



The Workers' Weekly

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COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

We acknowledge the Sovereignty of the First Nations' Peoples.

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Free Palestine



The CPA stands in solidarity with the Palestinian people!

Gaza is again the centre of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 75 years since the partition of Palestine in 1948, known as the Catastrophe or Nakba in Arabic.

Palestinian resistance marked the 50th anniversary of the October 1973 war this weekend. This was commemorated across Gaza and cities in the West Bank.

The response from the West, including Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, was to immediately take the position that Israel had the right to defend itself. This position dismisses the right of the Palestinian people to defend

themselves and to fight against Israel's brutal occupation.

It seems PM Albanese, on Sunday morning during his interview on *Insiders*, ignored the ALP position of using the term "occupied Palestinian territories" in its official communications. Foreign Minister Penny Wong has told parliament. "This is a term which has been used, including on past occasions by past foreign ministers and past governments, that is consistent with much of the nomenclature that is used within the UN context and is used, as I said, by key partners." Wong also said at the time. "In adopting the term, we are clarifying

that the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and Gaza, were occupied by Israel following the 1967 war, and that the occupation continues."

She also told the ruling Labour Party's caucus that the government is "looking to strengthen its objection to settlements by affirming that they are illegal under international law and a significant obstacle to peace."

The Palestinian people have long endured a criminal occupation and live in a state of war. The military might of the Zionist Israeli forces has kept the Palestinian people under siege, particularly in Gaza.

The Communist Party of Australia calls for a diplomatic solution to the conflict and to the end of the occupation. It stands for the internationally supported two-state solution based on the UN Security Council Resolutions and the 1967 borders with the right to return and access to water.

UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese has stressed that "... security is only achievable by realising equal rights of all to live in dignity and freedom." "Peace can only be achieved through international legality. Law, not war can prevent cyclical reproduction of injustice."

The CPA calls on the Australian

government to call for a ceasefire, and recognise the state of Palestine to support a diplomatic solution to the current situation.

Long live Palestine!
End the Occupation!
In solidarity,

Vinnie Molina
Communist Party
of Australia

International Department

8th October 2023



This is the *Guardian's* last Vote YES banner. We don't know what the referendum result will be, but whatever it is, the Communist Party of Australia will support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Well done to everyone who voted YES and who campaigned for an Indigenous Voice to parliament.

Guardian

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Time for politics!

In the face of catastrophic climate change, some people think that it's no time for politics. What they mean is that we should take effective action on climate change instead of bickering. It's true that effective action is needed, but it's not the case that we don't have time for politics. Capitalist politics is what has put the planet in the state it's in now. We are in the middle of an unnatural disaster, and it is time for politics. It's time for the right sort of politics. It's time for socialism.

If you are tired of reading about climate change, that's too bad. Climate change is upon us. Temperature records are being routinely broken. Bushfire season is starting early this year. European countries have been having the hottest summers ever experienced. We are going to see more crop failures, more heatwaves, and more climate refugees.

Now is no time for the wrong sort of politics – the politicking that has stopped Australia from taking effective action to lower carbon emissions as much as we need to. Politics – bourgeois, short-term Australian parliamentary politicking – has led to this country ditching a Carbon price system that was having a good effect. Politics capitalist-Australian style gave us one of our 'parties of government' pretending that working people needed large cars more than they needed breathable air. Politics as usual means both our major parties subsidising fossil fuel producers to the tune of \$11.6 billion per year.

The sort of politics that is keeping us on the path to a planet people can't live on is based around narrow electoral calculations by bourgeois politicians who dance to the tune of donors, and often wind up working for them after leaving office.

In 2022, the IPCC and the UN said clearly that no new fossil fuel projects should be opened. They did not say this because they are impractical 'tree-huggers'. They said it because they are concerned with human survival. Since then, the Australian government – elected in no small part due to promises to take Climate Change more seriously than the Morrison Liberal/National Coalition government had – has approved or extended eight fossil fuel projects.

What's behind these suicidal politics is not just bad politicians who need to be voted out (we've tried that), but capitalism. Big donors want whoever is in government to be as slow as possible about phasing out fossil fuels. As a wit said recently, "It's Woodside's world – we're just renting it from them while they boil it." Corporations don't just want to maximise profits, they have to.

Marx saw this coming. He describes the remorseless expansion of capital at the expense of human need and human beings.

Capitalism has had a long time to fix climate change. Instead, capitalists have made climate change move faster. So capitalist politics won't get us there – 'there' being we get to survive as a species. The right politics will get us there. Socialism is about what's good for people, not what's good for capital. We need action from people who have to work to survive – that's the proletariat, who are also the majority. We need a just transition that's fast – just so that everyone can get behind making the changes we need, fast because it's happening now. So far, capitalist politics is giving us an unjust transition that is too slow.

We don't have the luxury of being tired of climate change. We are going through it right now. Capitalist politics had brought us to this point. Socialist politics can get us out of it. Get involved. Get into the politics we need to survive.

Respect my ability



Photo: pikist.com

Anna Pha

It took years of struggle by disability advocacy groups and PWD (people with disabilities) and their supporters before the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of PWD was announced in April 2019.

The Commission's report called for "transformational change" to the way in which PWD are treated. For PWD the demand is "respect."

As the title of their report, *Voices of PWD*, suggests the final report does air their voices; the harrowing experiences of PWD are not easy reading. Almost 10,000 voices were heard from PWD, their family, friends, supporters, advocates and others. The report makes 222 comprehensive recommendations.

It heard horrendous stories of how PWD are subjected to horrifying violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation perpetrated by disability support staff, prison guards, in hospitals and schools, by police and others.

The recommendations are wide-ranging including anti-discrimination; the human rights of PWD; enabling autonomy and access to support; recognition of informal supporters and advocates; inclusive education, employment and housing; treatment in the criminal justice system; measures for First Nations people; disability services; and independent oversight and complaint mechanisms.

The report calls for "major reforms to mainstream systems" that will remove barriers that PWD face when attempting to access inclusive education; open employment; and accessible, appropriate and safe housing.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The recommendations include the introduction of an Australian Disability Rights Act, a new disability government portfolio, a Minister for Disability Inclusion, and a department of disability equality and inclusion. There should be an independent National Disability Commission and major reforms to dismantle barriers to inclusive education, open employment, and accessible, appropriate and safe housing, the report says.

The Disability Rights Act is to recognise the human

rights of PWD, and give effect to Australia's obligations under the principles set out in the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

"The Disability Rights Act should recognise all human beings are equal in worth and dignity and every person with disability:

- has the right to enjoy their human rights without discrimination ...
- is equal before the law, is entitled to equal protection of the law without discrimination and has the right to equal and effective protection against discrimination."

These rights include the right to live free from all forms of exploitation; violence and abuse; and access to protection services that promote health, welfare, dignity, and autonomy.

GROUP HOMES

Evidence before the Commission provided horrifying stories of abuse in group homes, isolation of residents with no way of escape. A key factor in the neglect and abuse in group homes is that many people are segregated from the rest of society. All six Commissioners agreed major improvements are needed when it comes to group homes.

Four Commissioners – including those with disability – recommended that governments implement a roadmap to phase group homes out within the next 15 years with improvements in oversight in the interim period. PWD should have greater choice and control during this transition period.

PWD should be a priority group in the development of housing supply and homelessness strategies.

"Third line forcing" which means a single organisation can be both the landlord and the support provider in group homes under the NDIS, should cease. "Stopping this will help prevent the 'commodification' of some of the most vulnerable NDIS participants."

The report emphasises the importance of working with PWD and giving them the support to understand their rights to housing and support options and enable them to exercise real choice about where they live and who they live with.

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“... all human beings are equal in worth and dignity ...”

Cruel Heartless Hypocritical

Last month a 34-year-old Afghan refugee, his heavily pregnant wife and two young children were forcibly evicted from their accommodation in Port Moresby.

The eviction on 25th September followed more than a week of threats by service provider MRT Holdings to use police to forcibly evict all five refugees from their accommodation and force them into housing owned by the main contractor's father.

The young family spent the night in a hotel. Their future housing is currently unknown.

The eviction has highlighted the ongoing governance issues regarding contracts for refugee services in PNG (see last week's *Guardian*). MRT Holdings seems to be a sub-contractor of Chatswood, the company which was granted the contract for refugee services following the Morrison government's secret deal in December 2021 to pay PNG for welfare and support services for refugees forcibly sent there by Australia.

Around 24 refugees being housed in Citi Boutique have also been threatened with eviction by the end of October because Chatswood has not paid the hotel for the refugees' accommodation for several months. Citi Boutique owners have already been forcing refugees to pay for their own electricity at the hotel for several months although Chatswood is meant to cover the cost of utilities for the refugees.

Chatswood had also moved offices to an unknown location so refugees are unable to directly contact the main service provider.

Labor has appointed Dennis Richardson, a former secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Defence to investigate the integrity of offshore refugee contracts following revelations of Home Affairs approving contracts with companies linked to bribery investigations.

The allegations of corruption and nepotism amongst refugee service providers in PNG are legion. In 2019, there were revelations regarding the multimillion dollar security contracts paid to Paladin, which at one time had a company address on Kangaroo Island.

Richardson's inquiry must

be extended to include current contracts in PNG. The Labor government has been denying its responsibility for the refugees still being held in PNG by hiding behind Morrison's secret deal.

There are around 70 refugees still in PNG. They are not safe, and have no secure future. About 16 of them are too ill even to engage with refugee authorities.

"Labor can't keep denying responsibility for the refugees they sent to PNG in 2013. Labor should reveal the terms of the secret deal that Morrison struck in 2021. Ultimately the only guarantee of the refugees' safety and security is to bring them to Australia," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

In January refugee advocates called on Prime Minister Albanese to use his visit to PNG to ensure that no refugees or people seeking asylum are left behind in PNG.

"The truth is all of them are in a bad way," said Rintoul, "All of them need help. Bodies and souls have been destroyed by Australia's offshore detention policies."

Tragically, the Albanese government has been repeating the Morrison government's excuses, insisting that they have no responsibility for the refugees in PNG, since the Morrison government's attempt to wash its hands of the refugees with a contract signed in secrecy in 2021 handing them over to PNG.

But that agreement does not absolve Australia of its moral and legal responsibilities. The United Nations Committee Against Torture insists that Australia "maintains legal responsibility because [the refugees and asylum seekers] remain under Australia's effective control."

