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Israel escalates war crimes

Anna Pha

The situation in Gaza is catastrophic and continues to worsen with women and children making up 70 per cent or more of the dead and injured. An estimated 1.9 million people have been internally displaced with nowhere to go.

Thousands of children have been orphaned and traumatised, living each day in fear. Water, food, and medical supplies have been withheld, with preventable diseases spreading rapidly. The few hospitals still operating cannot cope.

At the same time millions of people around the world continue to protest in growing numbers, calling for a ceasefire and action by their governments to halt Israel's genocide.

While continuing to support Israel and still refusing to call for a ceasefire, the Albanese government hypocritically expresses concern about the "harrowing number of civilian deaths, including children." There is growing concern within the ranks of the Labor Party with a number of branches, including Albanese's own branch, passing motions calling for a ceasefire.

Australia's support for Israel goes beyond statements and voting at the UN. Australia is directly complicit in Israel's bombardment of Gaza through the provision of weapons and information obtained through the US spy base at Pine Gap.

"Australia wants to see continued steps towards a sustainable ceasefire, but it cannot be one-sided," a spokesperson for the government said. As if Israel's siege of Gaza is not one-sided!

Nor do the US administration's actions match its words. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, while in Israel, told reporters: "I underscore the imperative of the United States that the massive loss of civilian life and displacement of the scale that we saw in northern Gaza not be repeated in the south." Hardly credible while the US continues to provide unconditional support, intelligence, and weapons to Israel. Its latest shipment is 2000-pound bunker buster bombs.

The official spokesman for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Australian James Elder, who refused to leave the Gaza Strip despite the resumption of bombing, said: "This is a war on children. The hospital I am standing in front of is operating at 200 per cent of its capacity."

Israeli Defense Forces have told the World Health Organization to evacuate a medical warehouse in southern Gaza, "as ground operations will put it beyond use."

The 7-day pause in the conflict saw a number of hostages exchanged for Palestinian women and children prisoners held by Israel, and a small increase in the amount of humanitarian aid entering Gaza.

As soon as the pause ended on Friday 1 December, Israel recommenced heavy bombardment of southern Gaza telling thousands of people to move yet again from where they were sheltering.

Palestinian rally in Boorloo/Perth on Sunday 3 December 2023.

WEST BANK

While attention is focused on developments in Gaza, conditions in the West Bank have deteriorated sharply in the weeks since 7 October.

"The Israeli army has launched numerous raids that, along with acts of violence by Israeli settlers, are taking a mounting toll. Meanwhile, the army has locked down the territory, closing roads and imposing restrictions on internal movement, while also cracking down severely on Palestinian political expression. The economy is paralysed, at particularly high cost to the olive harvest taking place in October and November," the International Crisis Group reports.

Access restrictions are especially severe in areas near Israeli settlements and in the so called "Seam Zone"; the Palestinian area isolated by Israel's 712-kilometre-long barrier in the West Bank.

Settlers have also imposed movement restrictions blocking access roads to Palestinian communities, limiting their access to essential services and livelihoods. In some cases, settlers have also damaged water resources which herding communities rely on.

Humanitarian assistance services, including health and education, have also had to stop since the restrictions intensified, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OHCA) reports. Farmers in the occupied West Bank face near-daily incursions and violence from armed Israeli settlers to the point that they live in fear of having their homes and land stolen.

The West Bank has been under illegal military occupation by Israel since the 1967 Middle East war and during that time Israeli settlements have continued. Since then, about 700,000 Israeli settlers have illegally settled in the Palestinian territory.

The settlers and military act with impunity.

The huge encroachments by settlements on Palestinian land make it increasingly difficult to enact the UN Security Council resolutions for a two-state solution.

South Africa is seeking to have Israel declared an apartheid state and in conjunction with Palestine is working on a complaint to be filed with the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. It has also announced the withdrawal of all its diplomats in Tel Aviv.

The Australian government should end diplomatic relations with apartheid Israel and give its full support for a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire. In addition, it should adhere to the rule of law and support a two-state solution in line with UN resolutions. ✪

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Guardian

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Unfinished business

This is the last issue of the *Guardian – The Workers' Weekly* for 2023 (the podcast will continue through the break). It's a time for looking back on one year and looking forward to another.

2023 is littered with unfinished business, and before we wipe our hands clean of one year and get into looking-forward mode, it's as well to look at what's coming into 2024 with us.

The Communist Party of Australia has a proud history of standing with Indigenous people in Australia – we were the first political party on this continent to do so, and we kept doing so. The CPA campaigned hard for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament – not, as some naysayers pretended, because we thought the Voice would turn Australia into some sort of utopia for Indigenous people, but because it could have been a springboard for more action, and given momentum to the fight for real, much-needed progress. We also campaigned because we didn't want to hand a win to the racist assimilationism that has given right-wing forces in Australia so many successes for so long. The referendum was lost and as predicted, an anti-treaty mood is sweeping the country, with the Liberal and National Party Coalition is emboldened in its use of racism. It is notable that even after a massive disinformation campaign on the issue, a large majority of Indigenous Australians voted yes.

There was always going to be unfinished business from the Voice. The CPA will continue to support land rights and justice for the first people to inhabit this continent.

AUKUS rolls on, with legislation in parliament right now lifting export permits for technology developed in Australia to the UK and the USA (see page 5 this issue). Most of the Australian media treats AUKUS as a done deal, but it is not. There is dissension in the Labor Party over this dangerous surrender of our sovereignty. Join us in the fight to give peace a budget! The *Guardian* will continue to inform and encourage from an anti-imperialist and anti-war perspective.

Speaking of peace, the Communist Party of Australia is actively campaigning for a ceasefire in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, and the implementation of the two-state solution. Massive demonstrations in Australia have put pressure on the ALP government to call for the recent pause, but much more pressure is needed.

On some of these issues we have numbers – even the corporate media couldn't ignore the pro-Palestine demonstrations (not that they didn't try; witness disgraceful under-reporting by the ABC, and Nine media's recent intimidation of journalists who support fair coverage of Palestine). As has been mentioned in this paper before, we need more than numbers at demonstrations. We need a strong Party and strong community organisations to really carry through on these issues. Support the Party! Stay informed – keep reading the *Guardian* (or listening to the podcast).

In 2024, we will strive to keep readers informed and involved on Indigenous Rights, on the fight for peace, and on the struggle against apartheid and genocide in Palestine. We will keep providing the news that the mainstream press doesn't want to look at.

See you there.

Readers Survey! Cuban coffee!

In almost every issue of the *Guardian – the Workers Weekly*, we ask for letters to the editor so you can have your say.

Now, in the last issue for 2023, we're inviting you to have your say about the paper. What do you like? What do you want more of? What could we do better?

Please follow this link to let us know:
s.surveyplanet.com/tvcgwp7v

(Answers can be anonymous, but if you want to be in the draw for a bag of Cuban coffee, leave your email. If you would rather have a printed survey, write to editor@cpa.org.au, or call the office and we'll have one sent out.)

Are YOU responsible for inflation?

Inflation! It's bad, although we're all up for a pay rise if anyone's offering (they usually aren't).

Someone's to blame, and it can't be the obscene profits made by the Coles/Woolworths duopoly. Reserve Bank boss Michele Bullock has claimed that demand for services like haircuts and dentistry are driving up prices, but is she right? The *Guardian* provides a simple quiz to let YOU decide if you're the culprit.

Are you a hairdresser?

(Michelle Bullock thinks it's you, and she runs the Reserve Bank. Try giving customers a complimentary mint.)

Are you a dentist?

(Michelle Bullock thinks it's you too. Get together with the nearest hairdresser and work something out, also make sure there are copies of the *Guardian – the Workers' Weekly* in the waiting room while you're at it)

Are you a gigantic furniture and electronics retailer who puts working people on the hook for years with special low-interest loan offers?

Hi Gerry Harvey, you've still got $16 million of Jobkeeper that you didn't need. Don't spend it on anything inflationary, okay?

Are you unemployed or on the Disability Support Pension?

Good news; you're not causing inflation. You're off the hook. Bad news; that's because the rates of your allowance have been kept at below livable rates because of worries about inflation. The rest of us should shout you a haircut.

Have you recently signed up for a nuclear-powered submarine program you don't need, but which will make you less independent and less safe?

Yes: you are the Albanese government, but don't worry, it's not inflationary, besides which everyone else is paying for it.

