



The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world. Since 2010, we've been broadcasting from occupied Tsalagi land in Southern Appalachia (Asheville, NC).

We also frequently feature commentary (serious and humorous) by anarchist prisoner, Sean Swain.

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FEDERATION OF ANARCHISM ERA ON IRAN AND AFGHANISTAN

THE FINAL STRAW RADIO
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in Iranian! Revolution in Lebanon! Revolution in Palestine!” Let’s have a revolution in every country! Thank you very much.

TFSR: I love that, comrade. Thank you so much for taking the time and the effort to have this conversation, and also please say thank you and appreciation and love to the comrades in the Federation. I really appreciate it.

FAE: Thank you very much, comrade. for your time and checking back with us. We really appreciate it.

The collective we spoke to for this episode began as a series of remotely-hosted blogs and communication methods among Iranian anarchists at home and abroad. By 2015 anarchists from Afghanistan had started to join and in 2018 the comrades from within Iran and Afghanistan and those living internationally founded Anarchist Union of Afghanistan and Iran. Since, more individuals and groups have joined up from around North Africa, the middle east and other places in the world and they in 2020 re-organized themselves the Federation of Anarchism Era. Last January, after the assassination by the US Trump administration of the murderous Quds leader Soleimani we spoke with members of the then-named AUAI about the network, living under 19 years of US war and 40 years of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This week, Aryanam, a member of the Federation of Anarchism Era, shares collective answers to some of our questions and a few personal insights to ongoing events in Iran and Afghanistan. He talks about the recent election of Ebrahim Raisi to the Iranian presidency, a man who helped to oversee the death committees that executed thousands of political prisoners, as well what the election of Biden in the US and the two governments agreements on nuclear development and the sanctions the international community is imposing on Iran. You’ll hear about the course of covid in Iran, the release of prisoners last year, the outcomes of the 2019 uprisings against the government and those in 2020 after the Iranian government downed a Ukrainian jet-liner, as well as viewpoints of members of the FAE in Afghanistan on the Taliban expansion as the US withdraws troops and words of solidarity for many places around the world in revolt against authority.

You can read reports by the FAE on their website, asranarshism.com, and keep up by following the project on twitter, fedbook, instagram, youtube and telegram (all listed from their website in the upper left hand corner). Keep an eye out for a fundraiser soon to support survival and defense needs of anarchists in Afghanistan as the Taliban takes back more territory and other initiatives. You can hear our 2020 interview with a member of the Anarchist Union of Afghanistan and Iran on our website, where it is also transcribed. A transcription of this interview will be available in the near future.

Search for this interview title at <https://thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org> to find links to further resources on this topic, featured music, the audio version, and files for printing copies of this episode.

TFSR: So would you please introduce yourself in whatever way you see fit: any name, pseudonym, pronouns or affiliations?

Federation of Anarchism Era: Hello! My name is Aryanam. I use he/him pronouns, I'm a member of the Federation of Anarchism Era and I am most responsible for English translation and communication. Thank you for having me.

TFSR: It's my pleasure. Thanks for coming on.

So I spoke with folks from the Anarchist Union of Afghanistan and Iran last January. Since then, y'all've changed your name to the Federation of of Anarchism Era. Can you explain the significance of this and if there's been any changes in say how the organization structures or it's purpose?

FAE: Yes. If you don't mind, I'll start with a little bit of history. We formed our primary nucleus at the end of 2009. Before that, a few people had their individual blogs and a few anarchists were basically abroad. And at first they performed their collective blog and after 2009 they started on facebook, they started their core outside the country. That was important because anarchists in Iran, like any other group that is opposition to the Iranian government, they get prosecuted really fast. It is really hard for them to find each other. So it would be important to have a core outside the country that is not feeling the same repression and censorship as the people in Iran. Also, the people from Iran can gather, find each other in one location and start communicating and collaborating.

So, after the reorganization at the end of 2013 by creating their Anarchism Era website, before the only had blogs and facebook groups. But by 2013 when we created our own website, naming it Anarchism Era and by that, little by little people from Iran started joining us. After that there by 2015, we had anarchists from Afghanistan join us and by 2018, we had three independent cores: one from anarchists of Afghanistan and Iran abroad; a group of anarchists in

sically the same in the U.S. what we witnessed at the George Floyd uprising was inspiring, very powerful, and we hope you will see that this year. Just do some actions that you guys did last year. Some insurrectionist action. Burn some cars. Burn some police cars, burn some banks. or something like that. I hope you guys have a "hot girl summer," I wanna be a part of that. Honestly that helps us out tremendously. Let's keep this summer just like last year. The reason that it's the best form of solidarity, in our opinion, is because the Western imperialism, the Western governments support certain groups. In the Iranian case, they support Iranian monarchists and the Mujahadeen, in which one of the goals is to take over the Iranian state. Basically, they are using their monarchists to set up a puppet state. Naturally, we anarchists are not in favor of that, we were like to dismantle the State. We do not want to have a puppet state in favor of capitalism and Western imperialism. So, by de-legitimizing the U.S. government or Western governments like the U.S., Canada, Britain, Germany, all the western states... It doesn't matter.

