



# *Planted by the Waters*

Fall 2018

Ecumenical Peace Institute/CALC • P.O. Box 9334 • Berkeley, CA 94709 • (510) 990-0374 • [www.epicalc.org](http://www.epicalc.org)

## What is SOAW?

*by Vivian Zelaya*

SOAW, or School of the Americas Watch, was founded in 1990 by Roy Bourgois, who was then a Maryknoll priest and a Viet Nam veteran. He saw first hand the brutality and slaughter perpetrated in Latin America by graduates of the School of the Americas, also known as the School of the Assassins.

After barely escaping with his life from Hugo Banzer, a graduate of the School of the Americas in Bolivia; after assassins from the School of the Americas murdered Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, who had begged President Carter to stop funding the Death Squads; after the brutal rape and murder of four north American church-women working in El Salvador and after the slaughter of 40,000 Nicaraguans, 80,000 Salvadorans and 200,000 indigenous Guatamalans, Roy began protesting the torture, assassination, and death squad activity taught at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Roy kept vigil at the gates of Fort Benning. Roy's non-violent protest movement grew over the years until nearly 20,000 non-violent protestors gathered at the gates of Fort Benning every year on the anniversary of the slaughter of the six Jesuit professors at the University of San Salvador. The professors had advocated for the poor and the powerless and for this, the School of the Americas graduates scattered their brains on the lawn of their home. Roy and many more protesters were arrested at Fort Benning and did Federal Prison time. Finally the School of the Americas responded to the protests by changing the name of the school to the Western Hemisphere's Institute for Strategic Cooperation. Meanwhile as the violence in Latin America escalated, people fled north for safety and survival. Economic consequences from so much violence and chaos drove many from their homes.

In the U.S., demagogues fostered racism and anti-immigrant scape-goating until the situation at border crossings for refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers, became more and more cruel and inhumane. As prison-profiteering from nonviolent border crossings became the norm and the border became increasingly militarized, SOAW's annual protest moved from Fort Benning to the border town of Nogales. Many

## Zahra Billoo on Racism, Islamophobia and Empire

at EPI's Autumn Gathering  
Saturday, November 3, 5:30 p.m.  
St. John's Presbyterian Church  
2727 College Ave, Berkeley  
info and RSVP at 510-990-0374

Zahra Billoo, the Executive Director of the San Francisco Bay Area office of the Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-SFBA) will be speaking about Racism, Islamophobia and Empire.

Zahra is a civil rights attorney. The website of CAIR-SFBA states the organization's purpose. "Civil rights advocacy remains at the center of CAIR's work. CAIR has served more than 25,000 victims of discrimination since its founding. Our California offices receive a total of approximately 800 inquiries a year and work to resolve them through mediation, negotiation, public pressure or, if necessary, through legal action. Our civil rights services are provided free of charge to the community."

Zahra's work extends beyond serving victims of discrimination. Going to CAIR-SFBA's website, one can see a range of efforts: civic engagement including voter mobilization and legislative advocacy, outreach and education, youth empowerment, and media. Reading Zahra's tweets the range of her concerns for justice and for peace can be clearly seen.

EPI has also known Zahra for her opening prayers offered at two of our Good Friday prayer services at the Livermore Nuclear Weapons Lab. We are happy we will hear again from a worker for justice whose steadfastness can be an inspiration to all of us.

Please see the announcement for the Gathering on the back page of this issue and find more, including a PDF of the flyer, at [www.epicalc.org](http://www.epicalc.org).

- You are invited to read *Planted by the Waters* online at <http://www.epicalc.org/>
  - Upcoming events which EPI is involved in planning will be found at the website.
  - ==>If you want Planted by email and email notification of events, send us your address.
  - Write to [epicalc@gmail.com](mailto:epicalc@gmail.com).

## Nicaragua, Venezuela, Syria and Iran, U.S. and regime change

more materials edited by Carolyn S. Scarr

### UN Charter Article 2 paragraph 4

*"All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations."*

### re UN Charter Article 1 paragraph 2

*Dr. Marc Bossuyt in his report to the UN Commission on Human Rights says "[UN Charter] Article 1, paragraph 2, requires that sanctions or other measures 'respect the principle of equal rights and the self-determination of peoples'. Sanctions that cause international dissension, that interfere with a State's legal rights, or that unduly affect a people's right to self-determination may not be imposed or must be lifted if imposed.*

*"Thus it is prohibited to impose sanctions on a country designed to make the population so miserable as to induce them to rise up against their government."*

*These accounts will include economic actions and states of siege in addition to military strikes.*

## Nicaragua

Until very recently, Nicaragua was an exemplary country in Central America, one of the most violent regions in the world.

- Crime rates were among the lowest in Latin America.
- Economic growth, between 4 and 5%, was the second highest in the region after Panama.
- It was one of the countries in Latin America with the greatest reduction in absolute and relative poverty.
- It was the only country in the region that produced 90% of the food it consumed.
- It was one of the very few countries in Latin America and the entire Third World that produced all its textbooks at all levels, from primary school to University and Adult Education.
- It had managed to stop the exodus to the United States.
- It was becoming a world-renowned tourist destination for travelers in search of peace, tranquility & healthy & environmentally friendly cultural experiences.
- It had reached levels of political participation of women that are only found in developed countries.
- It had managed to stop the drug cartels and organized crime.

What takes place in Nicaragua [today] is not a popular insurrection but a "regime change" operation. It is not "The People" who have cornered the government, but groups of the extreme right, supported by criminal gangs, who for weeks have held the population hostage while the National Police forces have

strict orders not to leave their facilities to suppress the terrorist violence.

What the so-called "champions of democracy" do in Nicaragua is to cut off the roads, preventing:

- people from going to work,
- farmers from harvesting their crops,
- the elderly and the sick going out to collect their pensions or their medicines,
- children and young people from going to school.

With bombs and firearms they threaten people, they forbid them to film them with their cell phones, they kidnap them and even force them to pay "toll" fees.

They loot and burn public goods, health centers, schools, communal offices and centers connected to the local Sandinista Front.

[They are championed by] the ultra right of Miami, Senator Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, "Cuban-American" Senator Marco Rubio and Miami Mayor Francis X. Suárez.