No: you are the Australian taxpayer (thanks to GST, we're *all* taxpayers), and your social services are going to be gouged to make room for AUKUS. So you'll need more money. So you're more motivated to seek wage rises – maybe it *is* inflationary. Go easy on the haircuts.

Do more than eighty percent of people who need to eat use your stores?

Hello Coles and Woolworths. You are an inflationary pressure. If only there were billions of dollars in profits you could dip into.

Have you had a wage rise in the last two years?

Lucky you! Also well done to you as a union member. It's not inflation-causing, but a lot of the media and rich employers will say it is. Ignore them. ✪

Convoy to Chalmers

In the first demonstration in Logan City in Brisbane in support of Palestinians, an estimated 1500 to 2000 people, and hundreds of cars have surrounded Federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers' office in a protest against the Albanese government's criminal support for the genocidal assault on Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank.

The mood at the rally was defiant, angry, and sad. In an event in nearby Logan Gardens, protesters spoke out against Chalmers and the ALP government's failure to oppose the genocide. The rally also did a loop of a bowls club where Chalmers was supposed to be hosting a Christmas party, chanting "Jim Chalmers you can't hide."

Demonstrations in Melbourne and Sydney in the eighth week in a row were also massive and attended by thousands. There have also been protests in Canberra and Adelaide. Communist Party of Australia members attended all these events, proudly displaying the Party's new banners in support of Palestine. ✪

Guessing Competition results

Many thanks to everyone who entered the guessing competition.

1. Denis White – Sennheisser headphones
2. Tanya Williams – Eureka flag
3. Ingrid – $50 Bookshop voucher
4. Don Mudie – 6-month *Guardian* sub

Seller's prize Peter Farmer $100 Bookshop voucher

Press Fund

A very big thank you for your support this year. The Press Fund is important towards meeting our ever-rising costs. We do not have any corporate donors. This is the last issue of the *Guardian* for this year. The staff take a break and the paper will be back on 22 January. We hope you will think of us over the break. There will be wages to be paid and other ongoing expenses. Every contribution helps no matter how small or large. Warmest thanks for the latest contributions:

G Speirs $100, M McClintock $20, M Simmons $150, D Mudie $5, R Gillespie $5, F Kermode $125, D Bastin $100, J Hodgson $20, P Farmer $35, M Smith $20, D Cartwright $20, F Vouros $20, D Mudie $10, C McEwen $10, Anon $10, G D $180, NH $100, G M $50, SS $5, Eddie Seymour $125, Mark Mannion $140, NH $100, Digireb $125, Peter Watson $20.

Total: $1495. Cumulative Total for 2023: $3365.00

New Year's message

Palestine rally in Logan Central, Brisbane. Around 800 to 900 people attended it.

Vinnie Molina

I take this opportunity to thank CPA members, supporters, and *Guardian* readers for all their work and support during the past 12 months.

2023 has been a challenging year for workers and their families in Australia and around the world.

Workers continue to be underpaid and many are unable to make ends meet even when working more than one job or long hours. The housing crisis sees families living in cars, caravan parks, tents, and on the streets due to one of the biggest problems in society. Public housing for homes not development projects for investors is urgently needed.

The CPA campaigns for a public housing policy that guarantees workers and their families a roof over their heads. Actions that demolish existing stock and the sales of public land to developers in exchange for "affordable and social housing" are a con.

The 2023 Foodbank Australia Hunger Report found 3.7 million households in Australia have faced food insecurity in the last 12 months.

The Reserve Bank of Australia's interest rate rises have put many people under extra pressure while providing billions in profits to the banking sector. Enough is enough! People need to organise and push governments to invest in people's needs, not in the interests of multinational corporations that pay no taxes.

The excessive military spending under the concept that "we must prepare for war to achieve peace" is senseless. The billions already spent in the military budget still fall short of delivering to soldiers and their families after service in US wars.

Bipartisan support for AUKUS means both major parties are complicit in prioritising money for military adventures instead of funding solutions to avert the climate crisis, and address housing, health, education and food needs. The huge budget allocated to offensive nuclear submarines and other weaponry has indebted generations of Australians for the benefit of the expansionist US agenda in the Asia-Pacific.

The planet is on the brink, yet state and federal governments continue to permit and subsidise the expansion of the fossil fuel sector and support new projects. Climate change is here now, with extreme weather events taking a heavy toll in lives, on property, and on the environment.

2023 saw the CPA continue to grow with many more members young and old who campaign together for a better world. They have actively challenged the status quo.

The Party committed to actively campaigning for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. Party members worked in a coordinated manner with the YES campaign in the name of the Party. The results from the Referendum show that there is still a lot of work to do to build a better society. During the referendum we saw overt displays of negative feelings and expressions of racism. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were let down by society on their own land. As a Party we will continue to work with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights, truth telling, treaty, and land rights.

The Party will continue to campaign in 2024 for a Budget for Peace and the Environment. All our efforts will go towards organising a movement against AUKUS, and to prevent a war on China. These are discussions that should happen at Party AGMs and plans must include mobilising to save the planet from environmental destruction and war.

In this it is with so much anger and sadness that in the latter part of this year we have witnessed the televised genocide of the Palestinian people. Israel's brutal attack on the Gaza Strip and increasing violence and dispossession in the West Bank with US complicity hurt us all.

The Australian government, by following US imperialism's views of the world, has made us all complicit in genocide. The Albanese government took a criminal decision to endorse Israel's attacks on the people of Gaza since 7 October. Israel's actions are not "self-defence." They are genocide. Eight decades of occupation and land grab from the Palestinian people give the Palestinian people the right to fight for self-determination and for the expulsion of the occupier by any means necessary.

As communists we stand in solidarity with Palestine and feel their pain. We pay respect to thousands massacred by Israel's brutal attacks, many of them children whose future was cut short by Zionism.

The government must end all military sales and assistance to Israel, condemn the Netanyahu regime, and cease diplomatic and trade ties with Zionism.

The people of Palestine and Israel can live in peace alongside each other, but the world must recognise an independent Palestinian state.

In 2024 we will continue to fight for an enduring ceasefire, the reconstruction of Gaza and an independent Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Australian government has the moral responsibility to do everything it can to ensure the future of the Palestinian people.

Party members have risen to the call to make their voices heard on the streets and we will continue to prepare our cadre in working-class politics. The upcoming organising conference to be held on 19-21 January in Sydney will further provide the tools for the struggles ahead.

I wish all Party members and *Guardian* readers a restful break, and a revolutionary new year 2024. ✪

Good news for anyone who has faced workplace discrimination and sexual harassment

At the moment, if you're making a legal claim against your employer for workplace discrimination or sexual harassment, one thing that might stop you going ahead is this: if the case doesn't succeed, you may have to cover the employer's legal costs. Legal fees can easily come to hundreds of thousands of dollars, so the financial risk can silence victims.

This December the Attorney General has introduced a bill that aims to remove financial barriers that prevent victims of workplace discrimination and sexual harassment from seeking justice. This is a breakthrough development for victim-survivor rights to legal justice, and a significant change from the changes being considered by the government 12 months ago.

The Australian Human Rights Commission Amendment (Costs Protection) Bill 2023 proposes a changes called 'equal access.' This means people who successfully claim workplace discrimination and sexual harassment can recoup their legal costs, while those who are unsuccessful are mostly protected from having to pay the defendant's legal costs.

Unions, academics, peak bodies, health professionals, lawyers and victim-survivors, and other organisations, all with expertise in preventing and addressing workplace discrimination and sexual harassment, have argued for this change for some time.

"This reform is a first for Australia in discrimination law. People will now be able to bring claims without the huge risk of having to pay the legal costs of the perpetrator, or the perpetrator's employer, should they lose. It also means that people who bring successful sexual harassment or discrimination claims will have their legal costs covered." said Katherine McKernan, Executive Director National Legal Aid.

"It is heartening to see the government listening to both victim-survivors and those organisations that work with the most disadvantaged to design a system that removes barriers to seeking redress from workplace discrimination and sexual harassment," said Emma Golledge, Kingsford Legal Centre. Golledge has called the change "heartening," adding that many clients "choose not to proceed with seeking legal justice because of their legitimate worries about financial risk to their future well-being, and that of their families.

This change is critically important for low income and vulnerable workers experiencing discrimination and harassment and will give confidence to workers who have been silenced because of fear of the cost of speaking up," said Michele O'Neil, President of the ACTU.

