "I have a couple of bedrooms in my home. Can I help? I have a apartment that's furnished that's not being used, could you use it?" It's been really cobbling together a coalition of support.

[00:32:54] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY - HOST, THE TAKEAWAY:** Do these families have pathways to citizenship or to legal permanent status?

[00:33:00] **KRISH O'MARA VIGNARAJAH:** Because of the hurry last-minute evacuation, the majority of evacuees enter the US on a tenuous legal status called humanitarian parole. What a lot of people don't realize is that status doesn't guarantee they'll be able to stay in the US permanently. It provides temporary relief, essentially allows them to stay for up to two years, and to apply for work permit. To access permanent legal status to remain in the US, they have to apply for asylum. That's a challenging situation because asylum is a high threshold to meet, it requires a significant amount of documentation to establish a credible claim, and for this specific population, that's a potential catch-22.

Many of the allies were encouraged to destroy evidence of their affiliation with the US to avoid Taliban detection and retribution, but that same documentation might be a death sentence in Afghanistan, it could actually be the key to winning an asylum case here in the US, not to mention the asylum system is severely backlogged with about 600,000 pending cases. That's why we're calling on Congress and the administration to pass what we're calling the Afghan Adjustment Act, which would allow Afghans to apply for a more permanent status.

[00:34:13] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY - HOST, THE TAKEAWAY:** Just one last question. What can people who are listening do to assist in their own communities?

[00:34:20] **KRISH O'MARA VIGNARAJAH:** That's an excellent question because this really is an all-hands-on-deck effort. It's important to realize that resettlement isn't just a sprint, it's a marathon. We need employers who are open to hiring refugees so that they can take those first steps towards self-sufficiency. We opened a Northern Virginia office, 20 staff. All 20 are Afghan, and I can tell you as an employer, these people they're talented, they're driven, they're skilled, they're resilient, they're reliable workers.

We need volunteers to help with apartment setups. We need people to serve as English tutors so families can navigate life in a new language. We need folks to drive families to doctor's appointments, cultural orientation, other appointments. And then we need advocates to encourage our elected officials to continue to support our Afghan allies. There's a number of ways to contribute, and I'd welcome any listeners who are interested in learning more to visit our website at lirs.org to learn more about getting directly involved in this transformative work.

Fortress Europe - Declarations: The Human Rights Podcast - Air Date 2-2-22

[00:35:24] **YASMIN HOMER:** I was wondering, as someone inside the bureaucracy itself, and as a member of the European Parliament, sort of, what the conversation is internally, and.. and what are the fears of the European Union; or, what's the, sort of, self-styled identity of the EU in creating this... this fortress?

[00:35:43] **PATRICK BREYER:** You know, we've just observed the, um, Holocaust Remembrance Day, and one of the lessons that we learned from these mass crimes of, um, the, um, Nazi dictatorship was that, um, everyone can be a refugee, and be in need of seeking safety and... and refuge from such terror.

And therefore we have, uh, implemented international agreements, such as the Geneva convention, the right of refugees to seek a safe refuge.

However, during the time of the Syrian Civil War, when, um, people had to rely on this, and did come to Europe, this arrival of refugees changed the public debate in a way that... now they were really perceived as a threat, and, you know, society couldn't cope, uh... completely out of line with the actual numbers and... and facts.

But this really prompted a public perception that migrants are a threat. There have been, um, some incidents that... that fueled this as well, and have been used by right-wing parties. And actually these authoritarian political movements gained so much support and popularity in the course of this development, that also the democratic parties reacted, and basically, to a large degree, adopted the same agenda of, uh, deterrence, and building a fortress in Europe.

So that is, basically, their way of trying to contain right-wing and authoritarian parties from taking control. They already have in some countries, in... in Eastern Europe, especially in Hungary; but you, you get similar rhetorics from other governments, and, um, in Poland, the situation is quite similar.

