As of December 16, the Committee to Protect Journalists has documented the deaths of 64 journalists and media workers in the past two months of the Israeli-Gaza war. Fifty-seven of these were Palestinian, four were from Israeli media, and three were Lebanese. Three more are missing, 13 have been reported injured and an additional nineteen have been arrested.¹

On December 15, the Al Jazeera cameraman Samer Abudaqa was hit by a drone strike in Khan Younis, just six miles north of Rafah, and left to bleed out for five hours while an ambulance trying to reach him was bombed. Al Jazeera is referring this incident to the International Criminal Court.

Samer and the Al Jazeera bureau chief for Gaza, Wael Dahdouh, had been covering the effect of Israeli nighttime shelling of a UN school, where refugees from the north and central parts of Gaza had taken shelter. The wounded Dahdouh, who had escaped on foot, kept pleading for his colleague to be rescued. Perhaps some of you are already familiar with Wael Dahdouh, who was on air October 25 when he found out that his home had been hit by the Israelis. He helped to dig out three of his children, including a 7-year-old daughter who died shortly after. Then, on air, he visited the hospital to which the bodies of his wife, son, and grandson had been taken. To escape shelling in the north, his family had moved to the Nuseirat refugee camp in the middle of Gaza.

As in the case of Wael Dahdouh, several other journalists have suffered the deaths of their family members. For example, veteran Palestine TV journalist Nidal Hamida lost his 10-year-old daughter Mayar, herself an aspiring journalist, and his son and wife after their home was struck by the Israeli military. According to the online news outlet BNN, “An insidious pattern of violence has emerged, targeting media professionals and their families.”²

According to Wikipedia, citing Reporters Without Borders, a total of 63 journalists were killed during the Vietnam War, with the caveat that “media workers were not counted then.” Regardless, this has been an extremely deadly war for journalists – and their families - in a viciously short amount of time. ³

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_journalists_killed_and_missing_in_the_Vietnam_War
In early December three university presidents, all women, were called before a House of Representatives Committee on Education to explain their defense of academic freedom and the first amendment on their campuses. President Claudine Gay, Harvard, was asked whether claims of the calling for “the genocide of Jews” on her campus violated Harvard’s rules. She responded, “it depends on the context.” Of course, the claims about the calls on campus were never verified, and the politicians ignored the fact that President Gay was merely defending academic freedom and the first amendment’s right to freedom of speech.

While President Gay correctly was defending the hallowed right of free speech and the university as a haven for the “marketplace of ideas,” she correctly implied about the campus and free speech in general that there were limits (the “context”). As Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said in regard to the first amendment to the constitution, freedom of speech must raise our voice, not lower it.

HARRY TARG AND CRAIG MOKHIBER: REFLECTIONS ON A LASTING PEACE

BY Craig Mokhiber

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Every November, Peace Action of Wisconsin invites its members to come together for food, music, the election of the next Steering Committee, and presentations by guest speakers on some of the issues confronting us. This year’s meeting was held the evening of November 16 at ZAO Church.

Songs of inspiration by Julie Anne Lovely and Doug Esty and musical parody by the Raging Grannies accompanied our potluck chili dinner. Office manager Pam Richard presented a brief retrospective of the past year’s achievements as well as challenges, including our move to new office space at ZAO. The 2024 Steering Committee was approved by acclamation. Members are: Ann Batiza, Christy Breihan, Babette Grunow, Laura Kukor-Shea, James Morrell, Samir Moukaddam, Thomas Scerry, Harry Targ, and Bruce Ware. The Committee will hold its organizational and strategy/vision meeting on Saturday, January 13th, in the afternoon.

Next, the fifty -or-so members present at ZAO or following along on Zoom heard from two highly respected speakers, David Swanson of World Beyond War, and Janan Najeeb of the Wisconsin Coalition for Justice in Palestine.

David Swanson spoke of the terrible devastation that has been visited upon both Ukraine and Gaza, by the US-funded military operations in both countries. The highly profitable war manufacturing industry has no interest in seeking peaceful resolution to these conflicts. It is up to us, people committed to advancing the cause of peace, to show that wars do NOT end the next war, but rather sow its seeds. Non-violence, negotiations, and diplomacy can lead us to a better world.

Janan Najeeb, the president of the Milwaukee Muslim Women’s Coalition, convened the Wisconsin Coalition for Justice in Palestine. It is time to call for non-violent resolution to the unjust circumstances imposed on the people of Gaza as well as to condemn the violent attack by Hamas on innocent Israeli civilians. The world has watched in horror as Israel has used the attack by Hamas to try to justify an all-out assault on all the people of Gaza that has killed between 15 and 20,000 human beings in Gaza, at least 7,000 of them children.

The numbers of the dead are shocking, but Najeeb shared not just numbers, but personal connections to victims of the Israeli bombings. She told the story of a family she knew as university professors in the US, who went back to Gaza to teach at the university there, whose home in Gaza was hit by Israeli bombs, killing some family members instantly. Some of the children survived the bombing, and ran out of the house into the street where they were shot to death by the Israeli army. The entire family that she knew as academics working for the betterment of humanity, was wiped out by the army of Israel with weapons from the US.