"We know that discrimination and sexual harassment are widespread and damaging, that many barriers exist to people bringing forward complaints, and that there is often a large power imbalance. This reform removes a significant barrier to access to justice and helps to address deep structural inequalities in our society."

The Respect@Work report, which contemplated this reform, was released in 2020 by Former Sexual Discrimination Minister, Kate Jenkins. The report found the prevalence of sexual harassment in Australia to be "endemic", conservatively estimating the cost to the economy at $3.5 billion per year. ✪

Teacher shortage stress

The NSW Teachers Federation has strongly endorsed a NSW parliamentary committee's recognition that crushing workloads are leading to more psychological injuries, as part of recommendations to conduct a forensic investigation into stress-related psychological injuries in education.

The recommendation is among 18 produced by the NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Law and Justice in its 2023 Review of the Workers' Compensation Scheme.

The number of psychological injuries suffered by NSW public school teachers increased from 349 in 2021-22 to 577 in 2022-23. In evidence to the inquiry, the chief executive of the State Insurance Regulatory Authority, Adam Dent, recognised the connection between teacher workload and the high number of psychological claims by teachers linked to work pressure:

"Absolutely. I think that is quite concerning. I think that then leans to a conversation around the structure of work in those environments. From our point of view, we would see those issues as being good ones for agencies like SafeWork to potentially work on with employers. But certainly the employers themselves will be able to take those matters into consideration. But that is highly disproportionate number, absolutely.

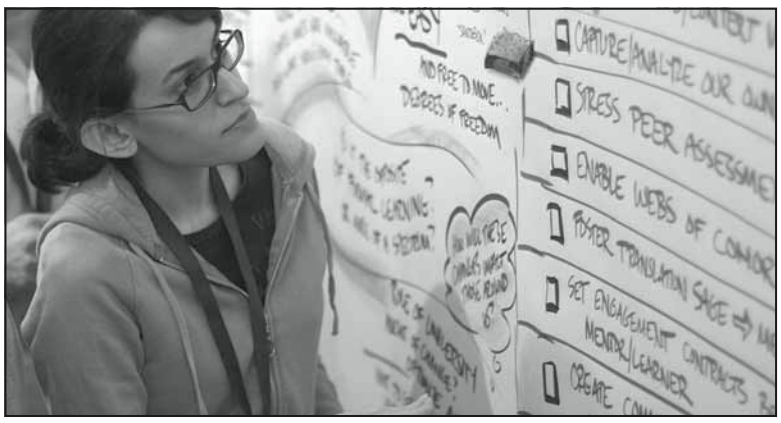

Photo: Alan Levine – flickr.com (C0 – public domain)

"Amid the worst teacher shortage in living memory, many of our teachers have been stretched to breaking point by unmanageable workloads. Yet the support structures simply haven't been adequate," said NSW Teachers Federation acting Deputy President, Amber Flohm.

"At a minimum, robust financial and medical support for people who get sick and injured at work must be provided. But it also needs to go further. We need preventative measures that address what the evidence points to as the number one cause of these injuries for teachers, work pressure.

"A psychologically safe workplace which facilitates both the successful return to work and healthy work practices requires vastly more support from both the employer and insurer than is currently experienced by teachers."

The Committee's report also calls for:

An enforcement campaign targeting workplaces that have high incidents of psychological injury to ensure they have in place a psychosocial hazard risk assessment;

A robust and reliable method of data collection to ensure information on secondary psychological injuries is collected by insurers and is maintained on an ongoing basis;

Amending workers' compensation legislation to ensure injured workers are only required to have a single independent medical examination from a specialist agreed upon by all parties, where relevant. ✪

South Australian teachers win better offer

South Australian high school teachers are being balloted on accepting a better offer from the SA state government after almost a month of striking.

On 6 November this year, fed-up teachers voted to strike after an offer from the state government that the union called "meagre." Teachers took to SA's state parliament and demonstrated in large numbers.

Now the state government has come back with offers of a salary increase of 13 per cent over the life of the agreement, to be back-paid from May 2023, longer pay of Zone Allowance (a payment to encourage teachers to work in country areas), and $16m workload relief for preschools.

Importantly, the agreement includes Australian Education Union representation in recruitment and selection processes. Union members have taken action, and it will be good to have the union involved in recruitment and selection, instead of being treated as external to the work of its members.

Voting will close on 13 December. The union executive has told teachers that if they don't accept the offer "there may be a need for strong and sustained industrial action." It seems that kind of action is what it takes for the South Australian government to pay attention to teachers. ✪

First step to justice for Jeffrey Winmar

On 5 December, the family of Jeffrey Winmar attended the Coroners Court of Victoria for the first directions hearing into the passing of Jeffrey Winmar. It is the beginning of a long journey towards justice for Jeffrey.

Jeffrey was a 28-year-old Noongar man. He was a beloved son, father, uncle, brother, grandson, and cousin to many. He was a family man that loved spending time with his siblings, nieces and nephews. His family remembers him for his infectious smile and as the protector of his younger siblings. Jeffrey was learning to play the guitar and had a passion for gospel music. He was proud of his culture and carried a strong belief in Christianity.

Jeffrey was hospitalised after a police pursuit on 9 November and never recovered, passing two days later on 11 November. Multiple police units, including the canine unit attended his house for a planned arrest.

Jeffrey's family are concerned about the conduct and accountability of police during the arrest and his pursuit. They have received inconsistent information from police, and are seeking answers as to his treatment during his pursuit, apprehension and arrest.

There have been at least 555 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Deaths in Custody since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1991, with 19 of those unjust deaths being in 2023 so far. Jeffrey is one of the three Noongar people who have died in custody this past month.

The family appreciates the support they have received from the community so far, especially all those who attended the vigil for Jeffrey at Dardi Munwurro.

Ursulla Winmar, Jeffrey's mother said "I want the police to account for what happened under their watch," while his father, Jeffrey Anderson said that "with the support of the Aboriginal community in Victoria, Western Australia and across the country, we will fight for justice for our Jeffrey."

The family has thanked all those who have sent messages of support and welcomes everyone to stand in solidarity with them as they embark on this long journey of justice. They invite all supporters to attend the Coroners Court for future hearings.

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) ✪

Dingo bytes

Inaction by the Australian government is leaving refugee families in Papua New Guinea destitute. Despite promises from the PNG Immigration Minister that the problem would be fixed, refugees still have no food vouchers, income, or access to medical help. Families have run out of food for their children; refugees have been left without electricity because they do not have the money to keep it connected. Electricity in Port Moresby costs up to $150 a week. Even drinking water has to be bought. Some money has been raised by friends and supporters in Australia for the last week, but it is nowhere near enough to buy sufficient food and keep the power on for the 62 refugees and their families still in limbo in PNG. Despite efforts to raise more money, there is no money to even provide food vouchers for this coming week.

While no refugees have been evicted, service providers have still not been paid by PNG Immigration, and the threat made in a letter last week remains. The CEO of accommodation provider, MRT told one family to "move out," and added, "I can close all the accommodation anytime."

"Clare O'Neil must urgently provide the money needed to guarantee that refugees have the services that they need to survive. There are two new babies to be supported," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition, "We know there have been meetings between Home Affairs and PNG Immigration, but nothing has come of them." While PNG and Australia argue the toss about who is responsible for the refugees' welfare, service providers are not being paid and refugees in PNG are facing increasingly desperate circumstances. "Doing nothing is not an option," said Rintoul, "Labor is spending over $400 million to keep Nauru open as an offshore detention facility, but they have found nothing to support the refugees they sent to PNG in 2013."

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: the NSW government.

NSW paramedics are currently the lowest paid in the country thanks to the state's wages policy. United under the slogan 'Value Our Service,' the paramedics are facing a wages policy in the form of a law that's been in place since 2011, which makes it illegal for NSW public sector workers, such as those working in emergency services, to receive a pay rise above 2.5 per cent without trade-offs.

In order to achieve their deserved professional rates of pay, NSW paramedics, members of the Health Services Union, have chosen to fight for professional recognition. In order to get a pay rise from the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC), you need to find savings of $4 million for every 1 per cent pay rise above 2.5 per cent. This means trading off conditions (such as penalties) as the Ministry of Health sees fit. Paramedics in NSW are registered professionals with a high level of clinical skills and responsibility. Professional recognition would reflect the clinical excellence of this workforce. It would mean delivering better patient care despite your postcode, and higher remuneration for paramedics. Other industries that have professionalised have fought for and won pay rises as big as 39 per cent. Members of the Ambulance Division of the HSU will fight for a pay rise that is in line with the value of service that NSW paramedics provide.