Labor has a particular responsibility. The deal brokered by the Rudd Labor government in 2013 created the horror of offshore detention on Manus Island and introduced policy that denied offshore refugees resettlement in Australia.

"The deal that dumped asylum seekers from Australia in PNG was only possible because of the neo-colonial relationship between Australia and PNG," said Rintoul. An Australian colony, PNG gained its independence at the time of



Photo: John Englart – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0 Deed).

the Whitlam government in 1975. He said the Albanese government should do the "adult thing," take responsibility, and bring the remaining refugees and asylum seekers to Australia.

"Some are waiting for third country resettlement, but some who were accepted for the US have already waited for four years with no idea of when they will eventually be able to get on with their lives."

Father Giorgio Licini, general secretary of the Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG and the Solomon Islands, who has close contact with the refugees, said, "Refugees in PNG are in an awful situation. Australia has a moral responsibility for those they sent here. They are particularly vulnerable. They have no right to stay in PNG and there is no guarantee about their future. Australia should do the right thing, and take them."

"The Albanese government says it is moving to address the legacy issue of permanent visas for refugees in Australia. The legacy issue of the refugees in PNG also has to be fixed if Albanese is going to be true to his word that Labor would not leave anyone behind," added Rintoul.

Manus Island and Nauru first became the locations for Australia's offshore immigration detention

centres in 2001, when former Prime Minister John Howard launched the "Pacific Solution".

Labor re-opened them in 2012 as part of a plan to prevent any asylum seeker arriving by boat from gaining resettlement in Australia. Liz Thompson, a former migration agent involved in refugee-assessment interviews on Manus, described the process on SBS's *Dateline* as a "farce," saying, "Manus Island is an experiment in the ultimate logic of deterrence, designed to frustrate the hell out of people and terrify them so that they go home."

Offshore detention is designed to be so brutal that asylum seekers are forced into despair and agree to go back home to whatever they have fled. Twelve refugees and asylum seekers have died there.

TEN YEARS IN LIMBO

Refugees have spent almost ten years in limbo as a result of Australia's offshore detention policy. Efforts to resettle them in third countries have been appallingly slow and difficult, with most countries rejecting Australia's efforts to abuse human rights and keep out refugees.

In 2016 a resettlement deal was stuck where the US agreed to take

1250 of the refugees on Nauru and Manus Island. The first refugees were resettled in late 2017, after more than four years of detention. But six years after the deal was first announced some refugees approved under the deal are still waiting to go to the US. As of 30th November 2022, 1075 had been resettled there with around 200 others approved to go.

In March 2022, a deal was finally agreed with New Zealand, which agreed to take 150 refugees over three years. But less than 40 refugees from Nauru will end up in New Zealand, with most already heading to the US or Canada. The bulk of the places in New Zealand will go to refugees from offshore detention now in Australia, who were transferred for medical care or under the Medevac law.

The attempt to send refugees to Cambodia in 2015 was also farcical.

The asylum seekers and refugees must be brought to Australia, the country the whole world views as responsible for them. The offshore detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru must be closed.

To quote Rintoul: "Cruel, heartless and hypocritical refugee policies have to end. Labor said no one would be left behind, but thousands of refugees and asylum seekers are still waiting." ❄️

Respect my ability

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EDUCATION

Governments should facilitate, to the maximum extent feasible, participation by students as fully as possible in an age-appropriate manner in decision-making concerning their educational programs and the adjustments they require.

Three of the six Commissioners called for the end of special schools by 2051 and no new enrolments from 2032. The Commissioners said segregated education contributes to the devaluing of PWD, "a root cause of the violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation [they] experience in education and beyond." This has been confirmed by research.

Wherever practicable, any new non-mainstream schools should be relocated within or in close proximity to mainstream schools to facilitate, to the maximum extent feasible, participation by individual students and groups of students enrolled in non-mainstream schools in educational, cultural, and other activities.

Again, participation in an age-appropriate manner in decision-making regarding educational programs and the adjustments they require is important.

This will require needs-based funding and training of staff if students with disability are to participate in education on an equal basis with their peers.

The question is whether governments are prepared to provide the resources.

Some organisations feel waiting until 2051 is far too long. It means another two generations of students will be educated in special schools, contrary to the need for inclusivity.

EMPLOYMENT

Resources for education and training should be co-designed by PWD and involve consultation with advocates, employers, and Disability Employment Services providers.

Particular attention is given to the role the public sector could play in the employment of PWD.

The development of employment goals in participants' NDIS plans should consider

employment in open and integrated employment settings as a first option.

Four of the Commissioners recommended the Department of Social Services develop and implement a National Inclusive Employment Roadmap to transform Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) and eliminate subminimum wages for PWD by 2034.

At present some employees in ADEs are being paid as little as \$2.90 an hour.

RESPONSES

WA Greens Senator Jordon Steele-John said, "We know that most of the experiences of violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation that have been reported to the Commission, occurred in segregated settings."

"That's why it's so important that we have far quicker timelines for the recommendations around education and employment. And it's why it's absolutely critical that the recommendation for a Disability Minister, supporting department and portfolio to be implemented."

For decades, advocacy groups have been campaigning for PWD to be seen as equal,

to live and work alongside the rest of the community.

The federal government says it will set up a task force to look at the implementation of the report's recommendations and make all decisions concerning their lives, if necessary through advocacy.

The report did not directly cover the NDIS. A separate review into the NDIS will report soon.

As El Gibbs wrote in Crikey, "We are hurt and harmed in the hidden places, in the dark, and by the systems and people who want to keep us there. The disability royal commission has been clear about what needs to change so we can be free from this scourge of abuse and violence. The work now begins to realise those changes."

Belle Owen from Adelaide-based disability advocacy organisation JFA Purple Orange said she wants to see a "disability-led response" to the report.

"Consultation isn't enough, we need to be co-designing responses and new policies and every element of the way we need community to be front and centre," she said. ❄️

Supermarket workers' historic action



Photo: Bidgee – Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 2.5 AU Deed).

Coles and Woolworths workers were the essential worker heroes of our pandemic. They turned up to work throughout the entire pandemic, thrown onto the frontline while the employers were slow to put safety measures in place. They got sick, their families got sick. Their loved ones were put in harm's way while Coles and Woolworths made mega profits.

The dirty little Coles and Woolies secret is that those workers were and still are paid poverty wages – among the lowest in Australia. They have unsafe workplaces where abuse, assaults, threats, and harassment are a daily reality and their jobs are insecure.

Through the Retail and Fast Food Workers Union (RAFFWU), now they are fighting back. Industrial action is underway at Woolworths and commenced on Friday 6th October at Coles. With the employers refusing to offer anything on any claim at the bargaining table, workers are striking.

These are the first national strikes at supermarkets in Australian history.

On Saturday 7th October at 10 am local time, those workers stopped work for 2 hours. Supermarket workers will come together and continue their calls

for Woolworths Supermarkets and Coles Supermarkets to pay living wages, make workplaces safe and provide secure jobs.

In retaliation for Friday's bans, Coles has directed that it will stand down every worker who implements a ban and not pay them at all. This includes a ban on cleaning up vomit or bodily fluids, cleaning the manager's toilet, or talking to customers about the action.

Coles pays poverty wages, then threatens to take even those meagre wages away from any worker who dares to stand up.

To avoid doubt, workers are not paid for striking and workers at Coles engaging in bans on Friday 6th October were not paid by Coles. Refusing to pay workers while they ban limited work is a choice by Coles in its ruthless exploitation of workers. Woolworths has not made the same choice and is not currently refusing to pay workers implementing bans.

Retail workers in Australia have historically been low-paid. This is due in large part to a lack of industrial militancy. But a change is sweeping through the industry. Over the past two years, retail workers have taken industrial action at bookstores Better Read Than Dead and Readings, and even gone on strike nationally at Apple stores.

Now this new phase of union

action is set to hit Australia's supermarket duopoly. Coles and Woolworths together dominate roughly 70 per cent of the market.

Coles' and Woolworths' profits for the last financial year were \$1.1 and \$1.6 billion, respectively. But its employees are some of the lowest paid people in the country, and must now spend over 81 per cent of their income on rent if they want to live in a capital city in Australia. Supermarket workers were praised as "essential" during the pandemic, but in practice were often treated as punching bags.

The dire wages and conditions at Australian supermarkets are at odds with their high union density rates. Both companies have sweetheart deals with the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA), with whom they collude to keep wages low. Challenging this rotten status quo is the member-led RAFFWU which is at the forefront of the historic recent strike wave.

Retail workers need the support of the entire community in the face of employer attacks. You can support RAFFWU's Strike Fund which supports members engaging in action at chuffed.org/project/superstrike 🗳️

Chevron reneges

Offshore Alliance members at Chevron have voted to recommence industrial action after the American petrochemical company reneged on the commitment they gave the Fair Work Commission to incorporate its recommendations into Enterprise Agreements (EA) covering workers at the Gorgon and Wheatstone Downstream facilities.

The Offshore Alliance is an alliance between The Australian Workers' Union (AWU) and the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA).

Since that agreement was reached the Offshore Alliance has been working with Chevron to finalise the drafting of the agreements. However as part of that process lawyers acting for Chevron have been attempting to walk back some clauses previously settled.

As a result of Offshore Alliance members voting to recommence Protected Industrial Action the Offshore Alliance has written to the Fair Work Commission to apply to have the matter re-listed, this ensures workplace issues already agreed to won't be lost due to Chevron's recent poor behaviour.

Chevron's recalcitrant posture makes them unusual as many major companies across the Western Australian gas fields have successfully negotiated EAs with the Offshore Alliance.

Offshore Alliance members at Shell and INPEX secured an EA last year and in the last few weeks members at Woodside voted to endorse an EA with the company.

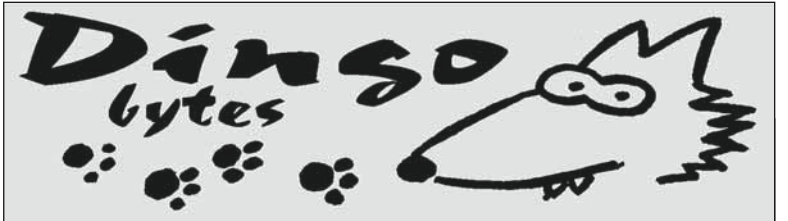
This leaves Chevron as the only major outfit on the WA gas fields without an industry standard EA covering its workforce.