<https://www.transcend.org/tms/2018/07/facts-about-what-is-happening-in-nicaragua-and-a-challenge-to-left-intellectuals/>

[In] Nicaragua – it all started with the Board of Directors of the Nicaragua Social Security Institute (INSS) on 16 April 2018 approving an IMF-imposed social security reform, modified and then supported by President Ortega. The reform maintained social security at its current level, would increase employer contributions by 3.5% to pension and health funds, while only slightly increasing worker contributions by 0.75% and shifting 5% of pensioners' cash transfer into their healthcare fund. These reforms triggered the coup attempt initiated by the business lobby and backed by the Nicaraguan oligarchy.

Student protests were already ongoing in different university cities in connection with university elections. These protests were re-directed against the Ortega government with the help of US-funded NGOs and the Catholic Church, an ally of the wealthy in most of Latin America. Some of the students involved in 're-directing' the protests were brought to the US for training by the Freedom House, a long-time associate of the CIA. USAID announced an additional US \$1.5 million to build opposition to the Ortega Government. These funds along with financing from the NED will be channeled to NGOs to support antigovernment protests. For more details, see also <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/49933.htm>.

Peter Koenig's article can be found at <https://thesaker.is/what-really-happens-to-nicaragua-venezuela-and-ecuador/>

[Senate bill S.3233, the "Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018"](#), imposes sanctions, calls for early elections and escalates US intelligence involvement in Nicaragua. It is a law that ensures continued US efforts to remove the democratically-elected government.

## Venezuela, An Embarrassment of Riches

Following his recent participation in Venezuela's Presidential Economic Advisory Commission, economist Peter Koenig writes:

"It is absolutely clear who is behind the food and medicine boycotts (empty supermarket shelves), and the induced internal violence. It is a carbon copy of what the CIA under Kissinger's command did in Chile in 1973 which led to the murder of the legitimate and democratically elected President Allende and to the Pinochet military coup; except, Venezuela has 19 years of revolutionary experience, and built up some tough resistance."

Koenig points out that Venezuela is very rich in natural resources, notably oil, but before the fully democratic and internationally observed election of Hugo Chavez in 1998, Venezuela was ruled for at least a century by dictators and violent despots who served the interests of the United States.

"The country, extremely rich in natural resources, was exploited by the US and Venezuelan oligarchs to the point that the population of one of the richest Latin-American countries remained poor instead of improving its standard of living according to the country's natural riches. The people were literally enslaved by Washington controlled regimes." <https://thesaker.is/what-really-happens-to-nicaragua-venezuela-and-ecuador/>

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Venezuela Analysis activist Jeanette Charles writes: "The world is bombarded with the narrative of a Venezuelan "refugee crisis" fiercely promoted by the United States and right-wing governments in the region. . . invested in painting Venezuela as an ungovernable and backwards country, absent of political leadership where droves flee political persecution, ultimately, to justify intervention and dissuade other countries from pursuing alternatives to capitalism."

She points out that many leaving Venezuela are actually dual nationality citizens returning home with the earnings from their stay. The vast majority of Venezuelan citizens are staying at home to build their country, defend its ongoing revolutionary process. Ms. Charles points out that "US sanctions play a critical role in Venezuela's economy and have a direct impact on conditions. US sanctions prevent Venezuela from refinancing its debt and block key imports. They also intentionally affect the lives of Venezuelans by limiting their access to material goods. . . .

"An emergent international anti-sanctions campaign in Canada and the United States . . . is dedicated to countering and reversing these illegal economic policies and denouncing these foreign government actions as a prelude to warfare."  
<https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/14024>

## Syria, What's Really Going On

*Former British Ambassador to Syria, Peter Ford, Warns of Pending War Propaganda on Commission of Inquiry Report to UNHR.*

"You will be seeing lurid accounts in the Western media of the latest report to the UN Human Rights Council from the Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria. This was issued on 12 September.

"In particular it is being stated that the report vindicates claims that weaponised chlorine was used in Douma. This is not what the report actually says.

"If you read the actual report – you have to reach section 92 so obviously few hacks will do that – you will see that it is carefully worded.

"The inspectors, who unlike the OPCW [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons] did not actually visit the site, 'received a vast body of evidence suggesting that.' (of course they did, from the jihadis and from hostile intelligence services); 'they received information on [deaths and injuries] (which is not the same as seeing bodies or examining victims); they 'recall that weaponisation of chlorine is prohibited' (but do not actually say that Syrian forces used it in Douma)." posted Sept 13, 2018 on <https://ingaza.wordpress.com/>

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To make things even more troubling, Middle East Eye reports that "Rebels say hundreds of US Marines arrived this month in Tanf to join special operations troops already there." [middleeasteye.net](http://middleeasteye.net)

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And long time reporter on the Middle East, Robert Fisk, writes of meeting a 58-year old senior Syrian doctor in Douma who says the patients there were overcome not by gas but by oxygen starvation in the rubbish-filled tunnels and basements in which they lived, on a night of wind and heavy shelling that stirred up a dust storm. <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/syria-chemical-attack-gas-douma-robert-fisk-ghouta-damascus-a8307726.html>

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## Iran, Sanctions and the Nuclear Deal

The Nuclear Deal was agreed upon in 2015 by the U.S. and a range of countries in Europe and Asia. Now as the Trump administration pulls out of the Deal, it is not clear what Trump and his team want to achieve beyond unraveling one of President Obama's major accomplishments.

Conn Hallinan this May hypothesizes that "the rationale for using sanctions to force a renegotiation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is cover for an eventual military assault by the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia aimed at regime change in Teheran."

Hallinan points out that "unilateral sanctions

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## **Iran continued from page 3**

almost always fail. Sanctions aimed at Cuba, North Korea, Iraq and Libya did not dislodge any of those regimes and, in the case of North Korea, spurred Pyongyang into producing nuclear weapons. Iraq's Saddam Hussein and Libya's Muammar al-Qaddafi were eventually overthrown, but by American fire-power, not sanctions.