Something to say?
Write to the Editor!
editor@cpa.org.au

Find out more about the
Communist Party of Australia
web **www.cpa.org.au**
email **cpa@cpa.org.au**

OP-ED: SACK MARLES!

Hannah Middleton

The US-led military buildup in Australia for war with China is like nothing this country has ever experienced before – and US sycophant, Australian defence minister Richard Marles carries much of the responsibility for this.

Marles uses the grossly biased 2023 Defence Strategic Review to claim that Australia is "facing the most difficult set of strategic circumstances since the Second World War" and that Australia must therefore "deepens military interoperability" with the US.

Marles' latest step to achieve a complete loss of Australian sovereignty is legislation in federal parliament that tears down restrictions on the trade in defence goods and technology between the AUKUS partners, the UK and the US.

The Defence Trade Controls Amendment Bill 2023 provides that certain export goods on the Defence and Strategic Goods List (DSGL) and related services will not require permits if they go to the US or the UK.

Former Pentagon official Ben Greenwalt has explained that the system "will allow the US to essentially steal and control Australian technology faster" on the hope that the White House does the same in reverse.

It will result in Australia surrendering "any sovereign capability it develops" to US control, he said.

Marles claims the US and UK support the creation of a licence-free environment between the AUKUS partners. However, neither country has yet introduced their own laws to reflect this arrangement.

Photo: US Navy Petty Officer Alexander Kubitza – flickr.com (CC-BY-2.0)

Australia has 'yet again' been made dependent on the US Congress to pass laws that complement Marles' legislation.

The new legislation also creates a number of new offences for companies which trade with countries unacceptable to the Australian government, on instructions from the US.

VASSAL STATE

The interoperability between the US and Australian militaries is growing at an increasing pace as Australia becomes a vassal state of the US.

The Force Posture Agreement, signed in 2014, involves 2500 US marines on permanent rotation in the north of Australia and increasing interoperability between Australian and US armies, navies and air forces.

The FPA also provides the US with unimpeded access to dozens of agreed facilities and areas across the continent. The Pentagon can take complete control of any of these installations if it considers this is in its interests.

The escalating US military presence across northern Australia was expanded in December last year to incorporate troops from Japan, a member of the Quad, the alliance of the US, Australia, Japan, and India which is aimed at China.

Richard Marles should be sacked and charged as an agent of a foreign power. ✪

OP-ED: Anti-semitism and Israel

Richard Titelius

I think the reports in *The West Australian* that there has been a more than 500 per cent increase in anti-Semitism should be treated with some caution. Anti Semitism refers to hostility or hatred towards Jewish people, and this should not be confused with anti-Zionism which is opposition towards the creation of the Jewish state.

Another kind of hostility is hostility to the actions of the Israeli state including the actions of the Israeli Defence forces – the organisation responsible for the bombing of thousands of Palestinian people and their homes and other civilian infrastructure in Gaza – especially the women and children of Gaza who carry no weapons. Protests and criticisms of the actions of the Israeli state and Israeli Defence Forces should not be viewed as anti-semitic criticisms of the Jewish people as a whole. This allows the Israeli state to escape criticism for their actions against the Palestinian people in their retaliation against Hamas. There are many Israeli people, both Jewish and Arab that are also critical of the actions of the Israeli state, the IDF and their Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the war against Hamas and the Palestinian people. ✪

Consulting: ALP tries to unscramble the egg

This week, Public Service Minister Katy Gallagher has appointed Andrew Nipe as Chief Consulting Officer and Joanne Rossiter as Deputy Chief Consulting Officer for Australian Government Consulting, an in-house consultancy for the Australian government.

Australian government consulting is supposed to use the experience of workers in the Australian Public Service instead of using contractors and external consultants.

One of the many scandals of the last Federal government was the discovery that Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) had been playing both sides of the street by advising the Tax Office, while also hawking the information to large corporations who wanted to avoid tax. In opposition, Labor made a lot of capital from pointing out how much the government was spending on expensive external consultants.

Australian Government Consulting is the governments' attempt to deliver on its promise to do something about the disgraceful amounts being spent on consultants.

Two projects for the new agency are almost finished. One is designed to make the Net Zero Economy agency plan for the future, and the other is to help state and federal governments work together for economic ties with India.

The government has decided to spend $10.2 million on the new agency over the next two years. If it goes well, it could save money, cut down on conflicts of interest, and develop the Public Service better by giving public servants more of an incentive to stay in house.

As everyone found out after the PWC scandal, external consultants and contractors are deeply embedded in the Public Service. This new agency won't replace them all overnight, but it could be a good start. ✪

GREEN NOTES

Anna Pha

The UN's 28th annual climate conference, COP28, being held in Dubai from 30 November to 12 December to the backdrop of rising global emissions and the hottest year on record. It is chaired by Sultan Al Jabar, chief executive officer of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, which has raised questions of a conflict of interest.

On the first day UN Climate Change Executive Secretary, Simon Stiell, warned delegates that "If we do not signal the terminal decline of the fossil fuel era as we know it, we welcome our own terminal decline ... we choose to pay with people's lives." He continued, "If this transition isn't just, we won't transition at all. That means justice within and between countries."

2023 will likely be the hottest in 125,000 years. "More destructive storms, unpredictable rains and floods, heatwaves, and droughts are already causing massive economic damage and affecting hundreds of millions of people ... costing them their lives and livelihoods," Stiell wrote in an opinion piece.

The key agenda item for COP28 is a stocktake of action on climate change since country commitments for emission reductions were made when the Paris agreement was adopted at COP21. It is also the beginning of new negotiations around increasing (ratcheting up) existing commitments. There is a strong push by developing and vulnerable countries for a decision to phase out, not just phase down, the world's use of CO2-emitting coal, oil and gas which are the main sources of warming emissions. This is the most contentious issue before COP28. With consensus required for all decisions it is also the most difficult. It is an urgent requirement if global temperatures are to be limited to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels as the science demands. The earth is hurtling towards a catastrophic 2.8°C by the end of the century and has already reached 1.2°C.

The conference got off to a promising start on the first day, with an agreement for a Loss and Damage Fund to be managed by the World Bank. Developed countries will help developing ones cope with the most devastating effects of drought, floods, rising seawater and other impacts of climate change. Initial commitments were made for more than US$420 million. Developed countries have failed to honour previous commitments to fund and provide technology transfers for adaptation and mitigation programs for vulnerable developing states. It remains to be seen whether they honour these latest commitments.

"The fossil fuel taps can't be turned off overnight but there are a lot of opportunities for action not currently being taken. For example, in 2022, governments spent over [US]$7 trillion in taxpayers' money or borrowings on fossil fuel subsidies. Subsidies fail to protect the real incomes of the poorest households and divert money that are increasing developing country debt burdens, or could have been used to improve health care, build infrastructure – including renewable energy and grids – and expand social programs to alleviate poverty. Done responsibly, a phase-out of such subsidies would actually help the poorest and improve the economies of the countries now dependent on them," Stiell wrote.

Australia is bidding to host the COP meeting in 2026 despite being the world's largest exporter of metallurgical coal, the second largest exporter of thermal coal and one of the largest exporters of liquefied natural gas. Australia boasts that it will achieve a 42 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030, when scientists say wealthy countries should be cutting their emissions by 50 per cent to 75 per cent for the Paris Agreement goals to be met.

According to the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), for every tonne of climate pollution that will be reduced by Albanese government climate policies to 2030, more than seven tonnes of additional pollution will flow from new government approvals. They're blunt about this: "The government might say it's not responsible for the emissions when Australian coal and gas is burnt overseas, but the fact remains Albanese government decisions are fuelling global warming."

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ENVIRONMENT

Fighting for the Future

By Hannah Middleton

New Age Publishers 43 pages **$10**

This pamphlet is a call to action to save our planet and humanity. It argues that humanity is at a crossroads. The insatiable drive for profits by capitalism is leading to irreversible and catastrophic climate change. Capitalist governments – and the giant corporations they work for – are refusing to act on the warnings of the world's leading scientists.