By de-legitimizing, by uprising and rioting, you are helping us to do our struggles better. Our struggles are interconnected. Any weakness from your government is helping us and any chink in the armor of our government would help you. Let me put it another way: the Iranian government supports different militia groups in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Afghanistan, all across the region. And Yemen, I'm sorry. If the Iranian regime gets weakened, Peoples movement in those regions, liberatory Peoples moments in those regions can be strengthened further. They are less repressed because the Militia are not receiving support anymore, so they can grow and win their fights better. Or if the people in Palestine managed to liberate themselves and not fall into the hands of Hamas, that would weaken the Iranian government, which allows us to further complete its destruction.

There was a video from a Lebanese activist from 2019 major Uprising. I think us 21 uprisings, all across the world in 2019. 2019 was a year of revolutions. The Lebanese activist was saying "Revolution

can keep up on pertinent news. You did mention that there's going to be the fundraising soon to support folks surviving in Afghanistan. I'll happily share the contact information for that when it comes up.

FAE: First of all, I wanna thank you for talking with us, having an interview with us. And I wanna thank all of our comrades that shared our perspective and our stories to the rest of the world. When we released the reports of our anarchist comrades in Afghanistan, it was translated in multiple languages and was shared widely. We really appreciate that repaired we thank every single one of you guys. Other than that, as we said, we are working on sending funding to help our comrades in Afghanistan to help in their survival. For different projects, we don't have anything at the moment, but we would announce them as they get finalized. You mentioned something about last year we mentioned about the podcast. We might have a podcast now, but it might not be in Persian, but instead in Kurdish. But it is still in the process of developing. We're still trying to find a satellite, trying to broadcast to Iran via satellite, because the majority of Iranian people and households have a satellite dish. It is one thing that has not been suppressed by the Iranian regime too much at the moment, so if we had a chance to broadcast to the Iranian people weekly, biweekly, monthly. That would be the best optional for us, but we are working on that Kurdish one at the moment.

Also, we would like to extend our solidarity to the people in Canada against their horrible genocidal regime of Canada. Also, our son in solidarity with the peoples movement all across the world, from Colombia to Myanmar. We are watching all these uprisings. All this a struggle against the State and Capitalism and we are in solidarity with your guys, comrades.

In regards to what the international anarchist community can do for us to show their solidarity... It might come as a personal opinion, but I believe the rest of the Federation would agree, is you would start the revolution at home. Start the insurrectionist action at home. Ba-

Iran; and a group of anarchists in Afghanistan. By having this three cores, we managed to form the Anarchist Union of Afghanistan and Iran in 2018 after that, a more individual anarchists from Iran and Afghanistan joined us. Before 2018, we also had collaboration with people from Morocco, from Iraq from the other, individual anarchists and anarchist groups from around the region. So by 2020, it became apparent that we are receiving more collaboration, more people from outside Afghanistan and Iran are joining us. So we thought we should reorganize ourselves, one more time and make it a federation. We accept membership from across the world who like to communicate and collaborate with us, they are welcome to do so.

One of the reasons that we are expanding that way is because in Iran and Afghanistan there are multiple ethnicities. For example, in Iran we have Arab, Kurdish, Turk, Azeri, Armenian, Baluchi, Turkmen and in Afghanistan we have Uzbek, Pashtun, Hazara, Pashai, Tajik...

So we published multiple articles in different languages, that is, ethnicities speak and they pay attention to basically all these ethnicities in two geographical regions. Even though we formed our federation in 2020, our main focus at the moment and activities are invested in Afghanistan and Iraq and our group abroad, but is mostly in Europe. So, the significance of this action is we are growing naturally, and more people are paying attention to us and that's the reason that the change our name and reassert ourselves to a federation.

TFSR: Is there an ideological basis to membership in the federation? Is there a shared politic as strict, for instance, as what's called Platformism, or... what's other word for it?

In Uruguay they have a version of Platformism... Especifismo? Or is it more like the International of Anarchist Federations, which is a synthesis and are there a lot of chapters in Latin America and in Europe? And the third part of this is, do you have relationships with those other federations?

