

Trump's racist comments trigger international condemnation

By James Cogan
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The already battered international standing of the US government has been dealt a further blow by the revelation that President Trump labeled some of the most oppressed and impoverished nations as “shithole countries.” Disgust and anger over the openly racist comments the US president made at a meeting with congressional leaders on Thursday have only been intensified by Trump's belated and obviously dishonest attempts to deny that he said what has been reported by multiple sources, including some who were at the meeting.

The remarks were made at a White House conference with Democratic and Republican lawmakers on immigration policy. In response to a discussion on “temporary protected status,” which allows people from countries ravaged by natural disasters or war, such as Haiti and El Salvador, to live and work in the US, Trump said: “What do we want Haitians here for? Why do we want all these people from Africa here? Why do we want all these people from shithole countries? We should have more people from places like Norway.”

Trump's rant was leaked to the *Washington Post* and made public. International denunciations soon followed.

The United Nations human rights' spokesperson, Rupert Colville, told a press conference: “There is no other word one can use but racist. You cannot dismiss entire countries and continents as ‘shitholes,’ whose entire populations are not white, are therefore not welcome.”

The government of Haiti, from which hundreds of thousands of people have migrated to the US to escape intractable poverty and political repression, issued a statement declaring that it “condemns in the strongest terms these abhorrent and obnoxious remarks.” The country's ambassador to the US has demanded a public apology.

Other political leaders also felt obliged to issue statements. The president of El Salvador tweeted that Trump had “struck at the dignity of Salvadorians.” Last Monday, the Trump administration stripped over 250,000 people from El Salvador who have been living for decades in the US of their protected status, giving them 18 months to pack up and

leave or be deported.

Vicente Fox, the former president of Mexico, tweeted to Trump: “Your mouth is the foulest shithole in the world.” During the 2016 election, Trump slandered millions of Mexican immigrants to the US, asserting: “They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists.”

The African National Congress government in South Africa labeled the remark as “extremely offensive.” The country's media was full of denunciations and ridicule of Trump. One news outlet, the *Daily Maverick*, wrote that an event at the White House “is soon to include [Ku Klux Klan] hoods and tiki torches at this rate.”

The government of Botswana called the remarks “reprehensible and racist” and reportedly summoned the US ambassador to ascertain if the country was considered a “shithole” by Washington. Across Africa, Trump was condemned and the imperialist powers, including the United States, declared to be responsible for the continent's legacy of poverty and backwardness.

Not surprisingly, there have been no strong statements of condemnation by European governments or by Japan or Australia. The policies of all the imperialist powers are discriminatory against people from the poorest regions of the world.

The European Union is seeking to seal its borders to block refugees from Africa and the Middle East, leading to thousands of people losing their lives attempting to cross the Mediterranean. Immigration to Japan is effectively impossible from most countries. Australia maintains a black list of dozens of states whose citizens are routinely denied even tourist visas. While they may not be officially labeled as “shithole countries,” that is how their populations are treated.

In much of the world, however, officials of the Trump administration have been left to desperately try and contain the diplomatic fallout. The State Department and embassies have issued reassurances that the United States values its relations with African and Central and South American countries.

The damage nevertheless extends internationally, as indicated by the announcement by the White House yesterday that Trump is canceling a February visit to the United Kingdom. There is no doubt he would have been met by even larger demonstrations than were expected due to the popular revulsion in Britain over his comments. In fact, wherever in the world Trump travels, the American ruling class faces the prospect of its head of state being greeted by mass opposition to his presence.

After less than one year in office, Trump is arguably more reviled than “weapons of mass destruction” fabricator and war criminal George W. Bush. The American president is viewed by billions of people as an unstable warmonger, racist and liar. In the American working class, one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse on the planet, growing opposition to Trump’s racist immigration policies and fascistic outlook is intersecting with mounting anger over falling living standards, failing infrastructure and police-state repression.

The reaction of the American political and media establishment to Trump’s remarks has had an air of despair. There is a degree of recognition in the capitalist class and its representatives that, with the Trump administration, the protracted loss of US authority and credibility, on both the world arena and at home, has reached a breaking point.

Summing up the sentiment in the corridors of power, Idaho Republican Mike Simpson told the Associated Press: “This a big deal. America’s influence and power in the world has really been about our ability to persuade because of our leadership, and he’s just destroying that.”

At the same time, the condemnations of Trump are laced with hypocrisy, especially on the part of the Democratic Party and its supporters. In the final analysis, Trump simply gave crude expression to how the Obama administration viewed and treated migrants from the nations that have been labeled as “shithole countries.”

Under Obama, at least 2.5 million people were deported—at least 1,000 per day—particularly from Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. If Hillary Clinton had been elected in 2016, the brutal persecution of so-called “illegal” immigrants would have continued unabated.

The aim of the recriminations against Trump in the American establishment is to try and present the current president as a mere aberration, a blemish on an otherwise healthy and democratic *body politic*. Every effort is being made to promote the conception that if a new figure was installed in the White House, things would return to “normal.”

Nothing could be further from the truth. Trump is the product of a decades-long process, characterised by a steep decline in the global economic position of American

capitalism and the immense growth of class antagonisms and social inequality within the US.

The Cold War lies and propaganda that US imperialism stood for “liberty,” “democracy” and “human rights” have been thoroughly exposed over the past 25 years. Washington engages in intrigues or outright invasions of countries and inflicts death and destruction so American banks and corporations can plunder resources and dominate markets. Within the US, the living standards of the working class have been devastated to protect and increase the wealth of a tiny proportion of the population—the capitalist class and its upper-middle class periphery.

It is within the degenerated political environment produced by these processes that Trump was able—through demagogic appeals to the immense alienation of sections of the population, and the political vacuum left by the right-wing, anti-working class policies of the Democrats—to win the presidency. His administration has proceeded to pursue the interests of the capitalist oligarchy through massive corporate tax cuts at home and stepped-up militarist intrigues internationally.

Trump is the noxious expression of the decline and decay of American capitalism and its ruling class. The presence at the pinnacle of state power of an outright racist, who gives open and crude expression to the reactionary content of US foreign and domestic policy, undermines the ability of American imperialism to cloak its aggression and plunder around the world in the mantle of “democracy” and “human rights.”

Anti-immigrant xenophobia, racism and nationalism are the inevitable corollary to militarism and deepening attacks on the working class. In every country, it is how the capitalist class is seeking to divide and disorientate the masses and defend its ownership and control over society’s wealth and productive capacity.

The response of the working class to racism and chauvinism must therefore be developed in complete opposition to the capitalist system and all its political parties and defenders. In the United States and around the world, it must be answered with the fight for the international unity of the working class in the common struggle for world socialism.

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