"This time around, the White House has made no effort to involve other countries. The Trump plan is to use the power of the American economy to strong-arm nations into line. Back our sanctions, threatens the administration, or lose access to the US market. And given that the world uses the dollar as its de-facto international currency, financial institutions may find themselves barred from using the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT), the American controlled network that allows banks and finance centers to transfer money from country to country. . . Those threats have not exactly panicked the rest of the world. . . [they] will cut Tehran's oil exports by 10% to 15%".

Hallinan suggests that planning is going on between the U.S., Israel and the Gulf states. That since none of these parties want to engage in a ground invasion, what is most likely "would be a war of aircraft and missiles to destroy Iran's military and civilian infrastructure." If this "re-ignites Iran's push to build nuclear weapons . . . Saudi Arabia will follow." Israel already has a nuclear arsenal.

Hallinan lays out what has to happen to stave off a war.

1. Iran has to stay in the Deal. That is already happening. The IAEA has found that Iran is in compliance with the terms of the Deal.
2. Europe has to resist the economic threats the U.S. is making against those who trade with Iran.
3. The U.S. Congress will need "to put aside their anti-Iranian bias and make common cause with the 'stay in the pact' Iranians. . . A CNN poll found that 63 percent of Americans opposed withdrawing from the agreement."
4. The U.S. Congress . . . will have to resist the pressure to support Israel's hostility toward Iran.
5. Congress should cut the arms pipeline to the Gulf states and stop aiding the Saudis in their war on Yemen.

This was Conn Hallinan's analysis last May. We can hope that he is wrong. Nevertheless his suggestions about what we should work for in the way of change of U.S. actions are meritorious on their own.

*Al Jazeera* this August asks "What is the US hoping to achieve by reimposing sanctions on Iran?" and finds a different answer in the administration's statements:

"The policy is not regime change, but we definitely want to put maximum pressure on this government,"

John Bolton, the US national security adviser, told Fox News. "And it's not just to come back to discuss fixing a deal that's basically not fixable, dealing with nuclear weapons aspect. We want to see a much broader retreat by Iran from their alleged support for international terrorism, their belligerent military activity in the Middle East and their ballistic missile nuclear-related programme." *"Al Jazeera*, 11 Aug, 2018

What might Bolton be after, I, Carolyn, ask myself?

"International terrorism" in Washington-speak means supporting Hezbollah, Hamas and the Houthi rebels. Hezbollah was begun as a self-defense response to Israel's invasion of Lebanon — think Minute Men in Concord. They remain the principal defense on Lebanon's border with Israel.

Hamas began as a faith-based social service organization for Palestinians. Israel originally supported Hamas as a potential counter to the PLO because the PLO was non-sectarian drawing together Christian Palestinians, and members of a range of branches of Islam. This support clearly ended in 2004 with Israel's assassination of Hamas' founder the blind sheik Yassin. In 2006, when Hamas won a majority of seats in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), Israel supported the losing party in its refusal to step down from power. If memory serves, Jimmy Carter declared the elections Free and Fair, and one third of Hamas' candidates were jailed shortly after.

About the Houthi rebels — it is altogether unclear why the Saudi's should have a right to say how the Yemenis rule themselves. And if anyone is being a terrorist in Yemen, the actions of the Saudis definitely fit the definition, "the unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims." (*Oxford online dictionary*)

"Their belligerent military activity in the Middle East" probably refers to Iran's support of the government of Syria which asked Iran to join in their self-defense against the fundamentalist rebels who are trying to take over the country and install their version of a Sunni theocracy. The rebels are supported by U.S. allies Saudi Arabia and Israel. Syria has for years been a country where Jews, Christians and Muslims managed to coexist fairly peacefully.

There is no evidence to support the assertion that Iran's ballistic missile program is "nuclear-related".

I believe Bolton wants Iran to cease being a power in its own region.

As Ann Wright pointed out at our Fall Gathering last year: "Trump is opposed to Iran's influence in the region — in Iraq and in Syria. It is their region."

In 1953 the U.S. overthrew the democratically elected government of Iran and installed the dictatorship of the Shah. It's time and past time to learn from our mistakes.

## Puerto Rico, a Year after Maria

On September 20th 2017, Hurricane Maria tore through communities in Puerto Rico, devastating the Island. Maria knocked out 100 percent of the electrical grid and 95 percent of cellphone towers in Puerto Rico, triggering a collapse in emergency communications. A federal report found that FEMA staff were not ready to support recovery efforts in Puerto Rico, including not having enough bilingual employees to communicate with local residents or translate documents. While officials initially attributed 64 deaths to the storm, the humanitarian and administrative crisis on the island led to thousands of deaths. A report from George Washington University showed 2,975 excess deaths in Puerto Rico in the six months after Maria's landfall. (Moms Rising)

In the one year since hundreds of thousands lost their homes and where many continue to live with unstable electricity, FEMA tarps still cover the roofs of their homes after a year of constant and profound neglect on the part of the federal government. (Julio Lopez Varona, Co-Director of Community Dignity Campaigns)

There are reports of plans by what really has to be called the colonial government to privatize the electrical system and the educational system. We have already seen how federal "assistance" in New Orleans after Katrina is pushing toward a restructured system of charter schools. Many people in Puerto Rico are working toward developing a publically own solar power system, opposing what Naomi Klein identifies as disaster capitalism.

Progressive Democrats of America are working on pressuring Congress to enact legislation, budget amendments, and supplemental appropriations to:

- Guarantee improved and comprehensive disaster relief to ensure prompt, efficient, and effective relief during and after natural disasters;
- Grant Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands relief from crippling austerity protocols and tariff disparities;
- Provide debt forgiveness for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands;
- Grant full statehood or statehood-level rights and protections to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands so that their residents enjoy the same rights and protections as all other American citizens.

Climate Hawks Vote provides additional details: the one thing Congress can do? Advocates on the ground in Puerto Rico agree: relieve the debt. Now, five Senators (Kirsten Gillibrand, Kamala Harris, Edward Markey, Bernie Sanders, and Elizabeth Warren) are co-sponsoring legislation to do just that, with Rep. Nydia Velázquez (D-NY) expected to introduce companion legislation in the House.