FAE: Our federation is basically an informal, voluntary organization. We cannot have a ledger and we don't have a membership fee, because we cannot have a formal organization in Iran because it makes it easier for us to be identified. You have to be doing everything underground. Some of our members are really poor or very young which can not spend any of their money on the membership fee. So we don't have any membership fee and we form our communication and our groups by informally communicating with each other. There is no council. We frequently meet, we basically speak with each other about what is to be done, how do we need to do it and then we go from there.

There are many different anarchist tendencies within our organization. There are anarcho-egoists, anarcho-syndicalists, there is anarcho-communist, there is a small group of anarcho punks. There are many different groups. But the common thing that holds us together is basically living in insurrection. It's action. We believe that we can not find a peaceful way to get rid of this government. We need to be actively, without any peaceful way, we need to destroy this regime. This regime and all of the regimes. We need to be active in the revolutionary way. That's because there is no peaceful way to interact with this government. The government should show us that in the uprising in November of 2019 that it does not allow even a peaceful protest to happen in the region. Any action from their people would be met with violence of the State. So the violence needs to be met with violence are the people. And for us to dismantle the regime, and the State.

TFSR: And in particular, when you're talking about 2019 uprising of the people. This is against the Iranian regime, based on the end of some like fuel subsidies and other subsidies and a lack of employment and social welfare net that the majority of the population was suffering under. Is that right?

FAE: That's right. The November Uprising, it just started with the oil subsidies being cut on. Around 50% of the Iranian population is

whole resistance in Iran. He is more ruthless and he has experience in the judicial department as it was mentioned, so his function is clear in that department.

As for Biden, in relation to the Islamic Republic of Iran, restarting the conversation with the Iranian regime, regarding the nuclear deals, it allows some breathing room for the Iranian government. If the Iranian government can produce some more money, loosen the sanctions just a little bit would spend it in suppressing the people. We know about this because there was, I believe, a 25 year negotiation deal with China and Iran, in which China received some points. it allows control of some resources in Iran, which is significant, especially in the Persian Gulf, down south. And in return. Iran would get some breathing room and also receive anti-insurgency tools brought in from being collisions are one of the items is all did receive their anti insurgency tools like increasing intelligence, it will include anti-riot gas other riot suppression tools. So, Biden's negotiation with Iran would probably help the Iranian government procure more funding, which would use a significant amount to repress the people. But it needs to be said that Trump government, with their sanction, was not helpful for the Iranian people. For example, for us to help give funding to any of our members in Iran. We have to jump through many hoops, because I'm in the United States, I cannot directly send the funding from the U.S. to Iran because of the sanctions. I have to go through many more steps, which is much more expensive to assist our members in Iran, to fund their projects in Iran. So, the sanctions were not really helpful for us, but less sanctions would probably give the State more breathing room, which allows them to repress people more effectively.

TFSR: I know at one point a year ago there was discussion about having a podcast, I guess in Persian. For internationals outside of Iran and Afghanistan, whether or not they can speak or read Persian languages, do you have suggestions for ways that they can show solidarity with anarchist struggles in Iran and Afghanistan and other people involved in the Federation or where they

harassed and identified the voters there, because majority of them are related to the regime. We found that they sons and grandsons the higher echelons of the government and they're just coming out on vacation and they wanted to go and vote as well. So, we found that out of while we were protesting in different countries, finding the people who're voting for the Islamic Republic of Iran. So the majority of the voting booths were deserted. The regime claims that the about 40% of people voted which is obviously a lie. Not many people voted. People, before the election, knew that Ebrahim Raisi was going to be come the president, because they were manufacturing consent. So, to say, toward that direction, they were lining up everything for Ebrahim Raisi was to be announced as the president. The regime has a specific goal by making Ebrahim Raisi the president. Ebrahim Raisi, during the 1979 election had many positions in Iran and one of them was. He was part of the Death Committee. The majority of the time he was in the judicial position of the government and he was totally involved in the death of thousands of political prisoners in summer of 1988.

We suspect he was chosen as a direct response to the Uprising of November of 2019 and the protests of early 2020. And right now there is a huge workers strike in Iran from the petroleum, the is the sugar cane syndicalist organization in Iran who have released a list of the participating workers and are there is about 57 organizations from 57 different companies from different industrial sectors, all participating in a strike. And that means thousands and thousands of people striking right now.

Ebrahim Raisi, we suspect, was chosen to become president of Iran as a response to all these strikes The government has not any base among people anymore, like I said after the protests of 2019 and 2020, the people do not trust this government anymore, and they're not even optimistic about the reform of this government. The majority of the efforts and thoughts are going concerned with replacing the regime or, as anarchists, for dismantling the state completely. So, Ebrahim Raisi was chosen to basically stamp and destroy the

already below the poverty line, so people were feeling the economic pressure already. After cutting the subsidies, the people came out that protest, which immediately because of the regime's violent actions turned into hot uprising. People started chanting anti-regime slogans, they started destroying banks and other properties. They destroyed the statues of the supreme leaders from Khomeini to Khamenei. That was like a turning point for the Iranian people. After that, the regime and Iranian people entered another phase. The majority of the Iranian people understood that there is no peaceful way, there is no soft way to fix this regime. The only path forward is either changing the regime or, we as anarchists say, dismantling the whole state.