And so, that's why they, the European Union, is pouring enormous amounts of resources and... and money, into... into building this fortress.

And, there is more trade, because, even before that, especially after, uh, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, there is a general perception of many people in Europe that they are being threatened.

I think when it relates to crime and terrorism, these fears are often... um, are pushed and created by media stories that, of course, like to report on sex and crime. But people get a completely wrong picture, and don't realize that we are living as long and safe as ever, pretty much, in Europe. And crime is really low, also in comparison to historical, to past times, but also to other countries.

And, you ask more, you'll find out, usually, that it's not... people aren't really afraid of being a victim of crime themselves, but they have a perception that the country in general is insecure, but they themselves are more concerned about the economic situation, about the results... effects of globalization...

So, often, the fears are more about social economic, um, security, and that is, sort of, being projected, into a fear of crime.

Also politicians like to use that, and play the... the tough guy, uh, who, sort of, protects people who have being threatened. You know, going against criminals, or even other minorities and migrants, is an easy thing to do for a politic.. for a politician and... and... to get support for.

And that has led to policies where, indeed, not only travelers are being perceived as a potential risk... so they are starting to... to collect information about our... our travels, our... our plane travels, but they also want to expand it to... to train and ferry travels. They are using algorithms that evaluate the risk

that we pose, based on patterns that, apparently, are, allegedly, sort of, indicate a risk, that we might constitute a risk if we have a certain criteria in common with other perpetrators in the past.

And it's not only about travels, but also, increasingly, the mere existence of a person is seen as a potential threat that required, to, sort of, preventively, keep a watch, retain data on their communications, and even location-- that's the... the communication data retention that you mentioned in your question-- and, um, that's used to legitimize a, kind of, general control and surveillance of the population.

And that moves our open societies more towards, kind of, a gated community; towards the... the Chinese system; maybe even towards a prison system, which, you would think is... is... is very safe in prison, because it's so controlled, but actually, crime is much higher than it is elsewhere.

And so, this is the kind of security society that we're dealing with. And there are definitely economic factors with it as, uh, I know I mentioned.

So, the military, uh, industrial complex has adapted to this situation, and they are now making a lot of money in the fields of border security, but also internal security.

This is big business, and this is also driving the supply and demand in this field.

Border walls and the climate crisis w/ Nick Buxton - This Is Hell! - Air Date 11-3-21

[00:41:14] **CHUCK MERTZ - HOST, THIS IS HELL:** The report begins, the world's wealthiest countries have chosen how they approach global climate action by militarizing their borders. These countries, which are historically the most responsible for the climate crisis, spend more on arming their borders to keep migrants out than on tackling the crisis that forces people from their homes in the first place. So did the wealthiest countries become the wealthiest by being the most responsible for climate change, and do they still benefit from continuing contributing to climate change? I'm trying to find out if there are any disincentives for these countries to stop contributing to climate change.

[00:41:46] **NICK BUXTON:** Well, that's all we wanted to look at. We wanted to see whether the countries that are most responsible historically for climate change, we've got to look at the main countries that have contributed to the

crisis that we're in. How are they responding to it and where are they prioritizing their money and their finance?

One of the big promises that came out of the Paris agreement, which was praised as a historic agreement in 2015, was that the richest countries said we're not only going to reduce our emissions, but we will also support those countries who are really at the brunt end of the crisis, and we're gonna support them in two ways. One is to mitigate, as in reduce their emissions, so we're gonna provide technology and we're financed to do that. We're gonna help them to adapt to the climate change that's happening.

There was a promise to mobilize a hundred billion a year in finance. In a sense you have the richest countries, and this is really the heart of what the crisis is, is the richest countries who have caused the crisis are not the ones who are facing the biggest costs, and the poorest, the most vulnerable countries who played no role in the crisis and yet are facing all the consequences in sea level rise, with islands disappearing, with hurricanes and cyclones hitting countries like Bangladesh, which just don't have the infrastructure to cope with the costs.

