

## Bosses and Republicans use fake 'labor shortage' to cut unemployment benefits



By Rebekah Entralgo

**T**he sudden shift from “we love our essential workers” to “they’re living off the government dole” seemingly happened overnight. Across the country, local media coverage has been filled with stories of business owners lamenting that they are unable to fill positions as economies reopen.

“We are short-staffed. Please be patient with the staff who did show up. Nobody wants to work anymore,” reads a sign outside a McDonald’s drive-thru window in Texas, according to an internet video.

In addition to a weaker than expected April jobs report, these viral anecdotes have raised concerns over a labor shortage in the United States and how to best address it. The Wall Street Journal reports a record 8.1 million job openings across the country.

But it’s not that people don’t want to work—it’s that they don’t want to work for so little.

Dan Price, the CEO of Gravity Payments, who raised the starting wage at his company to \$70,000, recently said he gets 300 applications for every opening.

It turns out there’s no “labor shortage”—just a shortage of people who will work for starvation wages, especially during a pandemic that’s hit low-wage workers the hardest. What we are witnessing now is a reckoning and reassessment of the future of

work.

But rather than think critically about why so many workers are hesitant to return, some pundits and right-wing politicians blame unemployment benefits. President Joe Biden’s American Rescue Plan provides an extra \$300 a week for those out of work during the pandemic.

The GOP now wants to take that away. Republican governors from Montana, South Dakota, Utah, Iowa, and Arkansas, for example, have already announced

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they will cut unemployment benefits to force more people back to work.

If Republicans truly wanted to abide by their free-market ideals, they would recognize that to stay competitive; employers must adapt to the market demands and pay their workers what they are worth.

**It's not that people don't want to work—it's that they don't want to work for so little.**

Instead, they're opting to slash unemployment benefits, oppose significant increases in the federal minimum wage, and have the government subsidize businesses by forcing employees to rely on assistance like food stamps to get by. Same as it ever was.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the reality that our economy is dependent on exploitation. As the virus spread, many workers watched their bosses prioritize profit over employees' lives, who risked their health and lives to work frontline jobs during a pandemic that killed over 500,000 people in this country.

While these low-wage workers braved the pandemic, their CEOs cashed in.

A new report from the Institute for Policy Studies found that among the 100 S&P 500 firms with the lowest median worker wages, 51 rigged the rules in 2020 to award CEOs large bonuses while their low-wage employees suffered. Average CEO pay skyrocketed 29% to over \$15 million, while average

employee salaries fell to barely \$28,000.

It's been well over a decade since Congress raised the federal minimum wage. But meanwhile, the CEOs and speculators who get rich off minimum-wage labor have seen their fortunes skyrocket. If the minimum wage had increased at the same rate as Wall Street bonuses since 1985, it would be worth \$44 an hour today.

With all of this in mind, would you put your life on the line for \$7.25 an hour? The lesson should be simple for employers: If you want workers, pay them a living wage.

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## **In threat to Russia, EU grants U.S. troops 'unhindered' movement across continent**

**By Ben Chacko**

**T**he European Union authorized the United States, Canada, and Norway to join its Military Mobility project Thursday, allowing those countries' troops "unhindered" movement within the bloc.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the move would "make EU defense more efficient and...strengthen our security" by speeding up the transfer of armies across the continent. The U.S. has over 70K soldiers stationed in Europe and is currently leading nearly 30K allied troops in the Defender Europe 2021 military maneuvers along Russia's borders from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

The decision is likely to be seen as a threat by Russia, coming the same day that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky asked visiting U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken to speed up Kiev's integration into NATO and the EU.

German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer praised a "quantum jump" in military cooperation that would boost "transatlantic connectivity and the co-operation of the European Union and NATO."

Military Mobility is the flagship project of what the EU terms "Permanent Structured Co-Oper-

ation" (PESCO), a framework for integration of member states' militaries that is seen in some quarters as a step towards a European army. Its goal is to "simplify and standardize cross-border military transport procedures...to enable the unhindered movement of military personnel and assets within the borders of the EU."

The integration of the U.S. will amplify fears that the E.U. military scheme is a cloak to undermine the official neutrality of countries such as Ireland, Austria, Finland, and Sweden, which stand outside NATO but inside PESCO.

Britain's Communist Party leader Robert Griffiths said bringing the U.S. into the scheme was "a dangerous escalation of the new cold war which highlights the growing military role."

And former Trade Unionists Against the EU chairman Doug Nicholls said the "increasing belligerence and militarization" of the EU was one reason that many British socialists voted to leave.

PESCO was "very much about getting U.S. Army boots on the ground," he told the Morning Star. "U.S. imperialism and Wall Street have been the strongest supporters of the EU since its inception."

**European peace activists say the move is about getting U.S. Army boots on the ground.**

# Dark cloud over Ramadan as Israel intensifies attacks on Gaza



By John Wojcik

**T**he right-wing extremist Israeli regime of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is sending more bombers into skies over Gaza, toppling buildings, and killing growing numbers of innocent civilians as the Islamic holy days of Ramadan draw to a close. The relentless escalation of attacks continues to defy what many Palestinians and others in the Middle East characterize as last-minute and nothing more than half-hearted attempts by the Al-Sisi regime in Egypt to negotiate a cease fire.