TFSR: So can you say, in November 2019... When I had a chance to speak to folks from the federation last in January, it was just after the U.S. assassination of Soleimani, who was the head of the Quds? He was, I think, visiting Iraq at the time and killed by the Trump regime. And we kind of talked about, among other things, public responses to the assassination and sort of who Soleimani was and also Iranian responses to American intervention and embargo and such. But I am wondering if you could iterate... I don't think we talked about the Ukrainian air flight. Can you talk a little bit about the repression that followed the uprisings and the deal with the Ukrainian air flight and the public response to that?

FAE: Sure. So, during their November uprising in 2019, the government response was extremely violent. At the time when you were talking through to one of our members, they still did not know the numbers. We knew it was the almost 1,000, we suspected it was more than that, but we didn't have.. That was just an inkling, we didn't have any extra information in that regard. Since then, just as recently as two months ago there was a new stat coming out that shows the death rate of the entire Iranian population. It was, unassuming as stats, but there was an interesting point on it. It shows there's a little jump in November of 2019, which is about 4,000 peo-

ple more than on the previous month and 4,000 more more about the following month and more than the same month in the previous year. There was this difference of about 4,000 people. So we are suspecting this 4,000 people there all because of the Uprising and they died because of the Uprising. The regime does not produce any specific amount, but this is the most direct a piece of information, piece of data that we have about how many people probably died from there and November Uprising. So, 4,000 people died in three days from all across Iran.

TFSR: Wow.

FAE: Yeah, so that happened. So that tamped down the flames of Uprising just a little bit until the Trump regime assassinated Qasim Soleimani, which was a commander of the Quds force of their Islamic Revolutionary Guard. As you said he was visiting Iraq as he did and he was assassinated on the way back, I believe. So, that jump started the another set of protests.

TFSR: There were government-sponsored parades and mourning in remembrances of this head of the Revolutionary Guard who had been... He'd been pretty prominent in repressing populations at home in Iran, right? So I'm sure there was a lot of mixed feelings among the population about the execution, the assassination.

FAE: Yes, there were a couple of interesting things about that. One is that Qasim Soleimani and the Quds force was responsible for killing at least 100 people in the province of Khuzestan, specifically in the city of Mashar. They basically came with the tanks and put down the Uprising there, which we estimated more than 100 people died just in that city in just a few days. Just like that in that one location.

So, the people of Iran.. The majority of people of Iran did not like Soleimani, the opposite of what the Western media was trying to

can get them guns, AK-47s. The last time that we talked to our Afghanistan comrades about it was \$500 for an AK-47. We are trying to get some for them. Raiding and procuring them in other ways was suggested but after analyzing the situation, we couldn't safely to do that without risking our comrades. So we decided to first procure food and then get power secured. Then we get them guns and after the there was a suggestion for us to get the satellite internet or satellite phone for all easier and more durable communication. So if we get any money and if you're figuring any funding we'll be spending solely for those projects, for now.

Some of our comrades are thinking of migrating but their not positive about the current trends, current situation in Afghanistan. As we mentioned before the U.S. has been there for 20 years. People there born and became adults all while the US occupation. But one of the [U.S.] objective was not allow for the people to develop independent collectives and communities to defend themselves because that would undermine their importance and their presence in the in the region. So, that's that.

TFSR: So jumping back across borders, because anarchists don't believe in or respect borders, Iran and the U.S. both had elections in the last eight months or so. We got Biden here and Iranians got Ebrahim Raisi, who I have heard described as a conservative hardliner. What do Iranian comrades expect to get out of their new executive? How do you see the election of Biden in the so called U.S. affecting the people of Iran. Not to continue, as we do, to center the U.S. so much but recognizing that it does have an impact.