And so this is where we wanted to look at really, are we responding to that with adequate climate finance? If not, how does that compare with where we are putting money? We decide to look at borders cuz in the sense that really crystallizes the issue, because one of the big stories in a lot of discussions is that climate change is gonna cause migration, it's gonna cause displacement. So are we helping countries deal with that to tackle it themselves, or are we just building walls?

Unfortunately the story that, and budget speak more than rhetoric, where we put our money shows that we spend twice as much, the richest countries, on building borders and immigration enforcement as we do on supporting the poorest countries to cope with the impacts of climate change.

[00:43:53] **CHUCK MERTZ - HOST, THIS IS HELL:** Those promises of contributions to fight and mitigate the worst aspects of climate change, those are reported here in the establishment news media in the United States as historic agreements. People were saying that this is been an amazing set of negotiations, and that they have actually come to conclusions that will lead to mitigation of climate change. Then those promises go unfulfilled.

How much of the problem is the way that the establishment news media covers things like the Paris talks, in that they cover the original promises, but they never follow through on seeing if those promises go fulfilled?

[00:44:29] **NICK BUXTON:** I think that's a big part of the picture, Chuck. The Kyoto Protocol, for example, said we committed to reduce emissions by this much and rich countries were to play a bigger role than poorer countries, and by the time you had Paris Accord, it was all came down to voluntary contributions. So not only do you have this weakening of commitments, it's now a voluntary commitment, we also on top of that have broken promises.

The richest countries are saying, "okay, we've broken our promise. We haven't produced a hundred billion a year, but we're getting closer, we're now at about 80 billion a year," but when people have actually dug into the figures, they see a lot of this money that's been promised is not new money, it's over reported.

Sometimes it's even bizarrely going towards paying for fossil fuel projects. There's the famous one with Japan as promised climate finance, but it's actually to fund a coal power plant in one of the countries, and the reason why they say it's climate friendly is because it's gonna be slightly less emissions than a normal coal plant. But it's still very much a polluting coal plant.

So really we do need a critical analysis of what is below the promises and what's actually been delivered. Oxfam, for example, showed that actual delivery is only about a fifth of what was promised, or reported as delivered.

[00:45:46] **CHUCK MERTZ - HOST, THIS IS HELL:** The seven nations that are the wealthiest nations that have contributed the most to climate change, that are also the ones that are securitizing their borders far more than they are addressing climate change are the United States, Canada, the UK, Germany, France, Australia, and Japan. This is what everybody's always talking about here in the United States, what about China? China's producing far more coal than any other nation. They are and will continue to contribute to climate change. Is China militarizing its borders? Are countries like India, which produces the second highest amount of coal, are they securitizing instead of financing the fight against climate change as well?

[00:46:22] **NICK BUXTON:** In that sense, that's why the US has a particular responsibility because it's developed its whole economy and become the richest economy on back of fossil fuel development and has had that role really since the beginning of the 20th century, so it's had a whole century of development based on that. Countries like China and India are much more recent carbon polluters and they're only now starting to develop the economies that match the fossil fuel productions they produce. So there's a difference there in terms of historic and current responsibility. I think it's important to keep that in mind.

And the other thing is of course people blame China, but China has a vast population. So if you look at tons per capita, an average American produces about 20 tons of carbon dioxide, the average Chinese person now produces about nine. You've gotta keep in mind, firstly, the population difference, and that's part of the picture, and they've also got high levels of poverty, which have only now starting to address. So certainly going forward, they have an increasingly important role to play but up to now historic responsibility lies with some of the richest countries like the US.

In terms of whether China and India are starting to militarize their borders there, there is evidence that that trend is also happening. As countries become more and more wealthy there seems to be a trend that the richest countries then start to, rather than tackle the underlying causes elsewhere and globally, they start to retreat behind walls and declare a much more aggressive nationalistic position. I think we're seeing some trends like that starting to happen in India and China as well. And India now has an increasingly militarized border against Bangladesh.