Under the US Territorial Relief Act, territories such as Puerto Rico can opt for relief of unsecured public

debt if they meet two out of three criteria: a population decrease of more than 5 percent over the past 10 years, the receipt of federal disaster assistance, and per capita debt over \$15,000 per resident. Puerto Rico would qualify under all three factors, as would the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The faith community needs to stand beside the people of Puerto Rico, learn from them what they need to rebuild their homes and put our shoulders to the wheel and push under their direction.

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## The West Berkeley Shellmound

Ongoing efforts to preserve this ancient burial / ceremonial and village site of the Lisjan / Ohlone people has drawn the support of many in the interfaith community. Several prayer circles have been held, numbering well over a hundred in attendance.

Some claim a big housing project will help homeless people. It is not going to work to try to pit the homeless against the Native Americans. No one is fooled.

If you want to help defend religious freedom and cultural respect get in touch. Call EPI and we will put you in touch.

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## Invoking the Flood

— Port-au-Prince

by Carolyn S. Scarr

Sudden rain descends outside our dining room.  
Drops the size of thimbles strike the courtyard awning  
in rackete thunder.

People run to bring cushions in from chairs  
take down clothes from the line  
shut windows.

Run-off from the brief downpour  
converges on the city below  
built on the dump.

The child care center is knee-deep in brown water.  
Mud and garbage flow in a filthy slurry  
from surrounding suburbs down to Cité Soleil,  
the city of the sun.

A wall surrounds the city of toil  
where people slaved for a dollar a day  
in cavernous buildings now echoing empty.  
In the brief rain unsound foundations crumble.  
The wall goes down crushes lean-to shacks.  
Five people die.

Laws of gravity, reverse!  
Water, flow uphill!

Cleanse of filth the city of darkness.  
Purify each crack and corner  
of the city of greed.

Wash clean our lives.  
Prepare us to build a city of light.

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## North Korea

While we hold hopes that the work by President Moon and Chairman Kim will achieve peaceful relations between the two Koreas and eventual reunification, we will still need to work on the current U.S. administration to withdraw its military forces and cease the economic sanctions which are raising tensions and wreaking havoc on the people of North Korea.

Patrick Cockburn in *Counterpunch* last January called economic sanctions war crimes. He wrote: "The first pathetic pieces of wreckage from North Korean fishing boats known as 'ghost ships' to be found this year are washing up on the coast of northern Japan. These are the storm-battered remains of fragile wooden boats with unreliable engines in which North Korean fishermen go far out to sea in the middle of winter in a desperate search for fish. . . the cheapest form of protein." Before the U.S. imposed harsh sanctions on North Korea, they exported coal, iron ore, copper, zinc, lead and textiles and were able to use the funds to import sufficient food to feed their population.

Diplomatic progress can be seen in the Joint Declaration of September 2018 which addressed cessation of military hostility, improving communication, working together for improvement of Korea's economy and environment, and the facilitation of family reunion meetings. The two sides will participate together in international games including the 2020 Summer Olympics.

Regarding nuclear weapons the Joint Declaration states:

"The two sides shared the view that the Korean Peninsula must be turned into a land of peace free from nuclear weapons and nuclear threats, and that substantial progress toward this end must be made in a prompt manner.

"1. First, the North will permanently dismantle the Dongchang-ri missile engine test site and launch platform under the observation of experts from relevant countries.

"2. The North expressed its willingness to continue to take additional measures, such as the permanent dismantlement of the nuclear facilities in Yeongbyeon, as the United States takes corresponding measures in accordance with the spirit of the June 12 US-DPRK Joint Statement.

"3 The two sides agreed to cooperate closely in the process of pursuing complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula."

More on these developments may be found at <https://english1.president.go.kr/> The quotation above is from Pyeongyang Joint Declaration of September 2018 which can be found at this site.

## Haiti, The Struggle Continues

Haiti Action Committee provides us with ongoing news of the ongoing struggle for popular rule in Haiti:

The spark that lit the most recent rebellion was an announcement by the Haitian Prime Minister Jack Guy Lafontant that gas, diesel and kerosene prices would be raised by 38-51%. Haitians took to the streets en-masse across the country. After just two days, the growing grassroots mobilization forced the government to rescind the gas price increases. But the protests escalated into a two-day general strike, barricades blocking streets and highways in cities throughout the country. PM Jack Guy Lafontant resigned but it was too little too late. The Haitian people are demanding the removal of the US-backed and fraudulently-elected president Jovenel Moïse.

### What Led To This Latest Uprising:

- The Jovenel Moïse government's announcement of a double-digit increase in fuel prices, increasing the cost of gas by about \$1.20/gallon, sparked the latest protests which began July 6th.
- Government corruption including the theft of \$3.8 billion from PetroCaribe by officials – those named include two former prime ministers as well as heads of private firms in Haiti.
- Ongoing attacks on Haiti's grassroots majority, including the burning of public markets, targeting market women; government land theft and demolition of homes; teachers not being paid; attacks on student protesters; and the violence of poverty – 59% of Haitians live on less than \$2/day, 24.7% on less than \$1.25.
- Ongoing repression. As of July 6th, independent media on the ground Radio Timoun reported five people killed and many wounded by gunfire by police and government-sponsored paramilitary; more protestors have been killed or injured since.
- Fourteen years of corrupt government since the 2004 US-backed coup that removed Haiti's first democratically-elected president, much loved Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and imposed a UN-US military occupation. The massive election fraud that made Jovenel Moïse president in 2017. *Fanmi Lavalas*, the party of Aristide and the poor majority, said on July 8th, 2018: "The cauldron of corruption and lies has been boiling non-stop 24 hours a day. The time has come to overturn it, for Haitians to begin to see the light of peace. Haiti is for all Haitians."

About the election results as "reported" by even the progressive news groups. There was not "low turnout" because of disinterest. Too many people went to the polls and found their names were no longer listed. One "progressive" analyst has said that Jovenel Moïse carried Cite Soliel. That is about as likely as a claim that Harlem was carried by George Wallace in the 1968 election. Cite Soliel was solidly pro *Lavalas*.

Visit Haiti Action Committee [www.haitisolidarity.net](http://www.haitisolidarity.net)

## **Freedom Flotilla Al-Awda — eyewitness to piracy**

Malaysian-born Swee Ang is the first female Orthopaedic Consultant appointed to St. Bartholomew ('Barts') and the Royal London Hospitals.