FAE: First, I wanna make a note of their their successful boycott of the Iranian election by their Iranian people. Before the election, and there were many, many propaganda and actions encouraging us to boycott the election. On the day of election, the majority of the voting booths across were deserted. And outside of Iran there were some voting locations for people went there and protested and

FAE: So, before the Taliban started this new conquest over the last few weeks, we were trying to start a project, a couple of projects in Afghanistan. We were already talking about it. We were basically finalizing some of the projects in Afghanistan. One of them was a starting an anarchist magazine, they publish monthly or biweekly and we publish it online. This would basically increase our anarchist presence in the region and we doubt that we have more leverage to do more. But this Taliban's movement basically cut us off guard, we have to scrap those projects that we had. Our forces are so small that they can't do it alone, and like I said there are no other movement that we can collaborate with. We were trying multiple organizations that were nominally closer to us, but the problem is even if we are like "okay, let's work together, even though we don't like each other," they do not like anarchists at all. They are completely anti-anarchist and we cannot establish a collaboration or alliance in any way. Right now, it seems that the Taliban may have already hold of 70-80% of the Afghanistan region. Yeah, so the Taliban is already there. They may in fact hold maybe Mazār-i-Sharif, maybe Kabul, some other cities in the region like a fortress, as you mention. But our priority is to save and secure our comrades living in Afghanistan. All other projects that we had in the region right now are on hold until further developments. We'll see what we can do. We are talking with our Kurdish friends and are the are trying to see if there have any experiences from Rojava that they can share with us since they were able to successfully fight ISIS in northern Syria, they might have some experiences that they can share with us. But this is really hard, because the anarchist presence in Afghanistan is a smaller and more spread than is possible to create any strong and independent movement without anybody's help.

So, right now we are just trying to help our comrades in Afghanistan. At the moment, we are working on setting up a fund for our comrade to send financial aid to our comrades so they can have food security. We want to get them air power generator, just in case the Taliban decided that they're gonna bomb another power line, they gonna cut down on a power line. And we're trying to see if he

portray of the Iranians. And while the Iranian government would like to have portrayed Soleimani as a hero of the Iranian people, the majority of the Iranian people that knew him disliked him. And those that did know him would not go to his funeral unless they were paid by the State to go onto the street, a tactic that every authoritarian state uses. It's nothing new.

Something that I would like to note is the response of the Western media, specifically there was an article in the New York Times that was saying that the pollution that gathered for the mourning of Qasim Soleimani in the city of Ahvaz was stretched about twenty miles. Which is ridiculous, because this city of is not that long. Now we can look at the map of the city, and see there how long the gathering roads stretched and we can measure that it was about 1.5 miles. No more than 1,000 people. And all of those were either people of the State or were paid to be there.

After the Uprising of 2019, the government clamped down, the flames of the Uprising died down a little bit, the Iranian government shot down the Ukrainian airplane, some people say by mistake by there is some evidence of they knew, that they shot at that airplane twice. And the excuse they gave us was that they wanted to bring it down "we shot the second time because we didn't want it to burn up in the air." Which is such a ridiculous statement, it makes me, angry. Just mentioning it makes me angry. They shot the plane twice, at first they lied about it. At first they claimed, "Oh we didn't shoot down anything, it wasn't us!" Then they claim "it was us, but it wasn't on purpose." Then when the second (missile) came they said "Oh, yes, the second was on purpose," that they wanted to bring it down. It was such horrible excuses, it just boggles the mind who came up with these excuses in the first place. So that started another set of protests and uprisings. The people were already, especially the student movements in Iran, chanting anti-regime slogans. People were protesting all across country. People were, of course, arrested during these protests. People were killed, executed after they got out also.

But those funerals and gatherings overcrowded between people were during the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic and the Iranian government already knew that this pandemic is happening and is spreading in Iran. They decided on showing force and showing that the Iranian people are very supportive Qasim Soleimani and were stricken of his death. They staged their funerals in multiple cities by crowding huge a number of people in small spaces. And at one of the incidents that happened because of this was there at a stampede of the feet during the funeral of the Qassim Soleimani in Kerman, the home city of Soleimani. On January 7th, 2020, during this funeral a stampede occurred that killed 56 people. The other effect of this crowding of people in a small spaces to look good under international news (that all the authoritarian regimes use to show their strength and all the people's support, even though it doesn't exist) is that during these funerals the covid-19 pandemic was already present in Iran. And we suspect that a vast majority of people got sick during these funeral proceedings. Because people were crowding in small spaces and they were not practicing any social distancing or anything like that, and they were not wearing any masks. And we suspect, actually, we know that the Iranian regime knew that the covid-19 was present, that maybe it was problematic and it was causing deaths of 1000's of people already in different countries... But for them to show restraint, they decided to have these (public funeral gathering) proceeding happening without any precautions for the covid-19 pandemic.

TFSR: So, could you speak a little more about how covid-19 was experienced by folks in Iran after it started spreading and people became more aware of it? And also if you have word about Afghanistan... Currently are there vaccines available and have you seen any increase in infections from this new on Delta variant as they call it of covid-19 that's come out of India? Have you were their experiences of lock downs and what have they been like? I'll ask the prison question afterwards, if that's okay, unless you're me to throw that in there

ber optics, and that's why they didn't have communication, internet communication to communicate with us. My first response was like how incompetent is the Afghanistan government and U.S. government that they made their fiber optic cables, that this is essential for the communication so easily accessible that Taliban could destroy it.