The question is, is this a strategy which is either humane or even rational in the long term? That's really what our report was saying, that it makes much more sense for us to be investing money in actually tackling the causes of displacement rather than militarizing the consequences. That's just not a rational position. It's also a moral position because the higher and more militarized walls we are building, the higher, the death toll that we're seeing. The Mediterranean now has become one of the world's largest graveyards because European Union is no longer trying to find safe ways to deal with migration and legal ways, they're creating an armed border, which means that people are taking more and more risky ways just to try and find a way to survive and to live and are dying in the process as they as they go through to Mediterranean.

So this is, in my view, that's a future that it's a very bleak future. If we're gonna take that as our main response to climate change, that we're gonna just barricade ourselves against the consequences.

Ilhan Omar on Ending War, Global Refugees, Russia Sanctions & Why More Saudi Oil Is Not the Answer - Democracy Now! - Air Date 3-8-22

[00:49:08] **JUAN GONZALEZ:**

Ukraine has been urging the United States and NATO to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine. President Biden and the Europeans have said that they do not want to do that, because they don't want to expand the conflict further. But the media also have been — a lot of the corporate media have been almost pressuring the administration to do so. What's your sense of this issue of the no-fly zone and where members of Congress stand on it?

[00:49:38] **REP. ILHAN OMAR:** So, when the Ukrainians ask us to implement a no-fly zone, that's an invitation for us to get involved in the war. A no-fly zone is not something that, you know, is just implemented. It's something that has to be militarily defended. And that ultimately means the United States and our NATO allies will be a part and parcel to this war. And when we get involved in this war, it's not that less Ukrainians are going to die. More Ukrainians are going to die. And we have to be able to have an honest conversation about what an escalation in this war could ultimately mean, not just for Ukrainians but for the rest of the world.

[00:50:24] **JUAN GONZALEZ:** And in terms of the sanctions that have already been imposed, you've expressed some concerns about some of the sanctions. Could you talk about that, as well?

[00:50:34] **REP. ILHAN OMAR:** Yeah, I mean, we are sanction-happy as a nation. And, you know, ultimately, it is important for us to support some sanctions on Putin and his allies to make sure that they feel the pain and the consequences of their actions. But what I do want the American people and everyone around the world to understand is that as we urge, you know, Russians who are antiwar, that these sanctions that we are cheering for and implementing will ultimately have an impact on the very people that we want to rise up and make sure that they are speaking against this illegal, immoral and unjust war on a sovereign country.

[00:51:24] **AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW! :** I wanted to ask you about another tweet. Just one week ago, President Biden gave his State of Union address. You recently tweeted, "Thank you @POTUS. I was proud to sign a letter in support of TPS for Ukrainians. I have also signed letters asking for TPS for Cameroonians and Ethiopians. Those deserve the same urgency." Can you talk about the way the media covers Ukraine versus other absolute crises in the world? Some have noted that when you're talking about white Christians who are victims, not only Christians but others in Ukraine, you have a much more sense of urgency than, for example, what's happening in the greatest humanitarian catastrophe in the world, which is in Yemen, not to

mention what's happening with refugees from other countries. If you could comment?

[00:52:27] **REP. ILHAN OMAR:** Yeah, I mean, it's heartwarming to see the incredible support from European countries, the United States and everyone around the world that the Ukrainians are experiencing — right? — as they flee war. Everyone fleeing war deserves this level of compassion and hospitality. Some of the countries that are welcoming Ukraine now are the same countries that have been stoking fear against refugees who were fleeing the Syrian war, the war in Libya and many other wars around the world. And it is a fact that, you know, many of the Syrian refugees were also fleeing Putin's brutality as he's helped Assad's regime wage devastation on his people. We also know that there are more than 2 million people that are being displaced in Ethiopia as we speak right now. There are people from Haiti, Central America, to Bangladesh, to Afghanistan, and so many other places that are being displaced. And there are more people that are considered refugees and immigrants in the world right now than at any point in our — you know, in world history. And so, we know that it's going to get worse as climate change gets worse. And I hope that we seize this moment to really start enacting policies that treat all people who are fleeing war and devastation the same way that we are treating Ukrainians at this moment.