Many previous attacks by Israel against Gaza, including the infamously cruel and devastating attacks in the 2014 war, focused on inflicting maximal damage on the poverty-stricken and blockaded Palestinian territory. But this round of attacks on Palestinians is the worst since 2000 when the second Palestinian intifada (uprising) began. The current attacks threaten to destroy the entire Palestinian infrastructure.

The United Nations and a host of international observers have characterized the Israeli bombings as being completely out of proportion to the retaliatory rocket attacks Israel itself is sustaining. While only a very few rocket attacks launched by Hamas militants have reached the Tel Aviv area, right-wing Israeli mobs have rampaged through the streets, savagely beating Palestinians and other Arabs and setting fire to cars and buses.

War weary, sick, and hungry Palestinians, meanwhile, sadly marked the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan under barrage after barrage of missiles and airstrikes coming from Israeli air force jets. Since Monday, Israel has toppled three high-rise apartment buildings in the Gaza strip.

Gaza's Health Ministry said the death toll has climbed to 83 Palestinians, including 17 children and seven women, with more than 480 people wounded. The Netanyahu government is bragging that it has actually killed far more than that.

Israel claims it has lost seven people, but it is not clear how many of them were soldiers in tanks hit by anti-tank missiles or civilians killed by Hamas rockets.

Last night, as on other nights recently, air raid sirens went off in southern and central Israel but there were no reports of damage or injury.

Netanyahu visited the site of the Iron Dome missile defense system, which the Israeli military says has intercepted 90% of the rockets fired from Gaza. The facility visited is also believed to house the country's nuclear weapons.

**Israeli cabinet authorizes intensification of attacks on Palestinian territories.**

## LOCAL NEWS

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### Ecuador has presidential elections

By Emile Schepers

**E**cador has presidential elections on Sunday, April 11, a runoff between the two top-scoring candidates in the original election held on February 7.

The Communist Party of Ecuador and other left and working-class groups strongly support Andrés Arauz, who was a member of the cabinet of former left-wing President Rafael Correa and is running as the candidate of UNES, the Union of Hope Party. His opponent is Guillermo Lasso of the CREO-Social Christian Party coalition. Lasso strongly supports neoliberal policies promoted by the International Monetary Fund, and also runs on an anti-abortion platform.

Arauz has vowed to dump the International Monetary Fund neoliberal agreement foisted on Ecuador by the outgoing right-wing administration of Lenin Moreno. In the week before the runoff election, Arauz has a small lead over Lasso.

### Preocupación en ONU por aumento de tensiones en territorio palestino

BY PRENSA LATINA

**E**l coordinador especial de la ONU para el proceso de paz en el Medio Oriente, Tor Wennesland, expresó hoy profunda preocupación por el aumento de las tensiones y la violencia en Cisjordania ocupada, incluida Jerusalén Oriental.

Tal escenario empeora desde el comienzo del mes sagrado del Ramadán, indicó en un comunicado y llamó a las fuerza de ocupación de Israel a ejercer la máxima moderación y utilizar la fuerza letal solo cuando sea estrictamente inevitable para proteger la vida. Los actores de sucesos violentos y ataques deben rendir cuentas y ser llevados ante la justicia sin demora, subrayó el diplomático noruego.

Wennesland recalcó que los recientes acontecimientos relacionados con el desalojo de familias de refugiados palestinos en Sheikh Jarrah y otros barrios en Jerusalén Oriental resultan igualmente muy alarmantes.

Ante este escenario, instó a Israel a poner fin a las demoliciones y a los desalojos, de conformidad con sus obligaciones en virtud del derecho internacional humanitario.

Países como Rusia, Irán y Siria han manifestado también gran inquietud por la agudización de tensiones en esa zona.

Según denunció la cancillería siria, desde el comienzo del mes sagrado del Ramadán, las fuerzas sionistas intensificaron sus ataques en territorio palestino para impedir que los fieles llegaran a las explanadas de la sagrada mezquita Al-Aqsa y efectuar sus rituales religiosos.

De acuerdo con la nota, los militares israelíes transformaron las inmediaciones de Al-Aqsa y la ciudad vieja de Jerusalén en un cuartel militar, al incrementar los puestos de control con el fin de obstaculizar la llegada de palestinos a la mezquita.

Las fuerzas de ocupación de Tel Aviv apoyaron también a decenas de colonos y grupos de la extrema derecha en sus acciones hostiles contra los jóvenes palestinos con el objetivo de interrumpir sus rezos y oraciones, remarcó la declaración.

Asimismo, Damasco reafirmó que esa nueva escalada demuestra la política del ocupante encaminada a cambiar la situación legal e histórica en Al-Aqsa y continuar su plan de judaizar a Jerusalén y terminar con la presencia árabe palestina en la misma.

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