A popular movement for change is growing around the world. It aims to dismantle the destructive policies that have led us to this uniquely perilous moment of human history, and to move toward a world system that gives priority to human rights and needs. The stakes in the bitter class war that is taking shape are immense and arise from the nature of capitalism. Capitalism is an unsustainable system.

The booklet insists that we must confront the reality that what we do now will forever alter the course of humanity and all life on Earth. Now more than ever we must fight for a better system. Our lives are more important than their profits.

Green Strategy: Path to Fundamental Transformation

By Marc Brodine

International Publishers NY 2018 Paperback – 293 pages **$40**

Green Strategy links environmental issues to other struggles and applies lessons from past struggles. It explores the interwoven environmental problems caused by the imbalance between humanity and the natural world on which humanity depends. The roots of our environmental crises are identified as lying in capitalism. Brodine puts forward a number of positive proposals for building the necessary coalitions and alliances with other movements. A very interesting and useful contribution towards the understanding of the complexity of climate change and its all-encompassing impact on every aspect of life.

POLITICAL ECONOMY

Super Profits and Crises: Modern US Capitalism

By Victor Perlo

International Publishers NY Paperback – 546 pages **$30**

This is a great book for beginners and those with a greater knowledge in understanding Marxist political economy. It not only presents the theory but also its application today, something which many theoretical texts do not do. It covers such topics as exploitation of labour and value, real wages and productivity, the rate of profit, corruption and decay of capitalism, monopoly, state monopoly capitalism, racism, the militarisation of the economy, US imperialism, economic crises and the business cycle, the structural crisis of world capitalism, socialism versus capitalism, and much more in simple everyday language.

ABC – What is Labour?

Progress Publishers 1986 Paperback 264 pages **$15**

A must-have publication explaining the labour process under capitalism and under socialism. The topics include the character of labour, the right to work, unemployment, organisation of labour and the scientific and technological revolution under capitalism and under socialism. As with the other ABC publications, there is a useful glossary at the end.

Frederick Engels on Capital

By Frederick Engels

International Publishers Paperback 108 pages **$14**

Das Capital is one of the most iconic works by the great revolutionary Karl Marx, fundamental to understanding capitalism and Marxist political economy. It revealed and substantiated the source of surplus value and exploitation of workers, the true source of private profits. This publication provides a clear outline of the essentials covered in the three volumes of *Das Capital*. Engels' writing is clear and easily accessible.

REVOLUTION

Birth of The Communist Manifesto

By Karl Marx & Frederick Engels

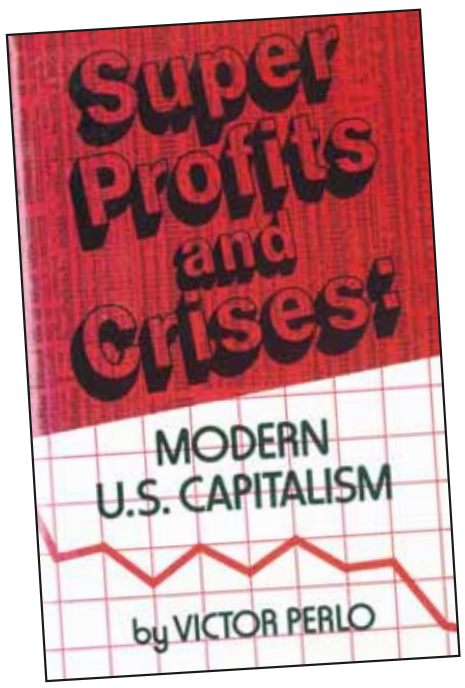
Edited with an introduction by Dirk J Struik International Publishers, USA, 1971 (1993) Paperback – 224 pages **$25**

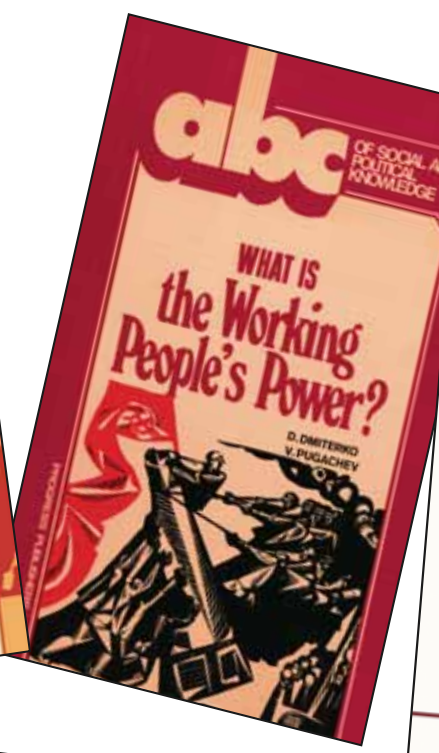
This publication contains the full text of the *Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels with early drafts by Engels and other supplementary material. It has a very useful introduction by Professor Struik that assists with understanding the *Manifesto* and the context in which it was conceived and written. Still very relevant, this is a must-read for anyone wishing to understand Marxism. It also includes an invaluable question and answer section on Principles of Communism by Engels.

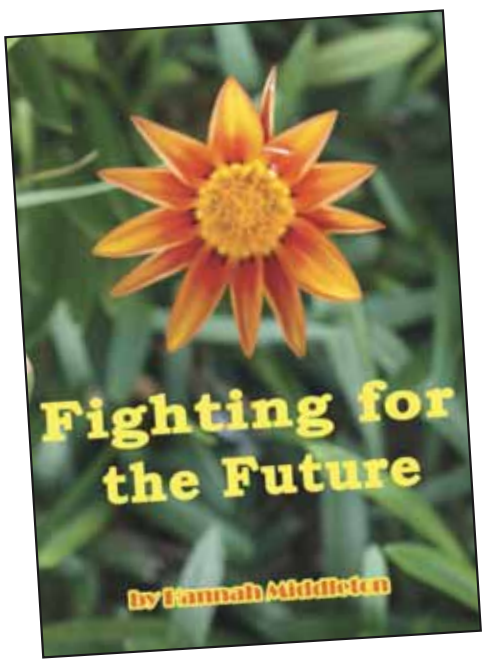
ABC – What is Revolution?

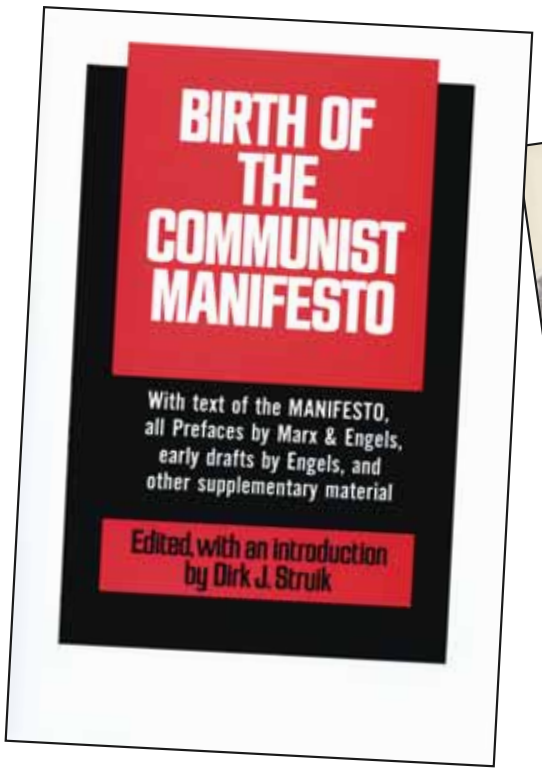
Progress Publishers 1986 Paperback, 191 pages **$15**

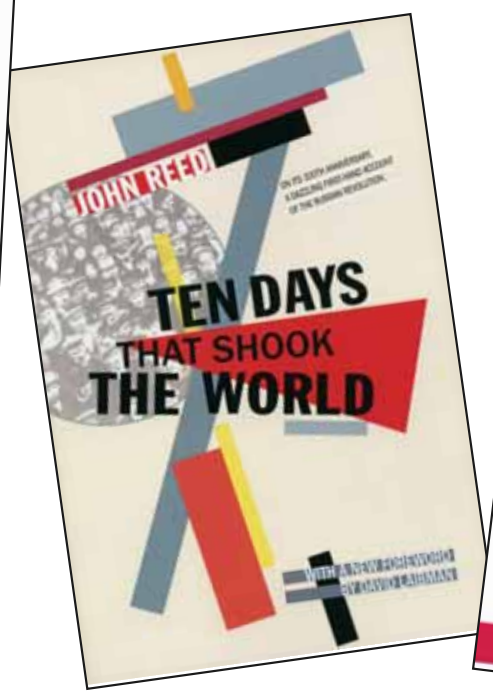
This easy-to-read volume explains Marxist-Leninist theory on the economic basis of social revolution, the revolutionary situation, types of social revolutions, diversity of ways of transitioning to socialism, and much more.