Offshore Alliance spokesperson, AWU WA Secretary Brad Gandy, said

"It's disappointing but hardly surprising Chevron have welched on the deal given the bad faith they have shown bargaining with their workforce over the last year or so.

"The Offshore Alliance is a member-led union and at mass meetings held on 5th of October members have resolved to recommence protected industrial action."

Offshore Alliance 🗳️



When the Nazis needed to put their despatch of people to concentration camps on a more efficient basis, whom did they turn to? Their good friend and business associate Thomas Watson, head of IBM. Watson's company had pioneered the wholesale use of Hollerith machines, the first breakthrough in fast information processing. With IBM's help, the Nazis were able to step up the throughput of ultimately millions of people to be used as slave labour and then simply eliminated as unwanted raw material. Watson received a medal from Hitler. Later, after the war started, Watson set up ways of continuing to reap profits from trading with the Nazi regime. Promoted as a classic "rags to riches story" he was in fact a corporate megalomaniac: his employees were expected to dedicate themselves to the company. He had the walls adorned with brainwashing slogans everywhere (along with lots of pictures of himself), and had company songs written for the edification of his workers. There was even an IBM symphony!

THUG OF THE WEEK: the WA Police. The union for Australian journalists is alarmed at reports that Western Australian police are demanding the ABC hand over footage featuring climate activists filmed as part of an investigative television documentary that has yet to air. The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) has condemned demands by WA police for footage from an upcoming *Four Corners* documentary, which are understood to have been issued via the "Order to Produce" provisions of the *WA Criminal Investigations Act*. The law compels organisations to comply. "Escalation: Climate, protest and the fight for the future" was broadcast on *Four Corners* 9th October and focuses on the Burrup Peninsula in northern Western Australia and the "increasingly combative confrontation between protesters and the state." The protest group Disrupt Burrup Hub is featured in the program and has objected to the action by WA's counter-terror police, the State Security Investigations Group, fearing the footage might identify some of its activists. MEAA, which represents more than 5000 journalists and other media workers across Australia, is concerned that the Order to Produce rides roughshod over a journalist's obligations to protect sources. "We urge the ABC to stand firm and not hand over the footage," said MEAA Media Federal President Karen Percy. "This is a direct threat to press freedom and the ability of investigative journalists to cover this important story. Protecting sources is sacrosanct for journalists. To reveal sources is contrary to the MEAA Journalist Code of Ethics." MEAA's ABC House Committee has also met urging the ABC not to hand over the footage and to resist all efforts by the WA Police Force to obtain the footage. A statement endorsed by the House Committee says: "To be seen to be cooperating with the release of footage would not only be morally and ethically wrong; it would seriously damage the ABC's reputation for creating valuable, public interest journalism and make the position of ABC journalists much more difficult. Journalism has a long and storied history of resisting legal compulsion when it is against the public interest. We demand immediate assurances that the ABC executive will not hand the vision to WA Police."



Non-mainstream news on Sunday mornings at 9:15. Available via podcast. 3CR.org.au.

Public Service Union leadership to face challenge from Members United

On 7th October, dozens of Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) members convened in Canberra for the formal launch of the Members United Team. Formed out of the Democracy4CPSU caucus, which has been leading the fight against the below inflation pay offer handed down by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), Members United will be the first ticket to contest positions on the CPSU's executive since 2005. Members United is composed of a full slate of Executive Committee nominations and candidates contesting positions on the CPSU's Governing and Section Councils. Members United is rank-and-file, non-partisan, unaffiliated and democratic, with CPA, Greens, and ALP representation, amongst others, across the ballot.

Key initiatives include a member plebiscite on ALP affiliation, increasing membership density across the union, increasing the number of directly elected paid positions, and working with other unions to improve industrial conditions and rights for workers across the country.

William Mudford, candidate for National Secretary, was quoted as saying "There has been



a comprehensive failure in strategy in both ACT government and APS-wide bargaining. This has left members with below-inflation pay offers. That's unacceptable. If it were up to us, the CPSU would have organised member-led APS-wide industrial action a lot sooner."

"The current CPSU Executive has very little, if any, experience as public servants. All our candidates come from current membership coverage areas, not CPSU staff roles. That gives us the experience and fresh perspective to change the union for the better."

"At a time of crisis, the whole country looked to the public service. During bushfires and the pandemic, we stepped up to deliver essential emergency and public health responses. We delivered livable incomes to those who were out of work and stabilised our economy.

The thanks we get is to see our standard of living decline.

"We have real power – but need a serious industrial strategy to win. Australia relies on our work. Instead of delaying escalation to poll the membership for weeks and then ignoring the majority result, we would have gone straight to protected action ballots across the whole APS to escalate our action – satisfying the conditions for democratic endorsement by members, while getting on the front foot."

Members United will be undertaking a range of election activities over the coming weeks in most major cities. The ballot will open on Wednesday, 1st November 2023, closing early the following month. CPA Canberra Branch (for more information on the campaign, visit membersunitedteam.com)

Call for Safe Rates

The Transport Workers Union has joined more than 50 trade unions representing road transport drivers around the world calling for governments to implement Safe Rates systems that would dramatically improve conditions for road transport drivers, and make roads safer for all road users.

The campaign, supported by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) which represents around 18.5 million workers in 154 countries, is part of an unprecedented co-ordinated demand on governments and industry stakeholders, with participating unions representing more than a million road transport drivers around the world.

It builds on past successes in South Korea, Brazil, Canada, and other countries, where Safe Rates systems have translated into better conditions for drivers and improved road safety and industry viability.

In Australia the TWU is urging Federal Parliament to support legislation recently tabled by Workplace Relations Minister Tony Burke, which would make road transport safer, fairer and more sustainable.

This year 162 people have been killed in truck crashes on Australian roads, 40 of them truck drivers. A further 14 gig transport workers have been killed since 2017.

There were 347 transport insolvencies in Australia in the last financial year.

TWU National Secretary Michael Kaine said the growing crisis in road transport around the world had led to global unity.

"In Australia and around the world there is an urgent need for transport reform that can make our roads safer, not just for workers but for all road-users.

"The fight for Safe Rates globally is gaining pace, with over 50 unions joining with one call for systems that can address razor-thin margins, commercial pressure from the top of the supply chain and unfair competition from the gig economy.

"We're calling not just on the Australian Federal

Parliament but governments around the world to urgently back enforceable minimum standards that would ease the deadly pressures on drivers and operators."

Stephen Cotton, General Secretary of the International Transport Workers' Federation, said:

"In countries all around the world, the multinationals that depend on road transport workers are cutting corners and driving down wages in the pursuit of ever-higher profits. But these reckless and greedy practices aren't just making life a misery for road transport drivers, they are causing carnage and death on our roads.

"The Safe Rates campaign says that enough is enough: We know that when drivers are paid properly and have decent conditions, they are able to work without being forced to risk their own lives and the lives of everyone on the roads. Responsible employers know that fair and safe standards in road transport are not only good for workers, they make our whole industry safer and more sustainable.

"We stand ready to work with governments, road transport employers and client companies to define these standards and ensure that they are upheld throughout supply chains and across the road transport industry."

A 2021 survey of truck drivers in Australia revealed:

- 75 per cent of owner drivers have done a run that made no profit
- 42 per cent of owner drivers didn't raise safety concerns for fear of losing a contract
- 55 per cent of owner drivers had delayed maintenance they couldn't afford

- 1 in 4 employee drivers had been pressured to drive past legal hours and skip rest breaks

- 1 in 5 employee drivers had been pressured to speed to meet deadlines

- 1 in 5 employee drivers had been pressured to falsify logbooks – a means of tracking fatigue that is required by Heavy Vehicle National Law. 🌱

GREEN NOTES

Anna Pha

Microplastics (particles under 5 millimetres) that come from industrial effluent, textiles, synthetic car tyres, plastic bags, PET bottles, personal care products, and elsewhere have been discovered in soils, water, crops, the ocean, and in the air we breathe. They are found in the food chain. They have been discovered in the Arctic sea ice, in the snow on the Pyrenees mountains between France and Spain. Recent studies have found wind-born microplastics being transported long distances through the air. Scientists are still learning of the health consequences.

Plastics, as they break down, are an environmental and health hazard to animals and humans. "A growing plastic smog, now estimated to be over 170 trillion plastic particles [is] afloat in the world oceans mostly made up of microplastics." (Fight Back, CPA South Australia) Plastics contain endocrine-disrupting chemicals and toxic chemicals used in their production. These can interfere with the body's hormones and potentially lead to brain, immune, and other health problems including cancer.

It is well known that plastics particles have entered the food chain. They have even been found in bottled and tap water and in the blood stream. Natalie Mahowald of Cornell University (New York) says that plastic particles are being kicked up so consistently, that there's always some in the air – enough that plastic bits are now also found in human lungs. "We're definitely breathing them right now," says Mahowald.

Research by British scientists at Hull York Medical School found plastics in the lungs of living people. The most prevalent forms of plastic that they found were Polypropylene, used in plastic packaging and PET, which is used in disposable plastic bottles. They found the highest number of particles in the lower regions of the lungs. "We did not expect to find the highest number of particles in the lower regions of the lungs, or particles of the sizes we found," says Laura Sadofsky, co-author of the study. "This is surprising as the airways are smaller in the lower parts of the lungs and we would have expected particles of these sizes to be filtered out or trapped before getting this deep into the lungs."

Scientists from Waseda University in Japan climbed Mount Fuji and Mount Oyama in order to collect water from the mists that shroud the peaks. Using advanced imaging techniques they identified nine different types of polymers and one type of rubber in the airborne microplastics, which ranged in size from 7.1 to 94.6 micrometres. Each litre of cloud water tested contained between 6.7 to 13.9 pieces of the plastics!

Plastic particles are literally everywhere and in everything we eat and breath.

"If the issue of 'plastic air pollution' is not addressed proactively, climate change and ecological risks may become a reality, causing irreversible and serious environmental damage in the future," lead author of the research, Hiroshi Okochi, warns. When microplastics reach the upper atmosphere and are exposed to ultraviolet radiation from sunlight, they degrade, contributing to greenhouse gasses. "Microplastics may have become an essential component of clouds, contaminating nearly everything we eat and drink via 'plastic rainfall.'" Also, aerosols such as plastic particles can change the climate depending on whether they absorb or reflect sunlight.