So, I don't think the U.S. regime was thinking of being a cure. They were thinking of their own goals, which was that they wanted to establish the region, to take it out of the influence of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. And they didn't want it to be influenced by Iran as much as possible because the Iranian regime has forces in Afghanistan as well. They would like to have a militia in Afghanistan. They very much would like to export their revolution to their neighboring countries like they do in Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and the same is true in Afghanistan. The U.S. government had specific goals which were, I believe, they would have liked to get rid of Taliban. But they found after the first couple of years after the invasion they realized that objective wasn't possible. I believe their objective changed to just hold the position, so they can exert power and influence the neighboring region, basically putting pressure on their neighboring country, which has is Iran. And having a base so as to be able to act within the region much more smoothly. The independent of people's movement is viewed as an insurrectionist movement which is combated by their anti-insurrectionist protocols.

TFSR: Is your impression that people in the Federation within Afghanistan believe that, yes, when the U.S. pulls out, the Afghan administration will be able to hold Kabul and maybe some surrounding area, which is basically fortresses as I understand? And will it be, that the rest of the country sort of ends up living under theocratic rule from the Taliban? Or have they actually already been living under the rule of Taliban and will there be space for organic, organizing and resistance for autonomy? Will that be able to occur?

first it was RAWA, the Revolutionary Afghani Women's Association that was used as an argument for U.S. military intervention, to say that in order for like a feminist society or for a society where- By the way the U.S. is not a feminist society but saying that "In order for women in Afghanistan to not be forced into a theocratic patriarchal and heavily repressive system, we need to do our part to hold the space to build something so that the people of Afghanistan can take back over there space," or whatever.

That was the argument that was made for a lot of well meaning people in the U.S. I think they're still concerned that, "Yes, the occupation has been terrible, but when we withdraw, there will be a collapse and move on... There's no other option. It's either the U.S. occupation or people living under Taliban rule!" And I think, with what you said about the has been the stamping out of any independent movements in Afghanistan that could provide a sort of alternative or provide something that is homegrown and that would fill the needs and desires of people in Afghanistan who don't want to live under the Taliban rule and also don't trust the warlord government. You know it hasn't been able to flourish. It's almost as if the U.S.... Not saying that the Taliban is a cancer, but it's as if the U.S. and U.S. population and government and military was approaching the problem, as Afghanistan is an organ in a body or is a body and that the Taliban is a cancer and the us military is chemotherapy and that we must irradiate the country as opposed to helping support civil society as an immune system that would help to regulate itself.

I'm giving a lot of agency to the U.S. and NATO and the West in this of that feels weird. But I just kind of want to point to like the short-sightedness of the mindset that people in the West, through our "humanitarian approach" have been thinking about sending and bombs and drones, as for the last 20 years.

FAE: Yes, so for that line of thinking.. As I mentioned, there are comrades in Mazār-i-Sharīf who mention that the Taliban cut the fi-

So, I guess of note - and I know this is a very long question at this point - I remember hearing early on that the Iranian regime decided to release 54,000 prisoners temporarily as a health measure, apparently driven by a fear that there would be a mass spread inside of the prisons. Which seems to show notable concern for public health that, for instance, the U.S. regime and state regimes here, had no interest in expressing interest preferred for people to die in prison.

FAE: So, let me answer your second question first... As you said there were a few 1,000's of prisoners released, but all of this prisoner ever non-political. They they didn't have any political activities. The political prisoners they were kept inside the prisons. Many of them got covid as well. I know some of them died because of that. The regime used covid as basically an executioner.

For the second question about how covid was experience in Iran and in Afghanistan... Well, some of our members' families and relatives got covid. Fotunately, our members that got covid did not have any severe consequences, there were no severe affects. They managed to come out of it okay. As far as in Afghanistan, the situation is kind of worse than in Iran. So in Afghanistan the corona virus spread there rapidly recently. Some of the problem is there is massive unemployment in Afghanistan and people want to go back to work, and the workplaces don't practice safe precautions against covid-19. Also in Afghanistan, there is less clean water and sanitation. And since the recent war with Taliban, covid-19 is not a priority anymore. The war with the Taliban is a priority and that caused an increase in the rate of spread of the covid-19 in Afghanistan.

And relating to the vaccination right now, they're only like 2.5-3% of the Iranian population are vaccinated. The Iranian government decided that they do aren't going to accept the vaccines find out U.S. or other western countries, they're going to make their own vaccines with the cooperation with Russia and China. The Iranian people don't trust the government, so even if they're the vaccine

comes into the market then becomes available, this was big majority of people would not get vaccinated. Which is kind of understandable, because if we do not know if the vaccine is gonna be as effective, that the side effects are as minimal as the other vaccines... Since their government can not be transparent or trusted on any other subject, we cannot trust it on this subject as well. That causes the situation of the vaccination in Iran very dire now. Nobody's gonna get vaccinated and that's probably gonna cause the covid-19 to become endemic in the Iranian population. Which is not they're good place to be.

