

Brexit problems, paramilitary gangs contribute to violence in Northern Ireland



By Al Neal

The smell of petrol, burning rubber, and the dull thuds of brick against police riot shield walls have marred the streets across five cities and towns in Northern Ireland for over a week. Union loyalists and Irish Republicans have clashed with police, and the rioting has often involved children as young as 12, creating scenes of violence not seen in decades—since the peak of the “troubles” in the 1970s.

On Wednesday, April 7, a double-decker bus was firebombed. The violence upon the streets of Belfast spilled over into Thursday, April 8, and marked the seventh night of violence in the loyalist areas of Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey, Londonderry/Derry, and Ballymena.

The sectarian fighting escalated by the west Belfast peace wall, dividing the predominantly Protestant loyalist communities from the Catholic nationalist communities who call for a united Republic of Ireland.

The death of Prince Phillip the Duke of Edinburgh, Friday, April 9, and the 23rd anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement—ushering in an era of uneasy and fragile peace between Loyalists and Irish Republicans—on Saturday, April 10, were the first two nights without incidents. Some minor disturbances did occur hours after the formal death announcement.

While all major political parties in Northern Ireland have called for “an immediate and complete end” to the violence, they remain divided about its causes. The Labour Party’s shadow Northern Ireland secretary said the riots have grown out of a “vacuum” created by Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s (lack of) leadership, and the tensions caused by his Brexit deal.

“I think it’s undeniable that loyalist paramilitary gangs are exploiting the tensions but they are

T H I S W E E K :

- Brexit problems, paramilitary gangs contribute to violence in Northern Ireland
- Local elections will see largest number of Communist candidates since 1980s
- Robot finds more warm water beneath Antarctica’s doomsday glacier
- ONU FAO acogerá Simposio Mundial sobre Biodiversidad de los suelos
- Court deals final blow to Trump era plan to drill in the Atlantic

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tapping into a deep hurt and anger in the loyalist and unionist community in Northern Ireland as a consequence of the prime minister’s repeated dishonesty of the consequences of his Brexit deal,” said Louise Haigh, NI shadow secretary during an interview on BBC Radio 4’s Today.

Five cities across Northern Ireland experience some of the worst violence since the 1970s.

She continued to say Johnson should “show responsibility as a custodian of the Belfast Good Friday agreement” and “convene talks with all the Northern Ireland parties” to “find political, pragmatic solutions to the tensions we are seeing.”

President Joe Biden weighed in last week and called for calm whilst voicing the administration support for the Brexit protocol.

“We are concerned by the violence in Northern Ireland, and we join the British, Irish, and Northern Irish leaders in their calls for calm,” said White House press secretary Jen Psaki during a press briefing on April 8.

“We remain, steadfast supporters of a secure and prosperous Northern Ireland, in which all communities have a voice and enjoy the gains of the hard-won peace. We welcome the provisions in both the EU-UK trade cooperation agreement and the Northern Ireland Protocol, which helped protect the gains of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.”

As of Monday morning, the Prime Minister has

signaled there is consideration of intergovernmental talks over the rising tensions in Northern Ireland, despite concerns that involving Dublin would spark further unionist anger. Johnson has not ruled out traveling to Belfast, but any visit will be delayed until the end of the official mourning period for the Duke of Edinburgh.

“My concern would be young people being groomed into paramilitary organizations and criminal gangs,” said Fr. Martin Magill, a parish priest near west Belfast, “there are serious safeguarding questions to be raised.”

Local elections will see largest number of Communist candidates since 1980s

By Morning Star

On May 6, voters in Britain will go to the polls in local elections that will see the largest number of candidates representing the Communist Party since the early 1980s. Candidates will be campaigning in the Welsh Senedd, Scottish Parliament, and London, as well as in English local councils.

The launch of the Communist Party’s manifesto, or platform, for the May 6 elections on Tuesday night will reflect “the confidence and enthusiasm of a growing Communist Party,” general secretary Robert Griffiths says.

The platform “Capitalism Is the Problem – Socialism Is the Solution” outlines the party’s policies and accuses the “Tory government in Westminster and, to a lesser extent, the devolved administrations” of a “heavy responsibility for the carnage caused by the coronavirus outbreak,” pointing out that “Britain has one of the highest COVID death rates in the world.”

The government’s mishandling of the pandemic and Britain’s deepest recession in 300 years have led to a renewed interest in socialism. So far in the U.K., there have been more than 126,000 COVID-related deaths, 400,000 have contracted long CO-

VID, and hundreds of thousands of people are on National Health Service waiting lists.

The Communists are hoping to show voters that there are alternatives. Millions of people voted for change in the 2016 EU referendum and the 2017 and 2019 general elections. Polls showed they were looking for a new politics and economics and an end to the richest 10% of the population owning more than half of Britain’s personal wealth.

Though the Labour Party is moving away from socialist policies, the Communists argue that “socialist measures are what is needed as we emerge from a pandemic into a major economic crisis.”

To redress the wealth imbalance, the Communist Party advocates a minimum £10.40 per hour living wage (approx. \$14.30 USD), with additional supports for lower-income workers. It is also calling for an above-inflation pay rise for public-sector workers, particularly for NHS staff who have borne the brunt of the pandemic. The party says that the government could fund much of the costs for the increase with cuts to military spending. The Conservative government of Boris Johnson recently allocated hundreds of billions of pounds to update Britain’s nuclear weapons program.