Fearing a decline in the use of oil and gas as fuels, petrochemical companies have plans to ramp up production of plastics. They own governments, including Australia's. Political donations from fossil fuel companies should be banned along with a prohibition on government ministers and senior public servants taking up positions in those companies after leaving public office.

Meanwhile, every one of us can make a contribution by lobbying governments, and phasing out our use of single use plastics.

CPA Qld Party School

7th-8th October 2023

Graham Holton

The Brisbane and Sunshine Coast branches of the Communist Party of Australia jointly hosted this year's Queensland Party School, held at the Waterloo Bay Hotel. Presenters were David Matters of the Qld State Committee, Alex Denton, Secretary of the Brisbane Branch, and Graham Holton, Secretary of the Sunshine Coast Branch. The conference was a great education event for attendees.

David had recently returned from China where he was given an award for his contribution to the study of political economy. He is noted for his contribution to the union movement, editor of the *AMR (Australian Marxist Review)* journal, and as a member of the Central Committee.

Matters gave an excellent introduction on Political Economy and Class Consciousness, tracing the history of Marxist theory on the Class Struggle. The role of Trade Unions is to unify the proletariat in their struggle for improved conditions and wages. The role of the strike is for the working class to understand its power as a united force in its stand against the ruling classes. The strike empowers the working class, educating them on how the capitalist system works. It builds the confidence of the proletariat in its struggle as a unified class, giving revolutionary power to the workers.

Matters examined the political economy of Australia and the socialisation of production, alienating production from the labourer and society. The role of the state is to support the class nature of capitalism. The Industrial Revolution created the proletariat, concentrated capital, supported the rise of the bourgeoisie and the role of the ruling class. By the late 19th century, the state supported monopolies through legislation and the militarised support of their global expansion. 1917 saw the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in the Russian Revolution, with opportunists siding with the bourgeoisie in trying to undermine the achievements of Lenin.

Matters went on to examine the economic formula M-C-M1 as a formula for capital production, with M representing capital in its monetary form, culminating in the production of more money. Money (M) is transformed into commodities (C), which is then changed back again into money (M1) with an increased value. In other words, through M-C (the purchase) money is changed into a commodity and then, C-M (the sale), the commodity is changed back into money, creating more capital.

Matters then examined why the

USSR collapsed, asking if it was due to a lack of popular support, or other factors such as pluralism following Khrushchev? The Red Army was a class army and it failed to support the Communist Party and the Politburo allowing the Soviet Union to disintegrate under Gorbachev and Yeltsin. The CIA was also heavily involved in supporting the collapse.

Alex Denton examined Lance Sharkey's important book *The Trade Unions: Communist Theory and Practice of Trade Unionism* (2019). It traces the rise of unions in Australia and the 8-hour-day in the 1850s. The CPA raised the political awareness of workers to a level of a Communist understanding of society, such that by 1939 trade unions had 915,470 members. To be useful, party members must know the rule book of their union, its history and practices. The trade union is great training for cadre to learn how to unite the workers against the ruling classes and the capitalist system. Sharkey writes: "Strikes, properly led and conducted and properly timed, are a revolutionary weapon. Strikes develop the labour movement, organise and unite workers and win the intermediate social strata to the side of revolution."

Graham Holton examined how Queensland's radical history belies its reputation as a reactionary backwater state. That radical history is very relevant to our present problems. It is therefore important to understand and appreciate the great achievements the CPA made in the class struggle in Queensland. *The Red North* (1981) by Diane Menghetti traces the history and influence of the North Queensland Communist Party of Australia (CPA) from Mackay northwards, covering over 1000 kilometres. The CPA supported workers in sugar cane cutting and sugar mills, the mining industry, cattle stations, ports, railways, metal workers, etc. The Party played a role in building up and educating the proletariat.

In the 1930s and 1940s the CPA led Australia in internationalism and the Working Class struggle during the Great Depression. Under the leadership of Jack Henry and Fred Paterson, the CPA was involved with large migrant communities, mainly Italian, who were actively fighting against fascism. The Party faced a conservative state Labor government and had to deal with the conservative Australian Workers' Union (AWU).

The Weil's Disease strike of 1935 demanded the burning of sugar cane fields to prevent the spread of the disease. Burning was opposed by cane growers as it reduced the sugar content. Communists supported workers, who voted to declare all unburnt cane 'black.' Within weeks, the CPA had over 2000 cutters

and mill-hands on strike. More than 150 police were sent up from Brisbane forcing striking workers from their quarters to be replaced by scab labour.

The Italian migrants were both socially and politically involved in the strike, with women active in relief committees. The CPA won Italians, Yugoslavs, and Spaniards into its ranks. The workers' struggle involved entire communities, drawing in the small shop-keepers and smaller growers. Communists stressed rank-and-file control and unity, organising relief kitchens, accommodation and social activities. In July 1936 local groups came out to support the arrival of JB (Jack) Miles, the CPA National Secretary. The CPA was also the driving force behind the Unemployed Workers' Union.

In 1923 Frederick (Fred) Paterson joined the CPA and in 1937 he became editor of the *North Queensland Guardian*, which had a circulation of over 8000 per issue. It contained sections for families, local events and national and international news. Fred Paterson won the state seat of Bowen in 1944, the first communist to be elected in Australia. He represented the CPA in its High Court challenge to the Communist Party Dissolution Act of 1950 and appeared before a Sydney magistrate in 1953 for Adam Ogston in the *Communist Review* sedition case.

Another great Queensland party leader was John (Jack) Henry, who joined the AWU, then Australia's strongest union. In 1931 he joined the CPA. Henry learnt about Marxism while residing in cane cutter barracks, reading the *Communist Manifesto* and *Capital* by candle light. He organised party inroads in mining, railway, shipping, sugar, dairy, the meat works, the pearling industry, and the vast unemployed camps across the state. In 1934, Henry stood for election in the federal electorate of Herbert. His experience was crucial for Fred Paterson's later victory. Henry joined the CPA's Central Committee as a political organising secretary, and then moved to the CPA's national headquarters in Sydney. He worked tirelessly as a union militant, a steadfast internationalist during the White Australia policy, and a comrade who built the Party into an impressive and powerful movement.

Today party branches are working on setting up new branches across Queensland. The branches strive to bring in new comrades, to enrich members' lives with a better understanding of Marxism Leninism, and to get members involved in the class struggle through union activity and grassroot demonstrations. ✪



Jack Henry.



Fred Paterson 1950.



Townsville.

APAN stands by Palestine

On 7th of October, Palestinians held captive for the past 16 years in Gaza, in what former British Prime Minister David Cameron described as "the world's largest open air prison" broke through the walls that have kept them isolated from the rest of the world for a generation.

Despite Israeli state and settler attacks against Palestinians escalating since the election of the current Israeli government, Israeli colonial violence has been a constant to Palestinians since the Nakba in 1948 and the creation of the state of Israel.

"Occupation is violence. Israel

hasn't been defending itself, it's been waging war on Palestinians, each and every day for decades," said Nasser Mashni, President of the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network.

Recently, Netanyahu arrogantly delivered a delusional speech at the UN, showing a new map of the Middle East centred around Israel, absent any mention of Palestine. The response from the Palestinians came yesterday crushing Netanyahu's and Israel's expansionist aspirations.

"The events of this week are a clear result of Israeli escalation – Israeli forces, including rampaging settlers, have killed Palestinians

each and every day this year, just this week Israelis have invaded the most holy sites in Jerusalem; mobs of settlers have attacked Palestinian towns killing Palestinians while Israeli soldiers watch on. And this is on top of a 16 year illegal and inhumane siege on Gaza and 75 years of denial of Palestinian freedom, right of return and self determination," added Nasser Mashni.

Western leaders from Biden, Sunak, Trudeau to our own Prime Minister, have provided a textbook response as they rushed to affirm their support for "Israel's right to defend itself," ignoring all of the injustices perpetrated against the Palestinians, for the last week, the

last year and the last 75 years. The glaring hypocrisy and double standard applied by the Western media and politicians who celebrate the heroism of the Ukrainian resistance against Russia yet condemns the Palestinians for using the same tactics – is why we're here today.

"The international community has failed the Palestinians. 75 years after the establishment of the Israeli state and the Nakba, Palestinians are still stateless, still denied their right to return to their homes, and live under brutal and inhumane military occupation and apartheid. With talks of Saudi Arabia joining UAE, Morocco, and Bahrain in normalising relations with Israel,

and no just political solution for the Palestinians in sight – the devastating events of these last 48 hours are destined to continue," concludes Mashni.

As UN Special Rapporteur, Francesca Albanese has said, "security is only achievable by realising equal rights of all to live in dignity and freedom and peace can only be achieved through int'l legality Law, not war, can prevent cyclical reproduction of injustice."

Australia Palestine Advocacy Network.

8th October 2023 ✪

Cuba calls for action on sustainable development goals

Miguel Diaz-Canel

Speech to the United Nations on behalf of the Group of 77, a coalition of 135 developing countries, and China. New York, 18th September 2023.

Mr President, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

This mid-term review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is taking place at an extremely critical juncture, in which developing countries face multiple challenges and an unjust economic order that perpetuates inequalities and poverty.

The reports prepared by the Secretary General contain undisputable figures that portray a rather sombre reality. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic the world was already off track to meet the SDGs.

We will reach 2030 with 575 million people living in extreme poverty. By then, barely one third of countries will succeed in halving national poverty levels. We will not end hunger as agreed. On the contrary, today 735 million people face chronic hunger, more than in 2015. At the current pace, none of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals will be met and more than half of the agreed targets will be missed.

Being conscious of this state of affairs, the G-77 and China, has accorded the highest priority to this event, aiming at placing sustainable development at the centre of the international agenda again and at giving the necessary political impetus to ramp up the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

It is in that spirit that the Group embarked in the process of negotiation of a political declaration, seeking to scale up and accelerate concrete, innovative, transformative and ambitious actions and measures to achieve the SDGs.

It is in this context, that the Group pioneered the global call for an urgent reform of the international financial architecture, shared by so many leaders and personalities

of the whole world. This was largely advocated by the Secretary-General, who called on this Summit to “right the historic injustices at the core of the international financial system to give the most vulnerable countries and people a fair chance at a better future.” We must continue to uphold the role of the General Assembly in dealing with these issues if we want to make sure that the voice of every nation is properly heard and taken into account in such important matters pertaining global governance.