TFSR: I guess, in response, besides the releases of prisoners in the United States, a lot of what was experienced, it was just the forced shutdown of public spaces and the threat that police would enforce social distancing. There were testing sites available eventually and like as with the U.S. (normally) will do the, majority of people getting punished for breaking curfew segment... Most of the curfews came into account because of the massive protests against police killing of Black and brown folks, but also the majority of people that were suffering from repression from the government for breaking curfew, ah, were like houseless folks or people that the police would attack anyway, like Black and brown and poor people. In a lot of other countries like in Italy, in Greece and Spain, in the UK, that lockdowns were more effectively an imposed by the government. They were doing patrols in China with drones... Was like a forced lockdown, the response that the Iranian government had to the pandemic? Or was it something else, and what was that like?

FAE: The Iranian government did not really enforce a lock-down like that. In the beginning of the pandemic, a lot of people were leaving the cities to go to northern Iran to rush to rush to go to provinces of the north. Usually the boujie people do this. They go to the northern city to live in their villas, to basically weather the effect. But they, themselves, they brought their covid-19 and majority

Afghanistan that before the negotiations, they (the Kabul government) released 5,000 Taliban members and during the negotiations they released another, here and there, they release another 7,000 the Taliban members. This boosted the Taliban's the morale and their forces. So at this moment it seems that the peace negotiations have failed. Of course it did, because they got about 11,000 of their members back. Why would they negotiate with the government? Another thing that I would like to mention is we lost communication week are comrades in Mazār-i-Sharif, in Balkh province for about a week. Just few hours ago we established communication again and the reason that we lost communication was that the Taliban cut their fiber optic communication. They manage to push them back from Mazār-i-Sharif, apparently they manage to fix the fiber optic. So we managed to reestablish communication.

Yeah, they there were saying that the fighting was intense near Mazār-i-Sharif, so one of the tactics the Taliban user would be to destroy the power lines, they destroyed the communication lines so that the population cannot ask for help. Without the power lines as many of their infrastructure will not work which would be in benefit of the Taliban. So, in regards to U.S. drawing out is that U.S. forces in Afghanistan they're, even though they supposedly were a counter-force to Taliban and by them being there and their actions in Afghanistan, they stopped the popular independent movement in Afghanistan. There is little-to-no independent movement to the Taliban. Everything that exists at the moment, is either from the government, or is from the religious or another political party that has their own goal and they want to score our own and political goals regional goals. They're not something that we can trust and corporate with because our goals and values are not the same.

TFSR: Speaking from a U.S. perspective, as someone who remembers when the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, and hearing the U.S. dialogue and the power players talk about it, the "humanitarian, liberal response" in the U.S. has frequently come from a position of "We need to be in there to provide stability." So, at

were, like you said, is seen as a threat to the Iranian regime. They do not like people to self-organize and to try to take care of themselves, because that's seen as an action against the regime. Even if some people were trying to help other, minority ethnicities in Iran, they started making up charges against them that they were acting against the regime, they are separatists, that they are working with a foreign entity to dismantle the regime. They make claims of their mutual aid organizations that people are trying to make and basically put a stop to all of that. If anything's happening in Iran, it is unfortunately, on the smaller scale and it's gonna be underground, they do not allow public self-organization from the people.

TFSR: Pivoting a little bit in topics, the former U.S. President Trump had promised (as an “Antiwar president”) to pull U.S. troops out of Afghanistan by May of this year and that date was switched to September 11th for the twentieth anniversary of the 9-11 attacks on the U.S. and that was changed by Biden, the current U.S. president. In March, President Ghani in Afghanistan said he'd, be working on a peace process and democratic elections with the Taliban or pursuing that at least. Also, it's clear that, while the US and NATO powers may be trying to “draw down their forces in the country,” they will not leave the country fully. They'll leave behind security, analysts, special forces, private contractors and a lot of the infrastructure attached to that. I was wondering how your comments from Afghanistan think that the next year might look. What are their concerns, fears and hopes. Do they expect the Taliban to overtake the existing central government in Kabul? The U.S. doesn't think it's gonna, last more than six months, and what could that look like?