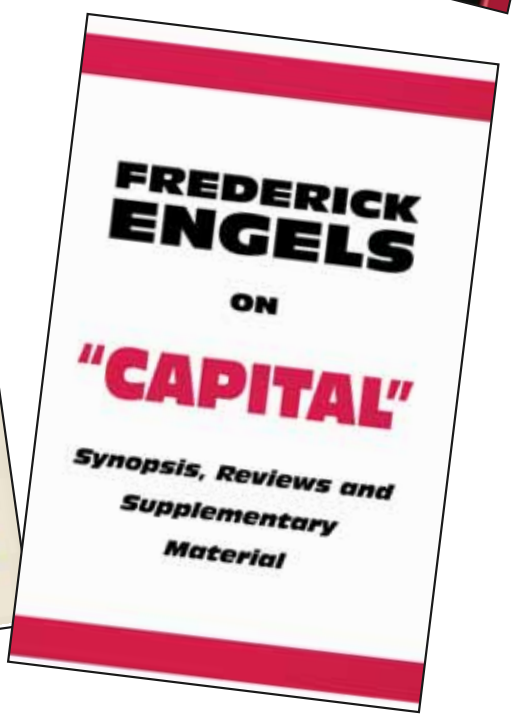












VE THIS SUMMER!

ABC – What is the Working People's Power?

Progress Publishers 1986 Paperback 228 pages **$15**

Another easy-to-read publication that examines Marxist- Leninist theory on the state. It starts with an historical examination of the different types of exploiter societies and the bourgeois state. This is followed by bourgeois democracy, where real power lies, and the working class struggle against exploitation. Lenin's theory of the proletarian revolution and development of socialism in the Soviet Union and working people's power are amongst the other topics covered.

Ten Days that Shook the World

By John Reed

International Publishers Paperback 430 pages **$45**

In this iconic work, John Reed provides a first-hand riveting description of the extraordinary events that occurred in the lead-up to and during the Revolution that resulted in the Bolsheviks seizing power. The book was first published in March 1919, and this edition was published for the centenary of the Revolution. It includes an introduction by Lenin written at the end of 1919, a preface by M K Krupskaya written in 1923 and a new foreword by David Laibman. It also has an interesting piece about the author John Reed by Howard Lawson, which raises some questions for today.

The Nature of Democracy Freedom and Revolution

By Herbert Aptheker

International Publishers Paperback, 128 pages **$20**

The author discusses the origins of the bourgeois concepts of democracy and freedom in their historical development. The first chapter deals with the ideas of John Milton, Thomas Jefferson, John Stuart Mill about democracy and class. Other chapters look at the nature of and various concepts of freedom. The final four chapters deal with aspects of revolution, including definitions, non-socialist and socialist, and questions of violence and democracy. An important book dealing with concepts that are widely misunderstood.

FLAGS

The Communist Party of Australia has produced a great red flag with hammer and sickle. Take it on marches and fly it proudly wherever and whenever you get the opportunity. **$15**

T-SHIRTS

T-shirts make excellent and welcome gifts. We have a range of designs, colours and sizes: Che Guevara – red or white with black image; Lenin – red or grey with black image; Marx – white with black image. CPA – red with Party logo; Eureka flag – blue with white cross. They come in M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL. Each **$25**

TEA TOWEL

"How to Spot a Communist" tea towel **$15**

The "How to Spot a Communist" tea towel is a popular and humorous item, which has a practical use or can be hung in the kitchen or somewhere else. It gives guidance in spotting a communist and makes an excellent gift for communists and non-communists alike with fifteen pointers. For example: "A communist can be spotted by his frequent use of foreign phrases like 'increase wages,' 'fix prices,' 'unity is strength,' 'peace not war,' etc."

CPA CENTENARY MEMORABILIA

Limited edition of tote bags, pins and pens carrying the centenary logo of the CPA. Tote bags **$15** with free lapel pin and pen. Lapel pins and pens sold separately for **$2** each including postage.

BADGES

The CPA produced a metal badge to honour the bicentenary of the birth of Karl Marx. It carries the slogan: "Workers of all lands unite" and the years 1818 and 2018 on either side of Marx's image. Badges are **$5** each including postage. If ordering more than one badge ask for a price.

UMBRELLAS

Be seen on May Day and at other rallies and marches with a large red sturdy umbrella with a yellow hammer and sickle. Excellent protection from rain, hail or sun. **$30** each including postage.

DVDS

Hugo Chávez and the new Latin America

An interview with Hugo Chávez by Aleida Guevara. In Spanish with English subtitles, **$16**

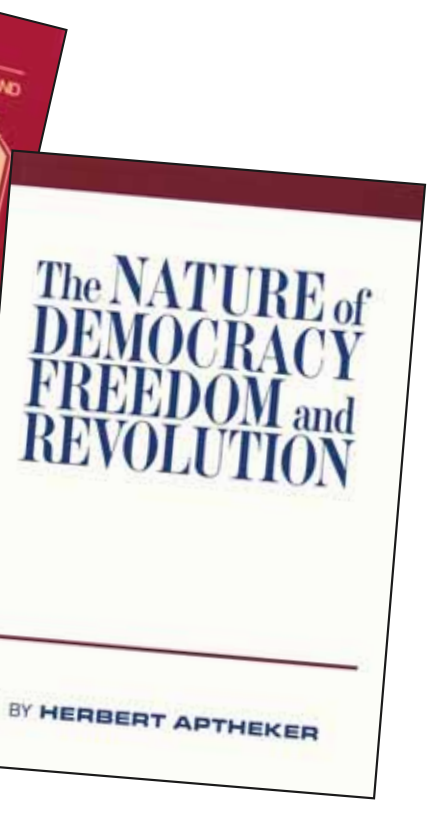
Eisenstein – Battleship Potemkin

Directed by Sergei M Eisenstein. The story of the mutiny on the Russian ship Prince Potemkin during the 1905 uprising against the Tsarist regime. *Battleship Potemkin* is considered one of the most important and influential films of all time, as well as possibly Eisenstein's greatest work.

Get *Potemkin* and another of Eisenstein's films *The General Line* on one DVD for **$25**.

Or how about eight films by Sergei Eisenstein on four DVDs for just **$65**. The other films are:

October 1917, *The Strike*, *Alexander Nevski*, *Que Viva Mexico!*, *Ivan the Terrible* (Parts 1 & 2).



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Israel's attack on journalists

Amanda Yee

Israel is intentionally assassinating journalists in Gaza. As it wages its genocidal onslaught on the enclave, having murdered at least 13,000 Palestinians so far, Israel is simultaneously killing media workers in order to prevent the world from seeing the unspeakable atrocities it carries out.

The situation at hand is as dire as it is unprecedented. Since 7 October, the Israeli military has killed 60 media workers, according to the Gaza Government Media Office. The Committee to Protect Journalists has stated this is the deadliest month for attacks on journalists since it started keeping records in 1992. Additionally, many other Palestinian reporters outside of Gaza face intimidation and harassment by Israeli forces.

"We have never experienced anything like this and we are overwhelmed," admitted Nasser Abu Bakr, head of the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate, a Ramallah-based trade union representing Palestinian media workers. "We are losing colleagues and friends every day as a result of the ongoing Israeli genocide against the Palestinian people and the policy of targeted killing against journalists."

"We can't keep up with the number of attacks against our journalists," Abu Bakr continued. "We are receiving more calls and information about ... incidents than we can process. Our journalists have always been a target for the Israeli military, but Israel moved from killing [an average of] one Palestinian journalist a year before 7 October to killing [over] one a day."

It's not just Palestinian reporters the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is attacking – any journalist who may potentially disseminate information critical of Israel is a potential target.