In the 1980s and 1990s she worked as trauma and orthopaedics consultant in the refugee camps of Lebanon and later for the United Nations in Gaza, and the World Health Organisation in the West Bank and Gaza. She is Founder and Patron of the British charity Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP).

She also treated the victims of the Pakistan (Kashmir) earthquake, and as consultant trauma and orthopaedic surgeon operated on and looked after the victims of the 7 July 2005 suicide bombs in the Royal London Hospital.

Dr. Ang is the co-author of *War Surgery and Acute Care of the War Wounded*, and also wrote *From Beirut to Jerusalem* documenting her experience in the Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon and Gaza.

She was aboard the *Al-Awda* sailing for Gaza with urgently needed medical supplies when the vessel was violently assaulted and hijacked in international waters and taken to an Israeli port. Passengers and crew were roughed up (some seriously injured) and abused, thrown in an Israeli jail and had their possessions and money stolen.

This is Dr Swee's account, word for word.

*Events from 29 July when the Israeli Navy stormed the Freedom Flotilla Al-Awda hijacked and diverted it from its intended course to Gaza to Israel.*

*By Dr Swee Ang, medical doctor on board the Al-Awda, 4 August 2018.*

The last leg of the journey of *Al-Awda* (the boat of return) was scheduled to reach Gaza on 29 July 2018. We were on target to reach Gaza that evening. There are 22 on board including crew with US\$ 15,000 of antibiotics and bandages for Gaza. At 12.31 pm we received a missed call from a number beginning with +81... Mikkel was steering the boat at that time. The phone rang again with the message that we were trespassing into Israeli waters. Mikkel replied that we were in International waters and had right of innocent passage according to maritime laws. The accusation of trespassing was repeated again and again with Mikkel repeating the message that we were sailing in international waters. This carried on for about half an hour, while Awda was 42 nautical miles from the coast of Gaza.

Prior to the beginning of this last leg, we had spent 2 days learning non-violent actions and had prepared ourselves in anticipation of Israeli invasion of our boat. Vulnerable individuals especially those with medical conditions were to sit at the rear of the top deck with their hands on the deck table. The leader of this group was Gerd, a 75 year old elite Norwegian athlete and

she had the help of Lucia a Spanish nurse in her group.

The people who were to provide non-violent barrier to the Israelis coming on deck and taking over the boat formed 3 rows – two rows of threes and the third row of 2 persons blocking the wheel house door to protect the wheel house for as long as possible. There were runners between the wheel house and the rear of the deck. The leader of the boat Zohar and I were at the two ends of the toilets corridor where we looked out at the horizon and informed all of any sightings of armed boats. I laughed at Zohar and said we are the Toilet Brigade, but I think Zohar did not find it very funny. It was probably bad taste under the circumstances. I also would be able to help as a runner and will have accessibility to all parts of the deck in view of being the doctor on board.

Soon we saw at least three large Israeli warships on the horizon with 5 or more speed boats (zodiacs) zooming towards us. As the Zodiacs approached I saw that they carried soldiers with machine guns and there was on board the boats large machine guns mounted on a stand pointing at our boat. From my lookout point the first Israeli soldier climbed on board to the cabin level and climbed up the boat ladder to the top deck. His face was masked with a white cloth and following him were many others, all masked. They were all armed with machine guns and small cameras on their chests.

They immediately made to the wheel house overcoming the first row by twisting the arms of the participants, lifting Sarah up and throwing her away. Joergen the chef was large to be manhandled so he was tasered before being lifted up. They attacked the second row by picking on Emelia the Spanish nurse and removed her thus breaking the line. They then approached the door of the wheel house and tasered Charlie the first mate and Mike Treen who were obstructing their entry to the wheel house. Charlie was beaten up as well. Mike did not give way with being tasered in his lower limbs so he was tasered in his neck and face. Later on I saw bleeding on the left side of Mike's face. He was semi-conscious when I examined him.

They broke into the wheel house by cutting the lock, forced the engine to be switched off and took down the Palestine flag before taking down the Norwegian flag and trampling on it.

They then cleared all people from the front half of the boat around the wheel house and moved them by force and coercion, throwing them to the rear of the deck. All were forced to sit on the floor at the back, except Gerd, Lucy and the vulnerable people who were seated around the table on wooden benches around her. Israeli soldiers then formed a line sealing off people from the back and preventing them from coming to the front of the boat again.

As we entered the back of the deck we were all

*continued on page 8*

body searched and ordered to surrender our mobile phones or else they will take it by force. This part of search and confiscation was under the command of a woman soldier. Apart from mobile phones – medicines and wallets were also removed. No one as of today (4 August 2018) got our mobile phones back.

I went to examine Mike and Charlie. Charlie had recovered consciousness and his wrists were tied together with plastic cable ties. Mike was bleeding from the side of his face, still not fully conscious. His hands were very tightly tied together with cable ties and the circulation to his fingers was cut off and his fingers and palm were beginning to swell. At this stage the entire people seated on the floor shouted demanding that the cable ties be cut. It was about half an hour later before the ties were finally cut off from both of them.

Around this time Charlie the first mate received the Norwegian flag. He was visibly upset telling all of us that the Norwegian flag had been trampled on. Charlie reacted more to the trampling of the Norwegian flag than to his own being beaten and tasered.

The soldiers then started asking for the captain of the boat. The boys then started to reply that they were all the captain. Eventually the Israelis figured out that Herman was the captain and demanded to take him to the wheel house. Herman asked for someone to come with him, and I offered to do so. But as we approached the wheel house, I was pushed away and Herman forced into the wheel house on his own. Divina, the well known Swedish singer, had meanwhile broken free from the back and went to the front to look through the window of the wheel house. She started to shout and cry "Stop –stop they are beating Herman, they are hurting him". We could not see what Divina saw, but knew that it was something very disturbing. Later on, when Divina and I were sharing a prison cell, she told me they were throwing Herman against the wall of the wheel house and punching his chest. Divina was forcibly removed and her neck was twisted by the soldiers who took her back to the rear of the deck.

