

With the presidential elections approaching, there are those who argue, yet again, that whatever problems there are with the Democrats and Obama, the “alternative”—the Republicans—are much worse. The reality is that in key ways, Obama, as U.S. president, has been *even worse* for the masses of people, in the U.S. and worldwide. This is a fact that can be clearly demonstrated. Here are six ways that Obama has gone beyond Bush in service of the ruling system of capitalism-imperialism.

2 Blaming Youth for Their Own Oppression

In a series of Father’s Day speeches and in various other public remarks, Obama has consistently put the onus for the poverty, high prison rates, poor education, and the whole oppressive situation that Black and Latino youth face on the people themselves. Obama claims that the problem is “personal responsibility”—absentee fathers, youth with sagging pants, too much TV, and so on. Left totally out of this is the reality: how this system has devastated communities of the oppressed; left little “choice” for millions of youth except the underground economy or the military; targeted young men with “stop and frisk” racial profiling and outright police murder; and thrown millions into prisons. And at the core of this message is the revival and strengthening of the patriarchal family, with the father at the head and acting as “role model.”

As Carl Dix said about Obama’s message: “The people are being blamed—and who better than Barack Obama, the first Black president, to blame Black youth for their plight? If George Bush does it, people would say it’s racist. But when the first Black president does it, it actually draws people into it.”

5 The War on Immigrants

Obama has been intensifying the brutal, inhumane offensive against immigrants to record levels. Last October, the Obama administration released figures showing that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had deported almost 400,000 people in fiscal year 2011. This is the highest yearly number of deportations in the eight years of ICE.

A key part of Obama’s war on immigrants is a federal program called “Secure Communities,” under which local police send the fingerprints of every person they arrest to the Department of Homeland Security.

Obama officials claim that this anti-immigrant offensive is targeted at people who have committed serious felonies. But the truth is that this has led to mass deportations of people whose only “crime” is to cross the border for work to support themselves and their families. People have been suddenly separated—perhaps forever—from their children and spouses, simply because they were stopped for a minor traffic violation. ICE calls such deportees “collateral”—bringing to mind the civilians the U.S. kills in its wars and drone attacks, and callously dismisses as “collateral damage.”



Mass arrest of immigrants in Phoenix, Arizona, 2010.

1 Assassinations on the President’s Orders

Before becoming the president and commander-in-chief, Obama opposed the prison set up by George W. Bush at Guantánamo to indefinitely hold hundreds of people without charges, simply based on U.S. accusations of links with terrorism. Once in the White House, Obama has actually gone further than Bush by claiming, and acting on, a supposed presidential authority to *assassinate* anyone, including those with U.S. citizenship, anywhere in the world just based on the presidential say-so that those targeted are “terrorists” and a danger to U.S. interests. The world saw this outrageous policy in action last September when missiles fired from a U.S. drone in Yemen killed Anwar al-Awlaki, a U.S. citizen and a spokesman for al-Qaeda.

According to news reports, there is a secret panel of government officials within the executive that discusses who to place on the kill list, with the president making the final decision. There is no public record of this process, no laws regulating it, no judicial review.

For an in-depth analysis of this issue, see “Obama Administration: Judge, Jury, and Executioner” at revcom.us.

Six Ways That Obama Has Been WORSE Than Bush

3 Threatening Preventive War Against Iran

At a March 4, 2012 speech at AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee), Obama declared, “Iran’s leaders should understand that I do not have a policy of containment; I have a policy to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. And as I have made clear time and again during the course of my presidency, I will not hesitate to use force when it is necessary to defend the United States and its interests.”

As legal commentator Glenn Greenwald notes, “Here we have the Bush administration’s most controversial war theory explicitly embraced: that the U.S. has the right not only to attack another country in order to preempt an imminent attack (preemptive war), but even to prevent some future, speculative threat (preventive war).”

Obama’s adoption of the principle of preventive war against Iran is *worse* because, for one, the danger of a U.S.-Israeli war against Iran is even greater today. And it is also worse because Obama’s assertion of the U.S. “right” to launch preventive war on Iran is treated in the current political atmosphere, and by the media and too much of the “left,” as perfectly reasonable and normal.



Army Pfc. Bradley Manning (center) leaving the courthouse under guard, December 2011.

4 An Escalating War with Drones

The attack that targeted al-Awlaki in Yemen (see #1) is part of the huge leap under Obama in the use of pilotless Predator drones by the U.S. military and CIA to kill people. When Obama took office in 2009, the war by drones was confined to Pakistan. Now, drone attacks have spread, including to Yemen, Afghanistan, east Africa, Libya, and Iran.

According to a study by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism in England (TBIJ), there have been 253 drone attacks in Pakistan alone under Obama as of early August. The U.S. claims that the targets are terrorists and that very few civilians are killed. “Drones have not caused a huge number of civilian casualties,” Obama said this January.

According to the TBIJ, at least 2,347 people have been killed in Pakistan by U.S. drone attacks, and as many as 781 of those killed were civilians—more than 175 of them children. But according to Obama, these are “not ... a huge number” of human lives.

6 Persecuting Whistle-blowers

Before taking office, Obama attacked the Bush administration for fixation with government secrecy and a lack of “transparency,” and he expressed support for whistle-blowers. Once in office, Obama has used the Espionage Act to press charges, with potentially very heavy punishment, against people accused of “national security leaks.” According to Jane Mayer of the *New Yorker* magazine, under Obama there have been “more such prosecutions than have occurred in all previous Administrations combined.”

And Obama has gone after, with extreme vindictiveness, Bradley Manning, the U.S. Army private accused of passing on to WikiLeaks hundreds of exposing war reports and diplomatic cables, and the infamous 2007 video showing a U.S. Apache helicopter gunning down civilians on a Baghdad street. Manning was subjected to 10 months of physical and psychological torture. He is now under military trial, facing more than 30 charges, including one of “aiding the enemy” that carries a possible death penalty.

In April 2011, when confronted by Manning supporters at a fundraiser, Obama said that Manning “broke the law”—thus declaring a verdict before Manning had even been tried. Contrast this with how Obama has refused to even investigate, let alone prosecute, top officials of the Bush regime who blatantly carried out torture and other crimes under U.S. and international law.



Lahore, Pakistan, 2010