Border walls and the climate crisis w/ Nick Buxton Part 2 - This Is Hell! - Air Date 11-3-21

[00:54:28] **NICK BUXTON:** I think cross-border migration will increase with time as climate change has a bigger impact, but what's our response, what options do we have there? And I think the two options. One is a very deadly militarized option. The other one is finding ways to facilitate migration, which is safe and legal and encourages, actually looks at what the best ways, firstly, to support people to not have to leave their home if they don't have to. So more aid, more support, better trade deals and so on, better development strategies that are done in collaboration in developing countries so people don't need to leave. If we put the money in borders instead of actually helping people who are displaced rebuild their homes within their countries, that would be a much more rational strategy.

And that those who then do come to the US, that we support them and we support them also supporting their communities back home. Otherwise, the only strategy really one is of building bigger and bigger walls, and bigger and more

deadly ways of stopping people come. At some point that kind of fortress mentality breaks down because it's not really a solution to the problem. All it is a as a war against the problem. We really need to think much more strategically, we need to think much more holistically about the whole issue of migration in the time of climate crisis.

[00:55:42] **CHUCK MERTZ - HOST, THIS IS HELL:** A war against the problem. So is this the military industrial complex's response to climate change? As you point out in the report that you co-authored, there's this sense that we do have a political choice in this matter, but when it comes to the military and industrial complex, it often seems like that's out of our control.

So is this securitized borders? Is this the way the military responds, to go to war against migration? What's wrong with the idea of going to war against migration?

[00:56:09] **NICK BUXTON:** I think that's what we are seeing, and it's really interesting if you go back to 2003 in the first reports that came out around climate change and security of the national security documents, whether it was in the US or Europe, they start to paint migration as a threat, as an emerging threat, and of course I think we're gonna see much more of that. This year President Biden has done a whole bunch of initiatives around climate security and each one of them names migration as a threat. So I think we're seen as the war on terror changes shape and moves on in some ways, or at least as not in the top of people's attention as it was for a couple of decades, climate change is gonna become seen as the new threat.

And it's really important to understand that behind this is not just the kinda national security apparatus that is always looking for threats. There's also very powerful industry that is keen to, that has made huge amounts of money in the last two decades, particularly since the war and terror began and is now using climate change to, to argue for more military spending, for more border spending. And that's something that we see really clearly, and we saw this report, that actually quite a few of the big military and border spending firms have a lot of power within the corridors of power, a lot of influence. They are lobbying constantly for increased spending on borders. They are raising climate change as a threat. So they're part of driving this narrative.

What was also interesting to find is that many of these same border firms also provide services to the fossil fuel industry. So we have a real nexus between big oil and the big military as well. So for example, Chevron contracts with G4S, one of the big border security firms, it contracts with Leonardo, one of the big

European military firms. We see Exxon Mobile with contracts with Lockheed Martin.

And it's not just contracts. What we find is there is often a lot of people sitting on each other's boards. There's now a real nexus with someone who's on the executive board of Exxon Mobil, also being on the executive board Lockheed Martin, and those kind of links are happening. Both these industries, for different reasons, and have a reason for there not to be climate action, for us not to tackle the cause of climate change, because they can make a lot of profits, either by perpetuating a crisis or profiting from the impacts of the crisis.

And so I think that's a really important part of this picture. It's not just around policies or attitudes or people think that we to be strong on migration, it's also around an industry that sees a lot of money to be made from this.

[00:58:39] **CHUCK MERTZ - HOST, THIS IS HELL:** So why is there more money to be made in addressing the consequences of migration than in addressing the root causes of migration? Why is there more money to be made in securitizing our borders than it is to do the humanitarian thing and help out people who are being forced to move by climate change?