I was pushed back to the rear of the boat again. After a while the boat engine started. I was told later by Gerd who was able to hear Herman tell the story to the Norwegian Consul in prison that the Israelis wanted Herman to start the engine, and threatened to kill him if he would not do so. But what they did not understand was that with this boat, once the engine stopped it can only be restarted manually in the engine room in the cabin level below. Arne the engineer refused to restart the engine, so the Israelis brought Herman down and hit him in front of Arne making it clear that they will continue to hit Herman if Arne would not start the engine. Arne is 70 years old, and when he saw Herman's face went ash colour, he gave in and started the engine manually. Gerd broke into tears when she was narrating this part of the story. The Israelis then took

charge of the boat and drove it to Ashdod.

Once the boat was on course, the Israeli soldiers brought Herman to the medical desk. I looked at Herman and saw that he was in great pain, silent but conscious, breathing spontaneously but shallow breathing. The Israeli Army doctor was trying to persuade Herman to take some medicine for pain. Herman was refusing the medicine. The Israeli doctor explained to me that what he was offering Herman was not army medicine but his personal medicine. He gave me the medicine from his hand so that I could check it. It was a small brown glass bottle and I figured that it was some kind of liquid morphine preparation probably the equivalent of oromorph or fentanyl. I asked Herman to take it and the doctor asked him to take 12 drops after which Herman was carried off and slumped on a mattress at the back of the deck. He was watched over by people around him and fell asleep. From my station I saw he was breathing better.

With Herman settled I concentrated on Larry Commodore, the Native American leader and an environmental activist. He had been voted Chief of his tribe twice. Larry has labile asthma and with the stress all around my fear was that he might get a nasty attack, and needed adrenaline injection. I was taking Larry through deep breathing exercises. However Larry was not heading for an asthmatic attack, but was engaging an Israeli who covered his face with a black cloth in conversation. This man was obviously in charge.

I asked for the Israeli man with black mask his name and he called himself Field Marshall Ro..... Larry misheard him and jumped to conclusion that he called himself Field Marshall Rommel and shouted how can he an Israeli take a Nazi name. Field Marshall objected and introduced himself as Field Marshall ? Ronan. As I spelt out Ronan he quickly corrected me that his name is Ronen, and he Field Marshall Ronen was in charge.

The Israeli soldiers all wore body cameras and were filming us all the time. A box of sandwiches and pears were brought on deck for us. None of us took any of their food as we had decided we do not accept Israeli hypocrisy and charity. Our chef Joergen had already prepared high calorie high protein delicious brownie with nuts and chocolate, wrapped up in tin foil to be consumed when captured, as we knew it was going to be a long day and night. Joergen called it food for the journey. Unfortunately when I needed it most, the Israelis took away my food and threw it away. They just told me "It is forbidden." I had nothing to eat for 24 hours, refusing Israeli Army food and had no food of my own.

As we sailed towards Israel we could see the coast of Gaza in total darkness. There were 3 oil / gas rigs in the northern sea of Gaza. The brightly burning oil flames contrasted with the total darkness the owners of the fuel were forced to live in. Just off the shore of

## **Al-Awda** continued from page 8

Gaza are the largest deposit of natural gas ever discovered and the natural gas belonging to the Palestinians was already being siphoned off by Israel.

As we approached Israel, Zohar our boat leader suggested that we should start saying goodbye to each other. We were probably 2-3 hours from Ashdod. We thanked our boat leader, our Captain, the crew, our dear chef, and encouraged each other that we will continue to do all we can to free Gaza and also bring justice to Palestine. Herman our Captain, who managed to sit up now, gave a most moving talk and some of us were in tears.

We knew that in Ashdod there will be the Israeli media and film crews. We will not enter Ashdod as a people who had lost hope as we were taken captive. So we came off the boat chanting "Free Free Palestine" all the way as we came off. Mike Treen the union man had by then recovered from his heavy tasering and led the chanting with his mega-voice and we filled the night sky of Israel with Free Free Palestine as we approached. We did this the whole way down the boat into Ashdod.

We came directly into a closed military zone in Ashdod. It was a sealed off area with many stations. It was specially prepared for the 22 of us. It began with a security x-ray area. I did not realise they retained my money belt as I came out of the x-ray station. The next station was strip search, and it was when I was gathering up my belongings after being stripped when I realised my money belt was no longer with me. I knew I had about a couple hundred Euros and they were trying to steal it. I demanded its return and refused to leave the station until it was produced. I was shouting for the first time. I was glad I did that as some other people were parted from their cash. The journalist from Al Jazeera Abdul had all his credit cards and USD 1,800 taken from him, as well as his watch, satellite phone, his personal mobile, his ID. He thought his possessions were kept with his passport but when he was released for deportation he learnt bitterly that he only got his passport back. All cash and valuables were never found. They simply vanished.

We were passed from station to station in this closed military zone, stripped searched several times, possessions taken away until in the end all we had was the clothes we were wearing with nothing else except a wrist band with a number on it. All shoe laces were removed as well. Some of us were given receipts for items taken away, but I had no receipts for anything. We were photographed several times and saw two doctors. At this point I learnt that Larry was pushed down the gangway and injured his foot and sent off to Israeli hospital for check-up. His blood was on the floor.

I was cold and hungry, wearing only one teeshirt and pants by the time they were through with me. My food was taken away; water was taken away, all belongings including reading glasses taken away. My

bladder was about to explode but I am not allowed to go to the toilet. In this state I was brought out to two vehicles – Black Maria painted gray. On the ground next to it were a great heap of ruqsacks and suit cases. I found mine and was horrified that they had broken into my baggage and took almost everything from it – all clothes clean and dirty, my camera, my second mobile, my books, my Bible, all the medicines I brought for the participants and myself, my toiletries.

The suitcase was partially broken. My ruqsack was completely empty too. I got back two empty cases except for two dirty large man size teeshirts which obviously belonged to someone else. They also left my Freedom Flotilla teeshirt. I figured out that they did not steal the Flotilla teeshirt as they thought no Israeli would want to wear that teeshirt in Israel. They had not met Zohar and Yonatan who were proudly wearing theirs. That was a shock as I was not expecting the Israeli Army to be petty thieves as well. So what had become of the glorious Israeli Army of the Six Day War which the world so admired?

