

**Update: Jan. 3 statement by Naomi Craine,
Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate from Illinois**

**For the immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of U.S. troops, bases,
weaponry and armaments from Iraq, Syria and the region!**

The Socialist Workers Party condemns Washington's assassination of Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani; Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, a leader of the pro-Tehran Kataeb Hezbollah militia; and other militiamen near the Baghdad airport Jan. 2. The U.S. imperialist rulers act as judge, jury and executioner, trampling on the sovereignty of other nations — just as their cops do here every day to working people at home.

We call for the immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of U.S. troops, bases, weaponry and armaments from Iraq, Syria and the region. Resolving the crisis facing working people across the Middle East is the business of workers and farmers there. Join or call protests against Washington's escalation!

Of course, Soleimani was no friend of working people in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria — or Iran. He was a central leader of Tehran's efforts to extend the Iranian capitalist rulers' military sway in the Middle East. And the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is a central force in efforts to suppress the struggles of working people inside Iran.

The U.S. press, like the regime in Tehran, tries to present Soleimani as a leader who came to power as a result of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. In fact, his rise was part of a *counterrevolution*, one that pushed back the gains made by workers, women and oppressed nationalities by the 1979 revolution that overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship of the shah there. That upheaval was a deep-going, modern, popular social revolution.

Soleimani rose through the ranks of the Revolutionary Guard as part of the counterrevolutionary drive by the cleric-led capitalist regime that consolidated power by attacking the gains of that revolution. He became the leader of the reactionary Revolutionary Guards' international Quds Force.

Soleimani played a key role in marshaling pro-Iran militias to keep the brutal regime of Bashar al-Assad in power in Syria during the civil war there, at a tremendous cost in the lives of working people. He orchestrated the expansion of Hezbollah and its attacks on Israel and reactionary anti-worker policies in Lebanon in the 1990s.

Tehran's efforts to expand its counterrevolutionary reach have been the target of mass protests, in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon.

Many of Iraq's workers and farmers hated Soleimani for helping to keep Tehran's boot on the country. For the last several weeks tens of thousands of Iraqis have joined protests demanding an end to both Iranian and U.S. interference in their affairs. More than 450 demonstrators have been killed and thousands injured, many of them at the hands of the reactionary Shiite militias that Soleimani traveled to Iraq to help organize. A popular chant has been — and still is — “Iran out out, Iraq remains free.”

But none of this excuses the U.S. imperialist intervention in Iraq and the region. There are over 50,000 U.S. troops on the ground and a massive arsenal of warplanes, tanks, missiles, drones and other armaments in the Middle East.

U.S. rulers' war policy is bipartisan

While many Democratic Party politicians criticized the Trump administration for the attack, seeking partisan political advantage, in and out of office, they have joined in presiding over the U.S. rulers' wars there for more than 30 years.

Democratic Party presidential candidate Joe Biden said he agreed that Soleimani "deserved to be brought to justice," complaining only that President Trump needed to give an "explanation" of how his administration plans to protect "our troops" and "our interests." But there is no "our." These troops are tasked with executing the goals of U.S. imperialism and *their* "interests." Our class provides the cannon fodder.

Some of the Democratic 2020 hopefuls say the assassination of Soleimani, however laudatory, was a "dangerous escalation" carried out "without consultation with Congress." But go look at the famous picture of Biden, along with Pentagon officials and President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sitting in the White House War Room, avidly watching the special forces killing Osama bin Laden and his family in cold blood at their compound May 2, 2011.

The simple truth is that both the Democrats and the Republicans are the parties of imperialist war.

Today the Trump administration is sending *more* troops to the Middle East.

As the Socialist Workers Party said in our 2017 statement, "For Recognition of a Palestinian State and of Israel," the road forward for working people in the Middle East starts with "the class interests and solidarity of workers and toiling farmers across the Middle East — be they Palestinian, Jewish, Arab, Kurdish, Turkish, Persian or otherwise, and whatever their religious or other beliefs — as well as working people in the United States and around the world.

"We are *for* whatever helps working people organize and act together to advance our demands and struggles against the capitalist governments and ruling classes that exploit and oppress us and their petty bourgeois political servants and media apologists.

"We are *for* whatever renews our class solidarity and self-confidence, advancing us along a revolutionary course toward a united struggle for workers power."

The people of Iraq have been fighting to regain their nation's sovereignty, to find a way forward to unite working people and take control of their own destiny. The best way to demonstrate solidarity with them is for working people in the U.S. to demand U.S. hands off Iraq, Syria and Iran. Get out now!