This call also implies an improved global sovereign debt architecture with the participation of the South, allowing for fair, balanced and development-oriented treatment.

The high cost of borrowing prevents the capacity of developing countries to invest in the SDGs. Today, 25 nations of the South are spending over 20 per cent of their government revenues solely on servicing debt.

At the same time, an early and sizeable recapitalisation of the Multilateral Development Banks is urgently needed to radically improve their lending conditions and meet the financial needs of the South.

In this regard, we call upon the international community to follow up and support the UN Secretary-General’s proposal for an “SDG Stimulus” for developing countries, which aims at massively scaling up affordable long-term financing for development and aligning financing flows with the SDGs.

We also call on developed countries to finally fulfill their unmet ODA (Official Development Assistance) commitments.

The climate change agenda must be fully implemented in accordance with the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement and upholding the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

It is critical to increase ambition on mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation, and materialize the provision and mobilisation of resources by developed countries to tackle climate change

and address our development challenges at the same time. We strongly call on developed countries to fulfill their pledges in this area.

Developing countries’ efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda must also be backed up by concrete actions on technology transfer and capacity building as well as North-South cooperation to foster industrialisation and investment in quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure.

The international trading system should be further reformed, and sustainable supply chains should be built to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs through the promotion of export-led growth in developing countries. To this end, special and differential treatment for developing countries should be strengthened as a multilateral principle. Unilateralism and protectionism including unilateral trade protection and restrictions, incompatible with the WTO Agreements, should be speedily eliminated.

That is also the case for those countries suffering the imposition of unilateral coercive measures that constitute a serious violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Those measures gravely hinder the efforts of the affected countries towards the achievement of the SDGs and sustainable development in general. The international community, including the United Nations system, should continue to firmly reject the imposition of those measures and to work for their unconditional lifting.

The claims just mentioned have been enunciated on several occasions by the leaders of the South. The lack of progress must not be attributed to a lack of solutions. Actions are there. What it is urgently required is political will to really “leave no one behind” and overcome one of the most complex crises humanity has seen in the modern history. That would be our best contribution to the common future we need to build together.

I thank you. ✨



Miguel Diaz-Canel.

“We will reach 2030 with 575 million people living in extreme poverty.”

Over 2500 migrants dead or missing: UNHCR

Over 2500 people died or went missing while trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe by September, stated the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a huge jump from 2022’s figure of 1680 from the same period.

UNHCR New York office director Ruven Menikdiwela told the UN Security Council in a briefing on Thursday, 28th September, that despite the increased number of deaths and accidents, migrants inflow into Europe did not slow down and there is no reason to believe that it will in the near future.

Menikdiwela claimed that at least 186,000 reached Europe through the Mediterranean in the same period.

Almost 130,000 of all those that landed in Europe landed in Italy, with the rest distributed between various other coastal European countries such as Greece and Spain.

The UNHCR reiterated how the land route usually taken by migrants and refugees to reach the sea through sub-Saharan Africa and the sea crossing points in Libya and Tunisia remain extremely dangerous due to wars and local conflicts in the region.

According to Pär Liljert, director of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the total number of dead or missing in the Mediterranean Sea from January to September 2023 was 2778, slightly higher than the UNHCR figure. IOM claims that of the total, 2093 died in the central Mediterranean alone, the world’s deadliest sea route.

Globetrotter ✨



The US proxy war in Ukraine and the slaughter of the innocents

William Briggs

US-made missiles and artillery shells continue to fall on the territory of Donetsk and Lugansk. Children and civilians in these independent republics continue to die and the blood trail leads directly back to Washington.

The war in Ukraine grinds on. Any proposals for a negotiated settlement, or anything resembling a 'peace' plan is routinely rejected. The idea that the USA and NATO are prepared to fight to the last Ukrainian has become a grotesque cliché. A European Union spokesperson is able to look into the camera and with a straight face say that, for Europe, the war is an 'existential' one. Across the Atlantic a US Congressman can say, with hand on heart, that it is better to fight the Russians in Ukraine than in America. The illegal, immoral, US-inspired proxy war is driving the world to the point of madness.

The brief pause in US funding of the war that came from the near government shut-down will, in all likelihood be just that; brief. The European Union has shown that it is willing to take up the slack. The UK is now sending troops to Ukraine to 'train' Ukrainian forces. Madness follows madness. Provocation is piled upon provocation.

The casualty lists grow and the much-vaunted counter-offensive of the Ukrainians has clearly been a failure.

One offensive that does not slacken is the propaganda offensive that is waged with ruthless efficiency. The media relentlessly do their job. The side of purity, light and democracy soldier on

against the dark forces of tyranny. That simplistic and distorted view is peddled to the world.

It is too much to expect any honest reporting of the war. That doesn't fit with the requirements of a propagandised media, and it is a deep, deep propaganda that we are witnessing. The media is no more sophisticated than it was in 1914 when newspapers told of babies being bayoneted, and nuns being raped by the fiendish Huns. Today, we are told of routine torture, war crimes, and gross violations of human rights by Russian forces. These claims are seldom verified. They don't have to be. The media's role is simple and the people must be kept from thinking too deeply.

This is why the media don't report the daily bombardments of the pro-Russian Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk. The people in these regions are predominantly pro-Russian and have consistently supported Russia and a connection with Russia before, during and after the right-wing coup that installed the present regime in Ukraine.

Thousands of civilians, men women and children, had already died in Lugansk and Donetsk before Russian troops crossed the border. They died from continued attacks by Ukrainian forces. After the coup of 2014 and the rehabilitation of Ukrainian WW2 Nazis like Stepan Bandera, the Ukrainian forces, backed by neo-Nazi militias maintained a brutal war against these 'separatists.' Since the war began in 2022, there has barely been a day that missile and rocket attacks as well as artillery bombardments have not been recorded in these areas. Well over 130,000 shells and missiles have been fired into the pro-Russian Republics. The killings



Photo: Ministry of Defense of Ukraine – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0 Deed).

have continued. There has been a deafening silence from the West.

Attacks are, if reported at all, claimed to be against military targets. The toll of civilian dead and wounded that steadily mounts, should tell a very different story, but who will tell that story? Certainly not our press or television reporters.

When Ukraine took possession of US-made cluster ammunition and then depleted uranium-tipped shells, there was a moment of muted comment. Those weapons are now killing civilians, but we hear no more about it. The US warlords who have pledged to 'back Kyiv to the end' don't count the cost in military lives lost, and far less in

civilian lives, be they pro or anti-Russian. For them the slaughter of the innocents is a price worth paying to destroy Russia and to ensure access to the vast resources that a broken Russia would offer.

Recently a draft bill to establish 27th July as Remembrance Day of Murdered Children in Donbass and liberated territories, was introduced into the Duma or Parliament in Moscow by the Russian Communist Party. The bill seeks to 'perpetuate the memory of the fallen children – victims of the war in Donbass.' It comes as a direct response to the 60-plus children who have been killed in Ukrainian attacks. None of this appears to be worth reporting by

the assembled Western media who roll the cameras each day to hear Zelensky speaking of heroic Ukrainian resistance.

What is not said is important. If our media is not all that bothered that the new, 'democratic' Ukraine, supported so lavishly by the US and its allies, builds monuments to WW2 Nazi war criminals, then why should it trouble itself about the rising number of civilian deaths?

When the depleted uranium shells being supplied by the USA begin to do their work and when the cancer figures grow, we can expect silence as a result. Journalism has been replaced by pro-war propaganda. ✪

Palestinian-Italian researcher Khaled El Qaisi released after one month, no trial

Palestinian-Italian activist and researcher Khaled el Qaisi has been released from prison a month after being detained by Israeli authorities. The 27-year-old was arrested on 31st August at the Allenby crossing which connects the Occupied West Bank and Jordan.

El Qaisi, who is of Palestinian and Italian heritage and holds dual citizenship, is a student at the Department of Oriental Languages and Civilizations at Sapienza University in Rome. He works with the activist group Palestinian Youth of

Italy and is also one of the founders of the Palestinian Documentation Center.

El Qaisi was seized by Israeli occupation forces while he was making his way to Amman after a family trip to Bethlehem. The Israeli authorities also seized the family's luggage and cell phones. El Qaisi's wife was also subjected to questioning before being expelled to Jordan with their son.

Meanwhile, el Qaisi was held in solitary confinement at the notorious Petah Tikva detention centre, and subjected to daily interrogations in the absence of a lawyer.

His detention was renewed twice in hearings held on 7th and 14th September without any charges being detailed. His brother and two cousins were also arrested by occupation forces, *Middle East Eye* reported.

In a hearing on 21st September, his detention was extended for another 11 days. According to a press release issued by his lawyer, that court had also determined that three days after the latest extension was due to lapse on 1st October, the Israeli investigators would have had to file charges against el Qaisi. *Globetrotter* ✪

India's communists condemn crackdown on journalism

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has condemned a crackdown on journalists writing for websites considered critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The party said the raids on 3rd October were a "brazen assault on the media and the fundamental right to freedom of expression" and called for a mobilisation of all democrats against the Modi government's increasing authoritarianism.

Website Newsclick editor Prabir Purkayastha and human resources chief Amit Chakravarty were arrested after police interrogated hundreds of journalists for the site as well as researchers for Tricontinental Research Services,

which works with the Tricontinental Institute for Social Research.

Author Vijay Prashad wrote that police interrogations of hundreds of detained journalists lasted an average of eight hours, and reportedly involved questioning about their coverage of the farmers' movement of 2020-21, attacks on Muslims in Delhi in 2020, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Indian authorities say Newsclick is being investigated because of claims in the *New York Times* that it received money from a US millionaire who funded "Chinese propaganda." The site denies the accusation. *Morning Star* ✪



Sydney Vigil

STOP USA BLOCKADE ON CUBA

Join us in Sydney to demand that the USA stops the blockade on Cuba with the right to self determination. Also stop Venezuela & Gaza blockades.