I was still not allowed to go to the toilet, but was pushed into the Maria van, joined by Lucia the Spanish nurse and after some wait taken to Givon Prison. I could feel myself shivering uncontrollably on the journey.

The first thing our guards did in Givon Prison was to order me to go to the toilet to relieve myself. It was interesting to see that they knew I needed to go desperately but had prevented me for hours to! By the time we were re-x-rayed and searched again it must be about 5 – 6 am. Lucia and I were then put in a cell where Gerd, Divina, Sarah and Emelia were already asleep. There were three double decker bunk beds – all rusty and dusty.

Divina did not get the proper dose of her medicines; Lucia was refused her own medicine and given an Israeli substitute which she refused to take. Divina and Emelia went straight on to hunger strike. The jailors were very hostile using simple things like refusal of toilet paper and constant slamming of the prison iron door, keeping the light of the cell permanently on, and forcing us to drink rusty water from the tap, screaming and shouting at us constantly to vent their anger at us.

The guards addressed me as "China" and treated me with utter contempt. On the morning of 30 July 2018, the British Vice Consul visited me. Some kind person had called them about my whereabouts. That was a blessing as after that I was called "England" and there was a massive improvement in the way England was treated compared to the way China was treated. It crossed my mind that "Palestine" would be trampled over, and probably killed.

At 6.30am 31 July 2018, we heard Larry yelling from the men's cell across the corridor that he needed a doctor. He was obviously in great pain and crying. We women responded by asking the wardens to allow me to go across to see Larry as I might be able to

*continued on page 10*

## *Al-Awda continued from page 9*

help. We shouted "We have a doctor" and used our metal spoons to hit the iron cell gate get their attention. They lied and said their doctor will be over in an hour. We did not believe them and started again. The doctor actually turned up at 4 pm, about 10 hours later and Larry was sent straight to hospital.

Meanwhile to punish the women for supporting Larry's demand, they brought hand cuffs for Sarah and took Divina and me to another cell to separate us from the rest. We were told we were not going to be allowed out for our 30 minutes fresh air break and a drink of clean water in the yard. I heard Gerd saying "Big deal."

Suddenly Divina was taken out with me to the courtyard and Divina given 4 cigarettes at which point she broke down and cried. Divina had worked long hours at the wheel house steering the boat. She had seen what happened to Herman. The prison had refused to give her one of her medicines and given her only half the dose of the other. She was still on hunger strike to protest our kidnapping in international waters. It was heart-breaking to see Divina cry. One of the wardens who called himself Michael started talking to us about how he will have to protect his family against those who want to drive the Israelis out. And how the Palestinians did not want to live in peace...and it was not Israel's fault. But things suddenly changed with the arrival of an Israeli Judge and we were all treated with some decency even though he only saw a few of us personally. His job was to tell us that a Tribunal will be convened the following day and each prisoner had been allocated a time to appear, and we must have our lawyer with us when we appear.

Divina by the end of the day became very giddy and very unwell so I persuaded her to come out of hunger strike, and also she agreed to sign a deportation order. Shortly after that possibly at 6 pm since we had no watches and mobile phones, we were told Lucia, Joergen, Herman, Arne, Abdul from Al Jazeera and I would be deported within 24 hours and we would be taken to be imprisoned in the deportation prison in Ramle near Ben Gurion airport immediately to wait there. It was going to be the same Ramle Prison from which I was deported in 2014. I saw the same five strong old palm trees still standing up proud and tall. They are the only survivors of the Palestinian village destroyed in 1948.

When we arrived at Ramle prison Abdul found to his horror that his money, his credit cards, his watch, his satellite phone, his own mobile phone, his ID card were all missing – he was entirely destitute. We had a whip round and raised around a hundred Euros as a contribution towards his taxi fare from the airport to home. How can the Israeli Army be so corrupt and heartless to rob someone of everything?

### **Conclusion**

We, the six women on board Al-Awda had learnt that

they tried to completely humiliate and dehumanise us in every way possible. We were also shocked at the behaviour of the Israeli Army especially petty theft and their treatment of international women prisoners. Men jailors regularly entered the women's cell without giving us decent notice to put our clothes on.

They also tried to remind us of our vulnerability at every stage. We know they would have preferred to kill us but of course the publicity incurred in so doing might be unfavourable to the international image of Israel.

If we were Palestinians it would be much worse with physical assaults and probably loss of lives. The situation is therefore dire for the Palestinians.

As to international waters, it looks as though there is no such thing for the Israeli Navy. They can hijack and abduct boats and persons in international water and get away with it. They acted as though they own the Mediterranean Sea. They can abduct any boat and kidnap any passengers, put them in prison and criminalise them.

We cannot accept this. We have to speak up, stand up against this lawlessness, oppression and brutality. We were completely unarmed. Our only crime according to them is we are friends of the Palestinians and wanted to bring medical aid to them. We wanted to brave the military blockade to do this. This is not a crime. In the week we were sailing to Gaza, they had shot dead 7 Palestinians and wounded more than 90 with live bullets in Gaza. They had further shut down fuel and food to Gaza. Two million Palestinians in Gaza live without clean water, with only 2-4 hours of electricity, in homes destroyed by Israeli bombs, in a prison blockaded by land, air and sea for 12 years.

The hospitals of Gaza since the 30 March had treated more than 9,071 wounded persons, 4,348 shot by machine guns from a hundred Israeli snipers while they were mounting peaceful demonstrations inside the borders of Gaza on their own land. Most of the gun-shot wounds were to the lower limbs and with depleted treatment facilities the limbs will suffer amputation. In this period more than 165 Palestinians had been shot dead by the same snipers, including medics and journalists, children and women. The chronic military blockade of Gaza has depleted the hospitals of all surgical and medical supplies. This massive attack on an unarmed Freedom Flotilla bringing friends and some medical relief is an attempt to crush all hope for Gaza. As I write I learnt that our sister Flotilla, Freedom, has also been kidnapped by the Israeli Navy while in international waters.

BUT we will not stop, we must continue to be strong to bring hope and justice to the Palestinians and be prepared to pay the price, and to be worthy of the Palestinians. As long as I survive I will exist to resist. To do less will be a crime.