That image of children being killed with our tax dollars, with the endorsement of our government, with profits flowing to our weapons industry, sent us out the door as committed as ever to working for a non-violent, but also a just, resolution to these conflicts.
RULING IN THE CASE AGAINST THE CIA

by Ann Batiza

As discussed previously in the Mobilizer, lawyer and journalists who visited Julian Assange in the Ecuadorian Embassy filed a lawsuit against the CIA, former CIA Director Pompeo, and the US Government. The lawsuit alleges that during the lawyers and journalists who visited Julian Assange in the Ecuadorian Embassy filed a lawsuit against the CIA, former CIA Director Pompeo, and the US Government. The lawsuit alleges that during the lawyers and journalists who visited Julian Assange in the Ecuadorian Embassy filed a lawsuit against the CIA, former CIA Director Pompeo, and the US Government.

I was rather shocked to hear Mr. Barnea argue that American citizens have no expectation of privacy in public buildings because of the ubiquitous surveillance now in place. He said, "[t]he expectation of privacy in public buildings is so low that the public has come to expect security cameras and other surveillance equipment in them. . .there is no reasonable expectation of privacy in such a facility, unless the person is given explicit assurances otherwise."

But Judge Koeltl’s questions zeroed in on the fact that the contents of the visitors’ electronic devices were alleged to have been downloaded and turned over to the CIA. The CIA also alleged that their conversations with Assange were recorded and shared with the CIA.

In response to this lawsuit, the CIA filed a motion to dismiss. Although that would normally be the end of such proceedings, unaccountably Judge John Koeltl decided to hear oral arguments regarding that motion on November 16. I was fortunate to be in the courtroom in lower Manhattan for that hearing. While three lawyers from the Roth Law Firm were present to represent the plaintiffs, only one attorney, Jean-David Barnea, represented the CIA and Pompeo.

Chants accusing Biden of genocide were popular in Madison as they are in Milwaukee. “Free, free Palestine” is also popular as is “Not another nickel, not another dime, no more money for Israel’s crimes.” US taxpayers give $4 billion to Israel annually and Biden is pushing for an additional $14 billion.

Ann Batiza stands with Nathan Fuller, director of Assange Defense, outside of the Pearl Street courthouse in the Southern District of New York.

MARIN WEBSTER DENNING AND MEDEA BENJAMIN SPEAK AT ARMISTICE DAY CELEBRATION

Peace Action of Wisconsin was one of four sponsors of the Veterans for Peace Armistice Day celebration at the Milwaukee City Hall Rotunda on November 11. The first plenary speaker was Marin Webster Denning of the Oneida Nation who has blocked the upscaled cruel bombardment in Native American history and culture. The second speaker (by Zoom) was Media Benjamin, co-founder of the women-led peace group CODEPINK, the human rights group Global Exchange, the Peace in Ukraine Coalition, and more; and author with Nicholas J.S. Davies of War in Ukraine: Making sense of a senseless conflict.

Denning used an iconic image of Tom Cruise in the cockpit (from the original Top Gun) to illustrate “influences that glorify war” especially when “you’re handsome and young.” He discussed how the indigenous American tribal names and symbols have been used by “the dominant culture” to name machines of war. For example, the Ute Electronic Intelligence (EI) Plane, the Black Hawk helicopter, the CCH-47 Chinook helicopter and the Tomahawk Land Attack Missile. He later returned to this theme and noted the indigenous names for series of US government tubboats, incorporating a multitude of tribal names such as Kiowa and Seneca and the naming of a Lakota aircraft and a Squaw (a derogatory name) submarine. The “509 Geronimo” is a paratrooper patch and most are familiar with the 101st airborne “screaming eagles” a bird that has special significance to his people. He noted that in fact, contrary to the imagery used by “the dominant culture,” the Oneida think of peace, not war.

Media Benjamin spoke about both the Ukraine War and war on Gaza. Because of her position on that war, she standback has been called to apply “a fire resolution” and several of her talks have been cancelled. She began her talk about the war in Ukraine by saying that “context matters” and mentioned the promise given to Gorbachev - that NATO would not expand one inch east. The promise has, of course, been broken many times over and was a major factor that influenced Putin’s illegal invasion of Ukraine. Benjamin later discussed the efforts of CODEPINK in confronting members of Congress about war in Gaza, including unsuccessfully attempting to persuade Representative Gwen Moore to sign a cease fire resolution. As described in the previous Mobilizer, Jim and Eldeen Carpenter, Jerry Hills and I had met Media in Washington DC earlier and had taken part in a major demonstration with CODEPINK in Senator Bernie Sanders’ office.

A video of the event will be posted on our Peace Action of Wisconsin website. The red dots in the timeline delineate each speaker.

BELLY OF THE BEAST TOUR

by Chris Breihan

The Wisconsin Coalition to Normalize Relations with Cuba brought the award-winning Cuban journalist and filmmaker Liz Oliva Fernandez to Milwaukee for three showings and discussions of her film, Uphill on the Hill, a Belly of the Beast production.

In the film, Fernandez exposes the disproportionate power wielded by a few members of Congress who have ties to the corrupt pre-power-power-power brokers who ruled Cuba. While most Americans have no desire to continue the vicious US blockade—in fact, many express surprise that it is still in place—this handful of politicians has managed to not only maintain, but actually intensify the US economic war on the people of Cuba. With a style reminiscent of Michael Moore’s “Roger and Me,” Fernandez reveals the atmosphere of fear and intimidation that protects their influence and discourages other journalists from questioning it.

The screenings, held at the Milwaukee Liberation Center on Mitchell Street, MATC, and UW-M, were attended by about 7 people. Many signed up to receive more information about how they can help end the blockade. The films by Belly of the Beast media outlet can be viewed on their website, bellyofthebeastcube.com. Their next documentary will be an expose of Sen. Bob Menendez, titled Hardliner on the Hudson.