[00:59:00] **NICK BUXTON:** I don't know if there's more money to be made, but those it's certainly true that industry is the one that's in the most, best, and, strategically, most powerful place to profit from it, and it's only become more profitable since the early 2000s. Both security and military firms have boomed since the end of the cold war, and particularly since 2001, of course, since 9/11. So they're in a really strong, strategic and political place now to really profit in a way that those other companies might be more involved in tackling the cause of the climate change are not.

I think also the other thing is that there's money to be made in the North, and that's where much of those contracts are. Whereas some of the poorest countries the kind of support we need is not gonna be resolved by private finance, it's gonna need public finance. So I think there's also a distinction there.

[00:59:45] **CHUCK MERTZ - HOST, THIS IS HELL:** The report states that the synergy as... you were just mentioning this, but I wanna make sure that people know this from the report, the report finds that the synergy between fossil fuel companies and top border security contractors is also seen by the fact that executives from each sector sit on each other's boards. At Chevron, for example, the former CEO and chairman of Northrop Grumman, Ronald D Sugar and Lockheed Martin's former CEO, Marilyn Hewson are on its board.

The Italian oil and gas company ENI has Nathalie Tocci on its board, previously, a special advisor to EU high representative Mogherini from 2015 to 2019, who helped draft the EU global strategy that led to expanding the externalization of EU borders to third countries. So how involved are these same people in the current UN climate change conference COP26 in Glasgow? Globally is the response to climate change being determined by CEOs who are on the boards of not only fossil fuel companies, but also the same surveillance and security companies that are securitizing our borders?

[01:00:44] **NICK BUXTON:** The reports I'm getting from Glasgow is that if they're very much present there. They're present inside the COP. These executives are in fact, and my latest understanding is that the civil society, or non-governmental, non-business groups only were allowed something like 34 people into negotiating space.

If you've ever been to these conference of big COP, these climate talks, they're very much dominated by lots of businesses given their press presentations about how green or sustainable they've become, and very little critical analysis about really whether it's greenwashing or whether it's actually a real reduction. So they've become a bit of a marketing space. It's a kind of trade show for any company that wants to go, whether they're part of the problem or not, to market how green they are. And of course they're there with close contacts, many of them have revolving doors with some of the government departments who they're negotiating with.

This is typical, as we know, and your show has covered in so many other ways, of politics in general, over the last few decades. Under neoliberalism corporations have had increasing in power and influence in determining government policy and that's no different in terms of climate change. Certainly those who are most affected by the impacts are excluded from these forums, and this time more than ever before. My understanding is this may well be one of the whitest, most privileged climate talks have ever happened. Partly, also, because of course all the rules have been imposed in terms of COVID, which have made it really either exorbitant or impossible for people from the global south to even attend and have their voice heard.

Final comments on small-government conservatives authoritarian tendencies

[01:02:13] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with *The Real Story* describing the state of refugee

policy in so-called fortress Europe toward the end of last year. *The Daily Show* described the racism inherent in the response to refugees fleeing Ukraine. *Democracy Now!* looked at the impact of sanctions on Afghanistan now under Taliban rule. *The Takeaway* explained the resettlement program for Afghans needing to flee after the US withdrawal. *Declarations* explained why even left-leaning politicians are helping to build fortress Europe. *This Is Hell* explored the tension between climate mitigation and a border securitization. And *Democracy Now!* spoke with Ilhan Omar about Ukraine, sanctions and the ignored refugee crises around the world.

That's what everyone heard. But members also heard a bonus clip from *This Is Hell* looking at the influential entities profiting from the fear of refugees.

To hear that and have all of our bonus contents delivered seamlessly into your new members-only podcast feed that you'll receive, sign up to support the show at BestoftheLeft.com/support or request a financial hardship membership, because we don't make a lack of funds a barrier to hearing more information. Every request is granted. No questions asked.