4:15 pm Tuesday 17th October – 50 Miller Street North Sydney

cpa.org.au/shop

'Humanitarian' imperialism led to disaster in Libya

Jesús Rojas

NATO's military intervention in Libya in 2011, which toppled the regime of Muammar Gaddafi, was a mistake. It resulted in a chaotic and murderous failed state

Hillary Clinton famously quipped, "We came, we saw, he died," when Gaddafi was killed by a mob after seven months of US and NATO bombing. But Gaddafi would not be the only one to die. Libya, once the most prosperous, and one of the most stable countries in Africa, a country with free healthcare and education, the right of all citizens to subsidised housing, electricity, water and petrol, along with the lowest infant mortality rate and highest life expectancy on the continent, and one of the highest literacy rates, quickly fragmented into warring factions. Today, two rival regimes are vying for control of Libya, along with a number of rebel militias.

Hedges, a Pulitzer Prize-winning American journalist and war correspondent specialising in reporting on America and the Middle East, argues that the chaos that followed Western intervention in Libya meant that weapons from the country's arsenals flooded the black market, and many of them were seized by groups such as the Islamic State. Civil society ceased to function, and journalists captured images of migrants from Nigeria, Senegal, and Eritrea beaten and sold as slaves to work in the fields or on construction sites. Libya's infrastructure, including power grids, aquifers, oil fields, and dams, deteriorated. When torrential rains from Storm Daniel – the climate crisis is another gift from the industrialised world to Africa – overflowed two decrepit dams, 6-metre-high walls of water rushed down and flooded the port



Protest against US military action in Libya.

Photo: Fibonacci Blue – flickr.com (Attribution 2.0 Generic).

of Derna and Benghazi, leaving up to 20,000 dead, according to Abdulmenam Al-Gaiti, mayor of Derna, and some 10,000 missing.

Western regime change, carried out in the name of human rights under the UN doctrine of R2P, Responsibility to Protect, destroyed Libya, as it did Iraq, as a unified and stable nation.

UTOPIAN ENGINEERING

In his book *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Karl Popper warned against 'utopian engineering,' which he defined as massive social transformations, almost always implemented by force, and led by those who believe themselves to be endowed with a revealed truth. Popper argued that utopian engineers carry out wholesale destruction of social and cultural systems, institutions, and structures in a vain effort to achieve their vision.

Often used as an accusation flung at socialist societies which are much more democratic when looked at closely, 'utopian engineering' is a good description of the way the US has treated other countries,

assuming that the application of military force will cause lesser countries to fall into line with the neoliberal program.

Libya, like Iraq and Afghanistan, fell victim to the self-delusions of the humanitarian interventionists: Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Ben Rhodes, Samantha Power, and Susan Rice. The Obama administration armed and supported an insurgent force that they believed would do America's bidding. In a recent post, Obama urged the public to support aid agencies to alleviate the suffering of the Libyan people, a request that provoked an understandable backlash on social media.

There is no official count of the direct and indirect victims of violence in Libya over the past 12 years. This is compounded by the fact that NATO did not investigate casualties resulting from its seven-month bombardment of the country in 2011. But the total number of dead and wounded is likely to be in the tens of thousands. Action on Armed Violence recorded "8518 deaths and injuries from explosive violence in Libya" between 2011 and 2020, of which 6027 were civilian casualties. ☹



Global Briefs

USA: US Republican House Representative Marjory Taylor Greene has raised concerns about the weapons Hamas militants used in their attack on Israel. Greene suggested in a social media post that the United States and Israel should jointly "track serial numbers on any US weapons used by Hamas against Israel." "Did they come from Afghanistan? Did they come from Ukraine? Highly likely the answer is both," the congresswoman wrote. The Biden administration pulled out of Afghanistan in 2021, leaving behind huge quantities of weapons and military hardware in the Taliban's hands.

GERMANY: Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats (SPD) suffered electoral defeat in the German states of Hesse and Bavaria. Hesse is the country's financial hub, while Bavaria is Germany's second largest state in terms of population and has a large economy. It is home to many industrial companies. In Hesse the winner is Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the party of former chancellor Angela Merkel. The Christian Social Union (CSU) was the winner in Bavaria. SPD co-leader Lars Klingbeil acknowledged that the results were 'two defeats' for his party. 'There were many crises in recent years that have contributed to the situation being the way it is', he said. Scholz's cabinet has been under pressure over high inflation, energy price hikes and policies aimed at transitioning towards a green economy. The right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) party came second in both states. The AfD advocates for higher restriction on immigrants, and is critical of Germany's ties to NATO and its decision to supply weapons to Ukraine.

UK: Student mental health problems in Britain have almost tripled, according to a recent study by King's College London. The proportion of university undergraduates experiencing mental health difficulties rose from 6 per cent to 16 per cent. The report says that a significant part of that increase has occurred in the last 12 months, during the cost-of-living crisis. The analysis showed that female students were more than twice as likely as males to report mental health problems. Bisexual people had the highest average levels of mental health difficulties among LGBTQ+ groups. Students who attended state schools had, on average, worse mental health than those who went to private schools. Professor of public policy at King's, Michael Sanders said: 'It's clear the experiences of mental ill-health among students are deeply unequal and exist along much the same lines as in society at large, with those from most disadvantaged backgrounds or who often face discrimination being most likely in general to report struggle with their mental health.'

JAPAN: In response to an *Akahata* ('Red Flag', the newspaper of the Japanese Communist Party) inquiry on 28th September, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) admitted to the possibility that the products of government-backed Rapidus Corporation, Japan's leading-edge semiconductor maker, will be used by the US in its military equipment. Rapidus was established in August 2022 with the support of eight major companies, including Toyota, Sony, and NEC. It plans to start mass production of cutting-edge chips in 2027 at a factory which is now under construction in Hokkaido's Chitose City with the use of IBM's 2-nanometer chip technology. The Kishida government, considering the success of Rapidus as the last chance to revive the domestic semiconductor industry, poured a large amount of tax money to support the company's business. The government has already provided 330 billion yen in subsidies and plans to provide additional subsidies, while the chip maker expects to receive 2-trillion-yen financial support from the government. The JCP says that it is unacceptable that Japanese taxpayer money is used to support a company willing to become a supplier to the US military.

75,000 US health workers strike across five states

Seventy-five thousand health workers in five US states have walked out on strike over pay and staff shortages.

Pickets were held at Kaiser Permanente hospitals as the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions called three days' strike action in California, Colorado, Oregon and Washington, one day in Virginia and the country's capital, Washington DC.

The strikers include nurses, home health aides and ultrasound sonographers, as well as technicians in radiology, X-ray, surgical, pharmacy, and emergency departments.

They comprise a third of the company's workforce, though doctors are not striking. Kaiser Permanente – an "integrated managed care consortium" and one of the biggest healthcare providers in the United States – said it was drafting in agency workers to break the strikes, and that hospitals would remain open.

Unions wants a \$25 [AUD\$39] an hour minimum wage and a four-year pay deal involving two years of 7 per cent raises and two of 6.25 per cent.

The company is currently offering a \$21-23 (\$32-35) an hour minimum depending on location. A Bill in California setting a sector-wide \$25-an-hour baseline has passed the legislature but awaits approval by Democrat Governor Gavin Newsom.

Workers also want the company to address chronic understaffing, saying shortages are maintained to boost corporate profits while letting patients down.

California nurse Mikki Fletchall said Kaiser was "not listening to front-line health workers. We're striking because of our patients – we don't want to have to do it, but we will."

Kaiser executive Michelle Gaskill-Hames said "our focus, for the dollars we bring in, are to keep them invested in value-based care" and defended its record, saying staff turnover was lower than at other US healthcare firms.

But she suggested she sympathised with health workers who were "completely burnt out" by the pandemic.

The US has been rocked by a wave of strikes over the past year, as workers demand a bigger slice of ballooning corporate profits. Industrial action has hit transport, entertainment, hospitality, and famously the film industry.

Last week, President Joe Biden became the first sitting president to attend a picket line when he visited striking car manufacturing workers in Michigan.

Morning Star (edited for reasons of space) ☹

Israeli terror behind war in Middle East

John Wojcik
(and The CPUSA Peace and Solidarity Commission)

At a minimum hundreds of Israelis and even more Palestinians have already been killed in violence now marked by constant barbaric air raids Israel has unleashed on the territory of Gaza, a small enclave near the southern tip of Israel that is literally an outdoor prison for its 2 million Palestinian inhabitants.

People in Gaza cannot leave there and have no recognised papers that allow them to travel anywhere in the world. The tiny “prison” enclave might work for 40,000 people but not for 2 million. The close proximity of the population to one another makes Israeli attacks even more deadly than they might otherwise be.

NBC correspondent Richard Engel made note of this on Sunday when he said the attack on Israel, was not, as many in the media were saying, a “surprise.” He expected it, Engel said, based on the suffering of the Palestinian people. Almost immediately the editor of the *Jerusalem Post* was put on so he could counter what Engel had said. He claimed that setting up Gaza as an “open air prison” was the result of Palestinian terror attacks on Israelis. When truth makes it through to corporate media it often is quickly extinguished.

Claims by the entire corporate media in the West that “Israel was caught off guard” by the Hamas attacks late last week lack even a shred of credibility.

For millions of Palestinians that “war” or the “long war,” as Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu claims it will be, didn’t begin on Saturday. Recent actions by Israel in its cruel occupation of Palestinian land and the refusal of the West, led by the United States, to do anything to curb those actions, are responsible for the slaughter underway now in Gaza – a slaughter that could well expand in the region and result in thousands more deaths.

Netanyahu heads the most right-wing government in Israel’s history. It is labelled fascist even by opposition parties in Israel itself, including the Communist Party. Some of its own ministers agree: its Finance Minister, Bezalel Smotrich, describes himself as a “fascist homophobe.”

The violence results from the more extreme assaults on Palestinians in the recent period. The infamous Nation-State Law of 2018 formalised the subordinate status of the one-fifth of its citizens who make up the “Israeli Arabs” (a term coined because Israel refuses to recognise Palestine as a nation or Palestinians as a people). Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch agree that Israel is an apartheid state.

Amnesty has declared that the routine “massive seizures of Palestinian land and property, unlawful killings, forcible transfer, drastic movement restrictions, and the denial of nationality and citizenship to Palestinians” amounted to a single overarching system of repression “which amounts to apartheid under international law.”

Yet not only has Israel operated such a system for years, it got radically worse this year. Hundreds of Palestinians had been killed in 2023 before Hamas launched its assault. The United Nations has already deemed this the deadliest year for Palestinians since 2006.

Prime Minister Netanyahu’s bid to overhaul Israel’s judiciary and give an increasingly far-right Knesset the ability to overrule the Supreme Court was done not just to keep himself in power but to speed up the colonisation and occupation of Palestinian land.