Among the long list of reporter casualties is Reuters photojournalist Issam Abdallah, who was killed by an 13 October Israeli strike on the Lebanese border while covering clashes between Hezbollah and the IDF. According to an independent investigation by Reporters Without Borders (RWB), Abdallah was explicitly targeted by Israeli forces – he was clearly identified as a journalist through his press helmet and vest, and he was standing next to a vehicle marked "Press" on its roof. Immediately before the attack, other journalists in the area had witnessed an Israeli helicopter flying overhead, so the military was able to clearly see that Abdallah was a non-combatant. According to ballistic analysis done by RWB, the missiles were launched from the side of the Israeli border and "two strikes in the same place in such a short space of time (just over 30 seconds), from the same direction, clearly indicate precise targeting."

Photo: Michael Loadenthal – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).

Not even the families of journalists are safe from Israeli retaliation. After learning on air that an Israeli air raid had killed his wife, son, daughter, and grandson, Gaza Al Jazeera bureau chief Wael Al-Dahdouh rushed to the hospital, followed by press cameras. Upon finding his son there, he knelt over his lifeless body and lamented, "They take revenge on us with our children."

On 7 November, Mohammad Abu Hasira, a correspondent for Palestinian news agency Wafa, was killed by an Israeli air raid, along with 42 members of his family. Just days before that, an Israeli strike killed Palestine TV reporter Mohammad Abu Hattab and 11 members of his family in south Gaza, including his wife, son, and brother.

People's Dispatch (edited for reasons of space) ✪

The Netherlands' turn to the radical right

The Freedom Party (PVV) of xenophobic leader Geert Wilders has won a resounding victory in the 22 November parliamentary elections in the Netherlands, with 37 seats out of a total of 150 in the lower house of the country's bicameral parliament.

In second place, the coalition of social democrats and left-wing environmentalists, GroenLinks-PvdA, led by former European Commission vice-president and Green Deal promoter Frans Timmermans, won 25 seats. The right-wing liberals of the VVD, Mark Rutte's outgoing 13-year-long PM party, won 24 seats. In fourth place, the new center-right New Social Contract (NSC) of Pieter Omtzigt (former CDA MP, Christian Democrats) won 20 seats.

The political context surrounding this outcome includes the early fall of the Rutte IV government, which was triggered by the issue of the so-called "asylum crisis": the disastrous management of refugee centres and the inability to humanely accommodate a growing number of people fleeing war zones.

Secondly, deteriorating conditions for the majority made the cost of living one of the key issues in this election. The working class in the Netherlands is suffering from the effects of an enduring economic and social crisis, the result of 13 years of austerity-driven, liberal-conservative governments. The number of people living in poverty (800,000) has increased, and people face higher housing, health, and energy costs, as well as an increase in the cost of basic commodities in recent years, forcing thousands to resort to free food distribution centres.

Globetrotter ✪

US Auto Workers call for ceasefire in Palestine

The movement for an immediate ceasefire got a lot bigger when the United Auto Workers announced their support outside the White House.

They're now the largest US national union to join the call for ceasefire: a major win for solidarity between the labour and Palestinian liberation movements.

The union made the announcement in Washington DC alongside Palestinian organisers and solidarity activists who have been on a week-long hunger strike to demand an immediate ceasefire.

Given the avalanche of international support for a permanent ceasefire, and the devastation that the Israeli military's genocidal campaign has already wreaked on Gaza, it may seem shocking that Israel allowed the temporary ceasefire to end. The Israeli military has already resumed airstrikes, killing dozens of Palestinians in mere hours.

The truth is that the Israeli government is feeling the immense international pressure for a permanent ceasefire. The window of time for the Israeli military to continue its genocidal campaign in Gaza is closing. So their campaign of death and destruction has resumed with new urgency.

But while they're fighting to destroy as many lives as possible, the union movement for ceasefire and Palestinian liberation is fighting on the side of life. The pressure is working, but just as it's clear that the Israeli government is hell-bent on genocide, it's also clear that we must push for an immediate end to the violence with more urgency than ever.

Labor Today International ✪

Moroccan activists arrested for demanding end to normalisation of ties with Israel

On 26 November, in Salé, Moroccan police assaulted and arrested activists with the Front Against Normalization with Israel who were demanding an end to the normalisation of ties between Morocco and the Zionist state.

The activists were participating in a march organised by the front in solidarity with the Palestinian people and Gaza, a part of a crowd of thousands waving Palestinian flags and shouting slogans in support of Palestine.

The march was attacked by the police in front of the Carrefour market in Salé. The police assaulted organisers and arrested some of the activists on the spot.

The Front Against Normalization issued a list of arrested activists and claimed that they were kept in detention in Salé.

Following in the footsteps of Bahrain, the UAE, and Sudan, in 2020, Morocco became the fourth Arab country to sign a normalisation deal with Israel. The deal, known as the Abraham Accords, was promoted by the US.

By signing the deal, Moroccan King Mohammed VI violated his country's commitment under the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 of not recognising Israel until a separate Palestinian state was created. The decision was massively unpopular domestically. Morocco signed the Accords in return for the US recognising its occupation of Western Sahara.

Globetrotter ✪

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Beyond Bank

Henry Kissinger: War criminal guilty of 3 million dead

Graham Holton

Henry Kissinger died at home on 30 November, aged 100, never having been tried for his war crimes. He had been a leading diplomat, serving as Secretary of State and National Security Adviser to US Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, from 1969 to 1975. The *Sydney Morning Herald* told its readers that he had "left an indelible mark on US foreign policy." The BBC's headline, "Divisive Diplomat Who Shaped World Affairs," was an understatement. Kissinger's diplomacy with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai led to Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972, establishing full relations with China in 1979. Kissinger had helped end the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict and negotiated the Paris Peace Accords, with the US pulling its troops out of Vietnam. Vietnam was united under a socialist government in 1975. Kissinger and Nixon pursued agreements with the Soviet government, on nuclear arms control.

There was also a far darker side to Henry Kissinger. What Kissinger called "Realpolitik," his critics called "immoral actions." He supported the bloody coup against President Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973, with at least 4000 dead, and he turned a blind eye to the Argentine military's 'dirty war' against its citizens, killing over 10,000 people. In 1974 he backed the Turkish invasion of Northern Cyprus. When the comedian Tom Lehrer heard that Kissinger had been awarded the Nobel Prize, he said, "political satire is obsolete." For the demonstrators who marched against his foreign policies, he was known as "KILLINGER."

Andrew Murray writes in *People's World*: "Broadly, there was no regime so obnoxious, no tyrant too murderous, for Kissinger's blessings to be withheld, provided only it upheld US strategic interests and stood firm against the USSR." In The Trial of Henry Kissinger (2002), Christopher Hitchens writes that Kissinger deserved prosecution, "for war crimes, for crimes against humanity, and for offenses against common or customary or international law, including conspiracy to commit murder, kidnap, and torture." He was "a stupendous liar with a remarkable memory."

Lubna Z Qureshi writes in Nixon, *Kissinger, and Allende* (2010) that, "To Kissinger, the profound issues of war and peace and national security only concerned Europe and Asia. Latin America did not count." In 2016, Jon Lee Anderson called Kissinger "the ruthless cheerleader, if not the active co-conspirator, of Latin American military regimes engaged in war crimes."

Few people have played a role in so much destruction and death as had Kissinger. He was a war criminal, not only for his actions in Chile, but also in East Timor, East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and Cambodia. He was responsible for the deaths of more than 3 million people.

Kissinger secretly extended the war in Vietnam into neighbouring Cambodia, as part of Operation MENU. He chose the bombing targets, including civilian settlements, clearly a war crime. In 1971 the US government supported genocide in East Pakistan, transferring weapons from Iran and Jordan to be used by West Pakistan in its attacks. This makes Kissinger liable for aiding and abetting that slaughter. Kissinger and Gerald Ford gave the go ahead for Indonesia to invade East Timor in 1975, and assisted the military which butchered hundreds of thousands of East Timorese.

Kissinger fully supported US imperialism around the world, no matter the human cost. He was never listed as a war criminal and was never tried in the ICC (International Criminal Court) in the Hague for his crimes. Kissinger could not be tried in war crime tribunals in those countries, because the US government would not allow it.

His career, and his lifelong immunity from consequences for the deaths and torture he caused, make Henry Kissinger a monument to US imperialism and exceptionalism. ✪

no regime too obnoxious
no tyrant too murderous

Recent visit to Fidel Castro Ruz Centre Habana

Dave Lock

In November 2023 we made our way to Cuba for the second time.

While in Habana we visited Ivan Barreto, Specialist Director for ICAP, at his office in Habana earlier in 2023. We had met Ivan previously during his visit to Adelaide.