FAE: So, let's start with the analysis of the comrades in Afghanistan. That is that the government in Afghanistan is probably gonna keep Kabul. Even though it might lose everything else, they're gonna focus their forces in Kabul and at least save that place. But, then you were mentioning god and the peace negotiations with Taliban... From the one of the reports have got from our comrades in

of people in the northern region of Iran got sick, they got covid, it spread more rapidly over there. The residents of those provinces, they were wanting a government shutdown. They wanted for people to stop going and coming up to live in their villas and spread more virus. But the government did not listen, they still allowed people to travel all of the places. After that they did something that is SO counter intuitive- even thinking about it is the very confusing for me right now... People the run to their villas, the boujie people, then wanted to come back. They were like “okay, they don't want us here. So, okay, we go back to where we came from.” The government then enforced a quarantine then. They say “okay, you gonna stay over there.” They refuse to let other people to travel at least temporarily.

As you mentioned with other governments, in Iran, they used the covid-19 as a means of repression. The breaking of the protesters, an execution method for the political prisoners. They don't enforce any social distancing if it was for the protesters against the regime, if it was for a state-sponsored gathering they were completely okay with that they don't enforce any social distancing.

TFSR: You also mentioned before we started recording how, in terms of travel restrictions being applied or distancing or whatever lock-down or these health concerns being applied to people differently according to class. And this kind of reminds me of the way that I understand sanctions, for instance, are applied by destroying the social safety nets for the majority of the population, while the rich continue to be able to live relatively luxuriously, traveling to villas in the north or what have you. You also mentioned that the Iranian government was allowing Chinese businessmen and business-people to still travel even after covid pandemic had become apparent to the world, which seems like a sacrifice of the health of the population in order to increase the business opportunities of the bourgeoisie end of the governing class. Is that a fair summary?

FAE: Yeah, so, when the covid-19 pandemic became apparent to be a huge and destructive thing when other countries started closing down the airports to the Chinese government, stopping the travel to and from China, the Iranian government did not. So, the Iranian government kept the airports open. And it allowed the Chinese businessman to travel to Iran and from Iran and to travel to Europe. So, basically the bourgeoisie of China used the bourgeoisie of Iran and the Iranian government as a loophole in those travel restrictions until people actually are closed travel routes through Iran as well. So, we suspect that on a good deal of the Iranian population getting sick from covid and its spreading in Iran was because of these travels as well.

The thing about Iranian bourgeoisie is highly related to the government. This might be a side note, but I think it's worth mentioning that prior to the Iranian revolution in 1979, the shah's regime wanted to consolidate power into the Shah's hands. So, he created that one party rule fully consolidated all the political power in his hand and went after religious and the market, the Capital and he wanted to gain control of both of them. Well, this backfired on him because the religious institutions and the Mullahs united with the Capitalists of the market, of the Bazaar and that led to the revolution 1979. The Islamic Iranian regime managed to consummated all three powers. There is no effective political power that can oppose the Iranian regime, it's a dictatorship. The religious institutions are in the hands of the Islamic authoritarian regime. The majority of their financial institutions are either run by the higher-ups in the regime by their friends and relatives. So, when we mention Iranian bourgeoisie now, you're basically mentioning the sons and relatives of the higher echelons of the Iranian regime. That's how it works in Iran. All the power is consolidated in the Islamic regime. The Iranian bourgeoisie, for the businesses they allowed the airports to be open and they traveled abroad as well, themselves. They got covid, they traveled abroad, those sons of the higher-ups and the regimes, they take vacations in their different countries.

There was another thing that happened during first wave of the covid-19 there was a loophole for the Chinese bourgeoisie, Chinese businessman to travel to Iran and used Iran as a hub to travel to the different countries that were closed off to China themselves. And the other other thing was that the Iranian bourgeoisie are directly related to the power structure after Iranian State, they themselves traveled to other countries abroad for the vacations, to get out of Iran and perhaps weather the worst effects of covid-19, but they were already sick when they were traveling abroad. They spread their disease further.

TFSR: And just a quick reminder to listeners that the variants that have been spreading so fast... the variants from like... South Africa have started getting infections, likely because they were getting plane flights from people in New York City flying there, where the infections were already spreading likely they got infections. I know it likely was brought in at Milan, where there was a large outbreak before these diseases are spreading because rich business people don't care about the possible implications of their interaction. So they burn up a bunch of fossil fuels in a jet plane, so they can go vacation or make a business meeting somewhere.

So, one hopeful thing that we've heard from a lot of places around the world were stories of people creating and growing thriving mutual aid in response to that dual catastrophes of governmental and economic failure in the pandemic. How was this seen in Iran and Afghanistan? How did the authorities respond, if there were instances where people created their own civil society responses, was that deemed as a threat and have those mutual aid efforts continued?

FAE: So, one of the examples of the mutual aid aim at Iran after the spread of corona virus was in the city like Isfahan, where people basically decided to not allow increases of the rents and may even decrease over a significant amount. But other mutual aid activities