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Robot finds more warm water beneath Antarctica's doomsday glacier



By Olivia Rosane

Scientists have maneuvered an underwater robot beneath Antarctica's "doomsday glacier" for the first time, and the resulting data is not reassuring.

Antarctica's Thwaites Glacier is referred to as the doomsday glacier because every year it contributes 4% to global sea level rise and acts as a stopper for the West Antarctic Ice Sheet. If the glacier were to collapse and take the sheet with it, that would raise global sea levels by around 10 feet. Now, a study published in *Science Advances* on April 9 warns that there is more warm water circling below the glacier than previously believed, making that collapse more likely.

"Our observations show warm water impinging from all sides on pinning points critical to ice-shelf stability, a scenario that may lead to unpinning and retreat," the study authors wrote. Pinning points are areas where the ice connects with the bedrock that provides stability, Earther explained.

The new paper is based on a 2019 expedition where an autonomous submarine named *Ran* explored the area beneath the glacier in order to measure the strength, salinity, oxygen content, and temperature of the ocean currents that move beneath it, the International Thwaites Glacier Collaboration explained in a press release.

"These were the first measurements ever performed beneath the ice front of Thwaites glacier," Anna Wåhlin, lead author and University of Gothen

burg oceanography professor, explained in the press release. "Global sea level is affected by how much ice there is on land, and the biggest uncertainty in the forecasts is the future evolution of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet."

This isn't the first instance revealing the presence of warm water beneath the glacier. In January 2020, researchers drilled a borehole through the glacier and recorded temperature readings of more than two degrees Celsius above freezing, *EcoWatch* reported at the time.

However, *Ran*'s measurements were taken earlier and allow scientists to understand the warmer water's movement in more detail. Scientists now know that water as warm as 1.05 degrees Celsius is circulating around the glacier's vulnerable pinning points.

While this sounds grim, the fact that researchers were able to obtain the data is crucial for understanding and predicting the impacts of the climate crisis.

"The good news is that we are now, for the first time, collecting data that will enable us to model the dynamics of Thwaite's glacier. This data will help us better calculate ice melting in the future. With the help of new technology, we can improve the models and reduce the great uncertainty that now prevails around global sea level variations," Wåhlin said in the press release.

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Court deals final blow to Trump era plan to drill in the Atlantic

By Jake Johnson

In April of 2017, Trump signed an executive order aiming to undo an Obama-era ban on fossil fuel exploration in that territory, but a federal judge in Alaska ruled the move unlawful in 2019.

Though the Trump administration appealed the ruling, President Joe Biden revoked his predecessor's 2017 order shortly after taking office, rendering the court case moot.

On Tuesday, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals agreed to dismiss the Trump administration's appeal.

"Because the terms of the challenged Executive Order are no longer in effect, the relevant areas of the [Outer Continental Shelf] in the Chukchi Sea, Beaufort Sea, and Atlantic Ocean will be withdrawn from exploration and development activities," the court said in its order.

Erik Grafe of Earthjustice, which represented a coalition of advocacy groups that challenged Trump's order, said in a statement that "we welcome today's decision and its confirmation of President Obama's legacy of ocean and climate protection."

In January, Biden ordered a temporary pause on new oil and gas leasing on federal lands and waters, a decision environmentalists hailed as a positive step that should be made permanent.

But climate groups voiced outrage last month when the Biden administration gave career officials a green light to resume processing existing permits for drilling on public lands and waters.

ONU FAO acogerá Simposio Mundial sobre Biodiversidad de los suelos

BY PRENSA LATINA

La Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura (FAO) anunció la realización de manera virtual del Simposio Mundial sobre la Biodiversidad del Suelo (GSOBI21) del 19 al 22 de abril.

El encuentro, informó el organismo especializado en un comunicado, reunirá a funcionarios gubernamentales, organizaciones internacionales, usuarios de la tierra y a expertos en ciencias del suelo y biodiversidad.

El objetivo principal del Simposio—añade el texto—será llenar vacíos de conocimiento, identificar soluciones frente a los desafíos globales a través de la mejora de la biodiversidad del suelo y promover el debate entre responsables de formulación de políticas, productores de alimentos, científicos, profesionales y otras partes interesadas.

La inauguración de la reunión la hará el director general de la FAO, QU Dongyu, y además de otras intervenciones de expertos de alto nivel, habrá una sesión dedicada en las acciones del sector privado sobre la biodiversidad del suelo, la salud y una revisión del estado de la biodiversidad mundial de ese importante recurso.

También en la sesión de apertura la FAO presentará 'El mundo mágico de la biodiversidad del suelo: una colección de 10 cuentos infantiles de todo el mundo' y exposición de carteles y concursos.

La salud del suelo depende de la presencia de una gran variedad de organismos vivos, desde bacterias y hongos hasta lombrices de tierra, insectos y vertebrados, los cuales conforman su biodiversidad, destaca la nota de la FAO.

Todos ellos unidos realizan una multitud de funciones ecosistémicas y brindan servicios ecosistémicos esenciales para respaldar la agricultura y la seguridad alimentaria, como regular los ciclos de nutrientes; controlar la dinámica de la materia orgánica; apoyar el secuestro de carbono, así como regular las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero.

Entre otras muchas contribuciones, esos organismos influyen en la salud de las plantas, los animales, el suelo y las personas a través de la interacción de patógenos y plagas con sus depredadores y parásitos naturales, asegurando defensas naturales y sirviendo como fuente de medicamentos y nutrientes.

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