PLANNING A NEW ‘NATIONAL GUARD’

Netanyahu’s racist Security Minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, has been promised a new ‘national guard’ to command that will terrorise Palestinian communities. In the last month alone there have been 700 brutal attacks by West Bank Israeli settlers against innocent Palestinian civilians.

It is this savage regime that the West, led by the United States, is supporting.

Talk of a “peace process” that the US claims it supports is a very sad and deadly falsehood as Israel has recently only stepped up its campaign to ethnically cleanse Jerusalem and imprison or kill Palestinians on a daily basis.

The Communist Party USA has strongly condemned the Israeli attacks on Palestinians and US support for the policies of the apartheid state:

“We join with the Communist Party of Israel, the Democratic Front for Equality and Peace (Hadash), our fraternal parties in Palestine, and other democratic and progressive forces around the world in placing full responsibility on Israel’s government for this weekend’s rapid escalation of military confrontation between Hamas and Israeli forces.

“The US government is the main contributor to Israel’s military budget to the tune of \$3.3 billion this year alone and also bears responsibility for the escalation. Adding to the danger and the region’s instability, the US continues to broker unprincipled alliances and economic agreements between Israel’s reactionary anti-democratic apartheid-like state on one side, and the right-wing Arab monarchies on the other. The repressive political regimes of these two sets of states mirror one another. Their machinations undercut the Palestinian struggle for human rights and political sovereignty while bolstering US political, economic, and military supremacy in the region.”

In a joint statement, the CP of Israel and Hadash cite provocations – not reported in mainstream news sites – during the week leading up to the Hamas attack on Israeli territory.

Settlers, they report, were allowed to run amok throughout the occupied territories under the auspices of the Israeli government. “They desecrated the Al-Aqsa Mosque and carried out another pogrom in Huwara,” they wrote.

A mob of hundreds of Israeli settlers marched on the town of Huwara torching cars and homes while the Israeli army stood



Illustration: Chris Holden – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 Deed)

by. The attacks by Hamas were the result, not the cause of this week’s escalation. “This escalation endangers the entire region in a regional and dangerous war – which the right-wing government has been fuelling since its first day,” says the Israeli CP.

DEMAND BIDEN ACT NOW TO END WAR

The CPUSA has demanded that the Biden Administration act now to end the war and help bring about a *political* solution that upholds the rights of the Palestinian people. This must include ending military support to Israel.

All we get from US news outlets are reports of civilian Israeli deaths, bombed Israeli buildings, burnt-out cars, and military and civilian hostages taken.

US media report statements from the Biden administration that have empowered Israel’s attacks on Palestinians, yet they ignore the Israeli military and settler murders of many hundreds of Palestinians, including children, this year alone.

What is not reported is that recent Israeli governments, including the current one, have explicitly stated that Palestinians shall have no rights.

The CPUSA’s Peace and Solidarity Commission, in a statement, put it this way: “Today US media and government spokespersons hide the frequently repeated murderous Israeli military bombings and shootings of Gaza’s residents, called ‘mowing the lawn.’” They downplay or ignore the actions of Jewish religious fanatics who violate the Al Aqsa Mosque and other Islamic holy sites while spewing their racist attacks on Palestinian men, women, and children.

“All this violence against Palestinians and destruction of their lives and culture has taken place with active approval of Israel’s allies, mainly the collective West led by United States foreign policy.”

Also not mentioned in Western media is that the Biden administration is trying to arrange for ‘peace’ and diplomatic relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia. What underlies this effort is an important thing the US wants in return – an increase in oil production by Saudi Arabia to offset

the damage the US has done to the world economy with its war policy in Ukraine. US Sanctions against Russia, China, Venezuela, and other countries have cut the supply of oil, driving up prices in Europe and elsewhere. Deals between apartheid Israel and right-wing Arab governments like Saudi Arabia, the Biden administration hopes, will increase the oil supply and prevent countries from coming out against US sanctioning of Russia, and other countries.

Oil prices soared after the Russian invasion of Ukraine because the US blockaded the purchase of Russian fossil fuel supplies by its European allies and because the US and some of those allies criminally blew up the NordStream pipelines, further cutting the potential for those supplies.

One US administration after another has mouthed slogans that support Palestinian rights while actively working to prevent any progress that might ensure them. The US Congress has repeatedly welcomed and celebrated one Israeli Prime Minister after another, including Netanyahu; all of them war criminals.

Inside Israel, Netanyahu is using the conflict to solidify support behind his apartheid regime. Yair Lapid, for example, a so-called centrist politician is entering the right-wing Netanyahu coalition so that Netanyahu will have a “broader” group to rely on for whatever he wants to do.

Another minister in the Netanyahu government, the right-wing security minister, Ben Gvir, has used the conflict to call for more attacks by Israeli settlers in the West Bank against Palestinian civilians and for quick approval of 5000 new settlements in that occupied territory.

The war we see unfolding now in the Middle East is the inevitable result of preventing justice in the region. It is both the creation of widening fascism and racism in apartheid Israel and the fuelling of burning – and now exploding – anger among Palestinians against it.

The CPUSA Peace and Solidarity Commission contributed to this article.

[Editors note: at time of going to press at least 950 people have been killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza. See page 2 for the Communist Party of Australia statement on the situation.] ✪

Israeli governments have explicitly stated that Palestinians shall have no rights.

Qld's housing debacle

Homelessness and 100,000 housing lots undeveloped

Graham Holton

According to *A Blueprint to Tackle Queensland's Housing Crisis*, by Professor Hal Pawson of the University of New South Wales, since the outbreak of COVID, Brisbane rents have increased by more than 30 per cent. The resultant lack of affordable housing in Queensland has created a homelessness crisis, up by 22 per cent since 2018. In the Brisbane suburbs of Logan and Beaudesert and the Gold Coast, 10 per cent of households are homeless, or living in unaffordable housing. There are over 46,000 on the public housing waitlist. In regional Queensland, the increase is "even more dramatic", up by 29 per cent in four years.

Within 20 years more than 220,000 households will need affordable housing. In the 2021-22 financial year homelessness services in regional and metropolitan Queensland combined, saw 12,739 per month. Queensland needs 11,000 affordable and social homes today, said Professor Pawson. The number of people with a "very high need" for social housing was 37 per cent higher than the system can accommodate.

Last year, the Qld Labor government promised an inadequate 13,000 social and affordable homes by 2027. Before 2017, "minimal" investment had been made by state and federal governments in affordable and social housing. The CEO of QCOSS, Aimee McVeigh, said, "There are about 300,000 Queenslanders currently experiencing housing insecurity. In Townsville alone there are over 4,000 people on the waitlist for housing." In regards to domestic abuse, women are forced back to their abuser, "Because they have nowhere else to go, they will return to their partner."

Housing Minister Leanne Enoch said the government's \$4 billion Housing Investment Fund was the "largest concentrated investment" in Queensland's history, and housing was "at the top" of its policy agenda. "Over the past two years, we have provided almost 200,000 forms of housing assistance per year to Queensland households or individuals, including emergency housing, social housing, private market assistance and homelessness services." Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said she was concerned about housing stress and the government was looking at buying more than 5000 properties.

Local Government Association of Queensland, chief executive, Alison Smith, said that in March 2023, "there were 85,777 hectares of available land suitable for residential development and 29,086 hectares across southeast Queensland, which would open up 589,150 homes across the state, including 386,693 in southeast Queensland." The problem is, according to John McCarthy of the website INQUEENSLAND (inql.com.au), that although Queensland councils have approved 100,000 housing lots, they remain undeveloped because builders cannot find trained staff and the sudden high costs in building materials. The State government's infrastructure drive has depleted the available trained labour pool. Developers and building companies are leaving Queensland for Sydney and Melbourne, where their profit margins are higher. The Director of National Property Research, Matt Gross, said the Palaszczuk Labor government was warned in 2016 of a coming severe labour shortage in the building sector, but little was done.

Rob Nicholls, a University of New South Wales construction industry regulation researcher, says that Australia needs a million new homes in the next five years. According to the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation, there will be a shortage of 106,300 new homes over the next five years. The number of apartments and townhouses being built has fallen by 40 per cent in the past ten years.

The situation is worsened by the large number of building companies and developers that are going insolvent and bankrupt. The Australian Constructors Association (ACA) said building firms were entering administration at more than twice the rate of other industries, as profit margins have fallen to below 1 per cent and liquidity is down to less than 5 per cent. An ACA representative said, "over half of all large builders are now carrying current liabilities in excess of current assets – a technical definition of insolvency. The building industry is a textbook example of market failure." Grant Warner, CEO of the Australian Institute of Quantity Surveyors said, "Electricity cost hikes and new building standards are adding further strain to an industry with rapidly shrinking margins."

One of Australia's largest home builders, Porter Davis, has collapsed and construction firm Lloyd Group has gone into voluntary

administration. Porter Davis laid off 370 employees and has left more than 200 projects unfinished. Other builders such as ProBuild and PBS Building, have at least 3,000 projects uncompleted across Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and the ACT. In July 2022 construction giant Metricon sacked 225 out of its 2,500 national work force in a restructure. In 2023 Queensland's LDC Pty Ltd and Melbourne-based Hallbury Homes went into receivership, with LDC leaving 50 projects unfinished and owing creditors more than \$7 million.

When a company goes bankrupt, subcontractors and contractors are "often left holding the baby." People who paid money upfront to have their houses built are left with a shell of a house when the builder cannot finish the construction. Left to the elements the pine timber frame is soon affected by mould and structural damage, making the residence unliveable. The owners rely on insurance companies for compensation. A bankrupt builder can easily set up a new company devoid of any responsibility for previous losses.

The cost of key building materials has increased by more than 40 per cent since Covid, as supply chains became constrained and the cost of building materials shot up. Builders who signed fixed-price contracts with customers found it difficult to cover the rising cost of building materials and labour scarcity. Many builders kept signing on new customers asking for advanced payments. In residential single-dwelling constructions, building companies operated a construction Ponzi scheme in which the deposit from one customer paid for the supplies at another site, or paid old debts. In the last financial year, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) recorded 2213 failures in the construction industry sector across Australia, the most insolvencies of any industry. Rather than properly regulating the industry, state governments have reduced controls over the industry, because of neoliberalist policies, leaving the responsibility on the customer.