## The Price

by Carolyn S. Scarr

How hard is the choice?

Madam Ambassador, you believe . . .  
you think the price is worth  
it. It.

It — five thousand lives.

Five thousand children every month  
five thousand children under five.

What child is worth the price?

A gallery of pictures  
spreads across my computer screen  
girls and boys, their parents,  
living, dead and dying.

In Basra two children run out to play.  
Bombs fall from U.S. planes.

Now their mother watches weeping  
as their bodies are dug from the rubble  
of the houses of the neighborhood.

This "it" — the price  
the rising total  
reaches five hundred thousand  
children under five.

Together with their families now the price  
passes one million dead.

What is worth a holocaust?  
Who chooses these to die,  
the children of Iraq?

The lessons taught across the world,  
down the bloody sweep of empire —  
the lesson taught and learned  
that life is worth the price  
when those who pay are foreign,  
different, other, far away  
pray to other gods, speak other tongues.  
Those lives lie in the scale — are worth the price.

No life is worth the price.  
The flowers strewn amidst the guttered candle stumps  
fade and die as we mourn our sudden loss.  
New York's dead and wounded  
join a massive company drawn from around the world.

Side by side we lay pictures  
which portray our common loss.  
Thus we may see around the world  
women who hold each other,  
watch in grief as a child's dead body  
is dug from bomb blast rubble.

## What is SOAW? *continued from page 1*

of those fleeing the consequences violence have also endured imprisonment at the West County Detention Center in Contra Costa County.

SOAW will be in Nogales to protest again, November 16-18. You are more than welcome to join us. Check us out at [soaw.org](http://soaw.org).

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## World Without Borders

**Evening of Saturday, November 10**

**Location and details to be announced.**

**Investing in sanctuary: freedom to stay, freedom to move, freedom to return**

In a post-9/11 world, more than 70 walls have been erected across the globe. Our rights of migration, mobility, and movement are under attack and we must defend our freedom to stay, freedom to move, and freedom to return. Organized by a coalition of faith and social justice groups, this event, uplifting voices of resistance, is fighting back against militarization, borders, and war. *It is part of a virtual caravan of events across Latin America, and one of several hundred international events promoting a world without walls this November.*

We hope to educate people about border walls across the globe, decry wall profiteers, and celebrate international resistance. We invite folks from all walks of life and faiths to join us in community. The event will include speakers, live music, and photo exhibitions.

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May we learn from Brian —  
his legs cut off beneath the munitions-bearing train  
on Concord's bloody tracks,  
whence bombs were shipped to Salvador,  
Honduras and to Nam, where once he fought —  
from Brian may we learn

"We are not worth more.  
They are not worth less."

Carolyn S. Scarr  
October 12, 2001

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From the "60 Minutes" segment, "Punishing Saddam" (airdate May 12, 1996) CBS Reporter Lesley Stahl (speaking of post-war sanctions against Iraq): "We have heard that a half million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And — and you know, is the price worth it?"

Madeleine Albright (at that time, US Ambassador to the UN): "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price — we think the price is worth it."

I/We want to be part of the Peace and Justice work of Ecumenical Peace Institute/CALC by:

volunteering (mailings, vigils, publicity, calling)  
 connecting EPI with my religious group  
 making a tax-deductible contribution:  
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## Regarding that Envelope

There is an envelope included in each issue of *Planted by the Waters*. If each person who receives *Planted* puts a check into the envelope and mails it to EPI/CALC, it will greatly improve our ability to do the work for justice and peace which we are called to do together. It doesn't have to be a lot. Every little bit counts.



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## Calendar & Announcements

**Saturday, October 20**, East Bay Sanctuary Covenant annual dinner

**Saturday, November 3**, EPI Autumn Gathering

**Saturday, November 10**, World Without Borders, see p. 11

### Inside:

1. Zahra Biloo at Autumn Gathering
1. What is SOAW?
3. Nicaragua, Venezuela, Syria, Iran — U.S. & Regime Change
5. Puerto Rico
5. West Berkeley Shellmound
5. Invoking the Flood (poem)
6. North Korea
6. Haiti
7. Freedom Flotilla Al-Awda, eyewitness to piracy
11. The Price (poem)
11. World Without Walls, announcement

### Actions

**Living Graveyard and Reading of the Names**, noon to one on 3rd Mondays, except holidays  
Oakland Federal Building, 1301 Clay Street, two blocks from 12th Street BART.

### Ongoing Vigils

**Thursdays, 4:30 - 5:30**, Five Flags Park, Foothill, Jackson & Mission, Hayward. Justice for Palestinians.  
South Alameda County Peace and Justice (SAPJC) & Tri-City Peace and Justice (TCP).

**Fridays, 12:00 - 1:00**, Telegraph & Bancroft, Berkeley Women in Black, for justice and peace in Palestine.

**Sundays 1- 2 p.m. & Thursdays 12- 1 p.m.**, Circle of Concern vigil at the west entrance to UC Berkeley to protest the involvement of the University of California in the development of nuclear weapons

## Ecumenical Peace Institute Autumn Gathering

**Saturday, November 3, 2018**  
**Dinner and Program 5:30 – 8:45 p.m.**

**St. John's Presbyterian Church  
2727 College Ave., in Berkeley**

### Zahra Biloo Racism, Islamophobia & Empire

Zahra Biloo is a civil rights attorney and the Executive Director of the San Francisco Bay Area office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-SFBA).

Dr. King challenged us to conquer "the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism." We will hear from Zahra Biloo on the work to oppose Islamophobia, which we at EPI consider to be a special case of racism. We recognize that U.S. empire is based on these three evils which we seek to eradicate.

A delicious vegetarian dinner catered by Food not Bombs  
Gathering and snacks at 5:30  
Dinner and program at 6:00

**==> PLEASE CALL 510-990-0374  
and let us know you are coming.**

Donation \$15 - \$50 benefits EPI's ongoing work;  
no one turned away for lack of funds.

Wheelchair accessible entrance on Garber St. and from underground parking garage. Cosponsored by St. John's Mission & Justice Commission & MECA & Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County .

Visit <http://www.epicalc.org/> for more details.