And now I have to, unfortunately, just sort of paraphrase what Abdul said when he called in. This might've been one of the least listenable understandable messages I've ever received. The sound quality, the connection, the cell phone static was terrible, but I think I could make it out. So listening through the static and maybe even reading between a few lines, I think what Abdul had to say was that, in response to recent episodes on authoritarianism, basically this gives lie to the whole idea that conservatives are interested in small government. And what is probably more accurate is not that they are opposed to government of whatever size suits their needs, it's democracy that they really have a problem with. They just don't like government that does things they don't like. Which is kind of inherent in the whole democratic experiment. So they prefer authoritarianism, strong man leader who's just going to implement their values without having to deal with anyone else's interests.

In the broader liberal echo chamber, the way this usually gets joked about is that conservatives want government to be just small enough to fit into your bedroom to make sure you're not having sex with the wrong kind of person, and the real small government conservatives want the government to be tiny enough to fit inside people's uteruses so that they can make sure that nothing is going on with anyone's pregnancies that those conservative politicians don't agree with.

So, yes, I think that makes sense. For years or decades, it's been easy to poke holes in the hypocrisy of conservatives who claim to want small government

while wanting the government to get into the most personal decisions a person can possibly make for themselves: their romantic lives, their sexual lives, their medical lives. Conservatives want to get in between all of that.

So it's been really easy to point out what they are not; you know, what they claim to be, but clearly are not. But in the last few years it has become more clear what they are, actually. And unfortunately, the answer seems to be authoritarians.

Now, just a couple of quick notes before I go: the first is that there are resource guides on how to help refugees in the show notes for today's episode, so please check those out. And then secondly, another quick reminder about the fact that we have launched a new *Best of the Left* community on Discord. If you don't know what Discord is, I have linked to an article in the show notes that explains it. Basically, Discord is a social media platform that doesn't act like the kind of social media platform we usually talk about, because there are no algorithms, no ads working to manipulate your attention, and each area of interest. For instance, *Best of the Left* is an area of interest. Each area of interest is walled off from every other, meaning that if you join our community on Discord, you won't automatically start seeing posts or suggestions from a thousand other similar groups. There's a special link in the show notes that will get you in. Apologies for the link in the previous episode that I know didn't work for some people, that should be fixed now. Completely my fault.

The community is open to everyone, but just like with the show, members get a little bit more. Everyone can engage in general chit-chat and discussions of recent episodes and current events. But members have a dedicated area to, among other things, exchange recommendations on podcast episodes, videos, articles, books, films, anything else you could come up with. In fact, at least one recent clip that was in the show came to me by way of a recommendation from a member. So if you're interested in conversations with fellow progressives who listened to the show, getting recommendations on interesting new stuff to check out, and engaging in discussions that will actually help make this show even better than it already is, join us on Discord. If your *Best of the Left* membership is through Patreon, all you need to do is connect your Discord account to your Patreon account, and you'll be automatically added to the *Best of the Left* community. I'll include a link to an article on how to do this in the show notes. If you sign up directly through our website or through Apple Podcasts, look for the link in the show notes of this episode to gain access.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to send them my way to Jay@BestoftheLeft.com. Of course, questions about Discord or anything else,

which you can send in by sending an email to that address, or by dialing 202-999-3991.

That is going to be it for today. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show and participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to the Monosyllabic, Transcriptionist Trio, Ben, Ken, and Scott for their volunteer work helping put our transcripts together. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media, activism segments, graphic design, web mastering, and bonus show co-hosting. And thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at BestoftheLeft.com/support, through our Patreon page, or from right inside the Apple Podcast app. Membership is how you get instant access to our incredibly good bonus episodes, in addition to there being extra content and no ads in all of our regular episodes, all through your regular podcast player. And now full access to our Discord community, of course.

So coming to from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, DC, my name is Jay!, and this has been the *Best of the Left* podcast coming to you twice weekly, thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from BestoftheLeft.com.