Soheil Abedian is a Persian-Australian property developer who has built thousands of homes across the Gold Coast. Abedian puts the construction industry's woes down to "massive greed." It is a product of "the capitalist system that we have in Australia and the Western world – that everybody would like to have more and more profit." ❄️



Half the Sky

Remembering activist women

Elle Bee

Faith Bandler (1918-2015) was an activist and who dedicated her life to civil rights.

Her father was from the South Sea Islands and had been kidnapped from his home in New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) when he was 12 years old and brought to Queensland as an indentured labourer in the sugar cane fields. This practice of kidnapped labour from the South Sea Islands was known as "blackbirding." Faith's mother was of Scottish and Indian descent.

During World War II she joined the Women's Land Army, carrying out farm work. After the war she worked in a shirt factory. In 1951 Faith travelled through the Soviet Union and Western Europe as part of a dance troupe. She experienced both life in communist countries and the aftermath of the horrors of war.

When Faith returned to Australia, she joined the New South Wales Peace Council and became a founding member of the Movement for the Advancement of Aborigines, along with Indigenous activist Pearl Gibbs and civil rights activist Jessie Street. She was also targeted by ASIO on her return from Europe, and had her passport suspended for 10 years. Recalling this time, Faith said "None of this surprised me because I knew that great people in world were suffering as a result of McCarthyism." Around this time in her life, Faith also met and married her husband Hans Bandler, who was a Jewish refugee from Vienna. Hans was one of the strongest supporters of Faith's activism throughout her life.

Faith campaigned for many years on constitutional change of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, advocating for removal of racist provisions and for the counting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the constitution. The referendum received a vote in favour with 90.77 per cent yes votes. It remains the most successful referendum in Australia's history. She participated in grassroots activism for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, campaigning against white communities throughout New South Wales who sought to restrict or remove Aboriginal communities. She was a powerful organiser and worked tirelessly throughout her career.

Later in life, Faith wrote about her family history and advocated for the rights of South Sea Islanders in Australia. She challenged common narratives from right-wing, colonial historians that South Sea Islanders in Australian in the 19th century had immigrated to Australia independently. In reality, South Sea Islanders who had been kidnapped and brought to Australia were treated brutally and subject to much of the same racial segregation as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In the early days of Federation, South Sea Islanders were some of the first minority groups in Australia to be affected, as laws came into effect requiring the deportation of South Sea Islanders.

Bandler's life is an inspiration at a time when people are fighting for real gains for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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US prepares to intervene in Haiti: 4 reasons why they shouldn't

NEW YORK: The United Nations Security Council voted to send a foreign "security mission" to Haiti – an armed intervention force. The body adopted a resolution, drafted by the United States and Ecuador, that authorises the so-called Multinational Security Support mission – "to take all necessary measures" – code for the use of force.

Officials from Haiti, the UN, and the US say the intervention will be aimed at helping Haiti's police suppress armed bands, or gangs, that cause deadly violence and have overrun the capital, Port-au-Prince. The UN reports that, as of 15th August, 2,439 Haitians had been killed this year.

"More than just a simple vote, this is in fact an expression of solidarity with a population in distress," Haiti's Foreign Minister Jean Victor Geneus told the council. "It's a glimmer of hope for the people that have for too long been suffering."

China and Russia, however, abstained from the vote, expressing reluctance about granting a blanket authorisation for the use of force under Chapter 7 of the founding UN Charter. The remaining 13 members voted in favour.

Here are four reasons why the planned armed intervention will be harmful to Haitians.

One, previous foreign interventions have brought trouble. Nothing suggests this one will be different. Here's the record:

- The aforementioned UN occupation.
- NGOs invaded after the 2010 earthquake. They wasted donated funds.
- US-assisted military coups in 1991 and 2004 removed the progressive Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.
- The US "Operation Uphold Democracy" reinserted Aristide in 1994 on the condition that he enforce neoliberal economic "reform."
- The US government provided vital support to the father-and-son Duvalier dictatorship from 1957 to 1986.

Two, Haiti's oppressed majority population needs a government, not a façade of one. A government in Haiti that served the people might provide a buffer between an imported, militarised foreign police and the Haitian people. Haiti has no functioning government today, much less one friendly to the people's cause.

Michel Martelly became

president in 2011, courtesy of US manipulation. The last general election in Haiti, in 2016, allowed Jovenel Moïse to be president. The two wealthy politicians belonged to the rightwing PHTK political party. The elections they won were thoroughly corrupt and saw abysmally low turnouts.

The distressed Haitian masses have no political party that reliably or effectively speaks for them. They have no say in foreign government plans for them. They have no institutional resources or constitutional protections against potential abuse at the hands of foreign occupation forces.

Three, the gangs have ties with Haiti's wealthy powerbrokers.

Haiti's establishment sought protection from disorder and destruction triggered by the ongoing protests, primarily in Port-au-Prince. In the absence of an army, and with the police unable to cope, gangs came into existence.

They were supposedly going to bring order to city neighbourhoods, even leading some protesters to join. Behind them, with funds the whole time, however, have been a number of wealthy Haitians. So of course, the gangs took on the additional role of blocking agitation for political change. Funds flowed from

local oligarchs and from abroad for that specific purpose.

There's a sea of contradictions. In suppressing the gangs, the interventionist forces would be defying the wealthy classes that pay them. But those same wealthy classes, are calling for a foreign security force to defeat them. The struggling people of Haiti may not readily follow such convoluted scheming, but they are familiar with the likely outcome.

Four, the timing of the intervention coincides with movement within the gangs toward a new kind of politics. One suspects that the proposed intervention represents a heavy-handed response to stirrings for political change.

Some leaders of some gangs appear to be disenchanted with inter-gang fighting and with dependence on the rich and powerful. They are making alliances and mouthing revolutionary sentiments.

Press reports centre on veteran gang leader Jimmy Cherizier. They've latched onto his nickname "Barbecue," assigned to him as a small boy; it evokes the spectre of fiery violence. This former highly regarded policeman brought other gangs into his 'G9' alliance and now is reaching out to other gangs.

Cherizier, quoted by journalist Kim Ives, speaks his mind:

"We are a great people. Our national motto is 'Union makes strength.' Our objective is to once and for all overthrow the system that exists in Haiti and achieve the dream of [Haitian founding father Jean-Jacques] Dessalines, which is for the nation's wealth to be shared by all its citizens.... Our battle isn't just going to be to demonstrate with people in the streets. We have guns, and we will fight with them.... We took our independence with arms."

Cherizier told Ives earlier, "This is a corrupt system; these people are using us to fight their political battles, and we do not want to be their cannon fodder anymore."

Sabine Manigat, a sociologist at Haiti's Quisqueya University, has the last word: The "image of Haiti portrayed in the foreign press, which highlights misery and insecurity, does not paint the full picture of a country where a social movement survives, people who are standing up and fighting, and who require international solidarity, not intervention."

People's World, edited for reasons of space. ✪

How Washington fought off the great Chinese balloon invasion

Alex Lo
South China Morning Post

If the US needed millions of dollars to shoot down a couple of hobbyist balloons, a trillion-dollar military budget is not enough to fight China.

A news story buried in *Aviation Week* in February offers great insight into why the United States needed a trillion US dollar budget for its military, and its politicians still complain that's not enough to counter the "China threat."

You may have heard about the three balloons that were shot down by US fighter planes after they downed an alleged Chinese spy balloon.

It was no spy balloon after all, neither were the other ones. This is the latest admission by America's top soldier, so it's official. Remember the hysteria that was coming out of Washington back then.

The three downed UFOs

– which incidentally helped trigger a congressional hearing with a self-styled whistle-blower who claimed the US government had reverse-engineered alien technology, a violation of galactic intellectual property rights? – were almost certainly Pico balloons so beloved of hobbyists and amateur meteorologists. *Aviation Week* interviewed the boss of a US balloon manufacturer who tried unsuccessfully to tell his government.

"I tried contacting our military and the FBI – and just got the run-around – to try to enlighten them on what a lot of these things probably are. And they're going to look not too intelligent to be shooting them down," said Ron Meadows, founder of Scientific Balloon Solutions (SBS), a Silicon Valley company that makes purpose-built Pico balloons for hobbyists, educators and scientists.

Costing between US\$12-US\$180 each, they can reach

altitudes of 30,000 feet to 50,000 feet. They are typically made of thin polythene or latex and are filled with helium or hydrogen gas to achieve lift.

According to a calculation by Stephen Semler of the Security Policy Reform Institute, the operation that downed a single UFO balloon over Lake Huron on February 12 cost almost US\$2 million. A Boeing E-3 Sentry early warning and control aircraft and a Boeing KC-135 Stratotanker for mid-air refuelling were deployed, costing US\$495,945 and US\$194,607 respectively, assuming a seven-hour operation.

Two F-16s were deployed, incurring a combined operational cost of US\$376,978. At least two AIM-9X air-to-air missiles were used, which cost a combined US\$885,597.

They added up to a grand sum of US\$1,953,127. Can we say it cost roughly US\$8 million to kill all four balloons?

Imagine how much could have been saved for US taxpayers if Washington had listened to a balloon maker! It reminds me of my favourite inverse mathematical relationship in political science: bullets/butter. No wonder the crumbling state of US subways, highways, airports, transport infrastructure, and schools.

But sorry, dear readers, it took me so long to deliver the punchline. Here it is.

General Mark Milley, who retires this month as head of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said on national television that the Chinese balloon "wasn't spying." "The intelligence community, their assessment – and it's a high-confidence assessment ... there was no intelligence collection by that balloon," Milley said. "I would say it ... didn't transmit any intelligence back to China."

It's worth remembering the hysteria that prompted US Secretary of

State Antony Blinken to postpone a visit to Beijing. James Comer, a Republican Congressman who chairs the US House Oversight Committee, claimed the balloon could be carrying "bio-weapons" made in Wuhan. Chuck Schumer, the Senate Democratic leader, declared all three UFOs were Chinese-made too. "The Chinese were humiliated – I think the Chinese were caught lying ... It's a real setback for them," he said.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg even claimed the Chinese "spy" balloon was a threat to the Western military alliance itself. Seriously! He said it was a "pattern of Chinese behaviour ... We need to be aware of the constant risk of Chinese intelligence and step up what we do to protect ourselves."

If America needed millions of US dollars to shoot down a couple of hobbyist balloons, a trillion-dollar military budget really looks insufficient to fight the Chinese. ✪



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