With the support of the Port Adelaide branch of the CPA we were able to deliver a donation of pharmacy medicines, children's school stationery and money to the people of Cuba.

The Fidel Castro Ruz Centre occupies what was formerly a large mansion and gardens restored and modernised for exhibition displays and public use. As you pass through the entrance hall, there are a series of quotes by Jose Marti on one side and on the other side are corresponding quotes by Fidel. Marti's inspiration and Fidel's parallel course become clear.

Over the next two and a half hours our excellent and patient guide took us room by room through the remarkable story of Fidel's life. By no means does the content lose sight of the brave men and women who are the champions of the revolution. It is a truly modern presentation and display. In one room there is a high-tech display clearly reaching out to a younger generation. The walls are covered with a global map and by the touching and swiping of smart screens, or placing a cylinder in a socket, you can review all of Cuba's humanitarian missions past and present around the world. The last room is a very moving display of pre-revolution conditions. The six pillars of the revolution are presented here: the challenges of land reform, industrialisation, housing, employment, education and healthcare.

A truly inspirational and emotional experience. The Centre also hosts educational events and has a bookshop. Work is also undertaken to digitally preserve all of Fidel's writings.

The Port Adelaide Branch of the CPA wanted to explore the possibility of creating a fraternal link between the Port Adelaide Workers' Library, (known as Fidel's) and the Habana Centre. After our tour I asked our guide if there were steps we could take to achieve this. She immediately arranged an interview with the Director.

Director Rene Gonzalez Barrios received us warmly. He was very interested in the CPA and the workers' library. Through his interpreter I was able to describe our library as a multilingual, Marxist/Leninist, socialist and unionist collection reflecting international and community struggles as well as serving an archival function. It is a community place for organisation, education, and activism. The fact that this all existed in an independent meeting hall impressed him.

In conclusion, the Director asked me to continue communication and present a review of the Workers' Library as a step towards formalising our connection.

I cannot overstate how impressive the Fidel Castro Ruz Centre really is. It is proof that communist internationalism is inspiring for all concerned. ✪

Global Briefs

MALI: Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger have endorsed plans to create a federation, following a two-day meeting in Bamako, Mali's capital. The decision was announced in a joint statement, with plans to develop the new Alliance of Sahel States. (AES). The countries agreed to help each other in the event of external aggression or internal threats to their sovereignty. Earlier the three former French colonies had severed military ties with France.

BRITAIN: One in four British households are estimated to be in fuel poverty, and thousands of people die each year due to cold and damp homes, organisers of fuel poverty protests claim. Four-day actions took place in London, Glasgow, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, and Southampton, to demand solutions to the problem. The Glasgow organiser of Fuel Poverty Action (FPA) said that 531 people died in the winter across Scotland last year, while Scottish Power made billions in profits

"Frankly, it's outrageous and it needs to stop. The government can and should ban pre-pay payment meters, they drive people already in debt into further crises. This does not get solved without nationalisation," he pointed out.

"Everything else is just band-aids, and without that kind of action people will continue to die".

PALESTINE, West Bank: Extreme Israeli settler' violence in the West Bank is an open secret. While all eyes are on what's happening in Gaza, the settlers run amok on the West Bank. From the start of this year to 1 October, 750 Palestinian buildings, houses and businesses were demolished to make room for more Israeli settlements and outposts. "The number of those killed in the West Bank since the beginning of the year has risen to 464, including 256 people killed since 7 October,' the Palestinian Health Ministry said. The Biden administration is planning to issue visa bans on an undisclosed number of Israeli settlers committing violence in the West Bank. France has called for EU sanctions on Israeli settlers. Meanwhile, the violence and murder continue.

WORLD: The coming year will see people in about 40 countries going to the polls. It is estimated that almost a quarter of the world's population will be taking part in elections. The results of many of those elections will have a huge impact on how the world will develop. China will be the first country to have elections in January, in Taiwan. The outcome there will have a profound effect on the region. The Chinese Defence Ministry has warned the United States against increased arms sales to Taiwan as it will make the situation there more dangerous, especially before the elections.

The US election campaign has already created domestic and international tensions. India will be deciding who will be in charge in April/May. Russia will go to polls in March, and Britain will have parliamentary elections as well. The European Union will be electing its parliament in June/July. It's very likely that the coming year will be quite dramatic.

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.

12:30 pm Sunday 17th December – Sydney Town Hall

World Association of Political Economy report

Politcal Economy, the study of economic systems and how they are controlled by political systems, affects all of us. The following is a report from **David Matters**, who attended a recent international meeting on the topic.

The first face-to-face meeting of political economists from around the world since the COVID 19 crisis took place on the Island of Pingtan in 2023. The gathering was jointly hosted by the World Association of Political Economy (WAPE) and the Fujian Normal University. Scholars and lay political economists from around 15 countries were part of the gathering.

The subjects were organised around the theme of Chinese Modernisation and World Modernisation. The significance of hosting this conference of WAPE at such a prestigious place was not lost on the participants. To get to the conference, guests had to cross what is already one of the largest land and sea bridges to the Island of Pingtan.

Pingtan is in the Taiwan straights and Taiwan can be seen from the Island. Fujian province and Taiwan share much in relation to culture and language with Taiwan, the local dialect in Fujian is the same as the Taiwanese dialect. The bridge that we crossed will extend to Taipei by 2035, and the area is in a 'Pilot Economic Zone' as part of an initiative to encourage cross-strait relations. The peaceful reintegration of Taiwan into the mainland continues with special considerations for helping to bring along the economic development of the special pilot economic zone.

The writer of this article had been accepted to present a paper dealing with this theme from the Australian context. This paper had drawn the conclusion that the political and economic system in Australia was having a negative impact on Australia's development and modernisation.

For example, I argue that the state monopoly system prevented transport modernisation including the introduction of fast rail, and that the control resource monopolies exert over the political and economic system through state monopoly capitalism has impeded the response to climate change.

The control that 'developers' had over this system was leading to the extinction of Australia's unique flora and fauna including the koala. The excessive reliance on continuous urban sprawl and the road network were the result of the political and economic system which corrupted and spoiled the ability to respond.

The major influence of organisations such as WAPE and the development of progressive Marxist thinking in Chinese universities has had a positive impact. Ecological socialism which saw an economic measurement for the environment was having a profound influence in China. WAPE had gone from being one of many organisations in China to one that had bought some of the most progressive thinking to main stage.

As part of this recognition two major works were released at the conference. The first was the historical account of the development of the Innovative School of Marxism in China. This 750-page work traces the development of the School through the eyes of Marxist Scholars from around the world and is a significant contribution to the development of Marxism in the modern world.

The second work that was released at the Forum was China's Economic Dialectic, the Original Aspiration of Reform by Professor Cheng Enfu. This collection of essays is not the musings of a cloistered academic. The writings have shaped policy initiatives, and successfully challenged the attempts of bourgeois forces to dominate the ideological struggle in China.

Enfu's work has played an important role in advancing 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics'. It is an encyclopaedic understanding of the development of Chinese Marxism and the interplay of mechanisms that have assisted the development of socialism in China. It is an exciting read for anyone interested in the continuation of Marxism.

WAPE as a forum has provided fresh insight into the continued relevance of Marxism in the modern world. It has boldly challenged the bourgeois ideologists in their own institutions and is worthy of our support. The forum will reconvene in Athens in 2024 and Istanbul in 2025.

Political economists could do well to link up with and advance this school of Marxism as well as consider attendance at future forums.

At this forum distinguished awards were given to those who had been considered to have advanced the study of Marxism through published works. The author of this article was honoured for a work originally published in the World Review of Political Economy, now available in Issue 74 of the *Australian Marxist Review*. The article was 'the State of the Whole people and its influence on the Struggle for Socialism in the 21st Century'.

Editor's note: 'China's Economic Dialectic' by Cheng Enfu, along with other works on Political Economy, was reviewed in *Guardian* #2078, 13 November 2023. The *Australian Marxist Review* is published by the Communist Party of Australia, and like the *Guardian* is available at cpa.org.au ✪

David Matters

ecological socialism is having a profound influence

Book Review by Ron Jacobs

Quick Fixes: Drugs in America from Prohibition to the 21st-Century Binge

by Benjamin Y Fong

In his new book Benjamin Y Fong agrees with the premise that drugs have changed the world. However, his explanation of how and why it did is not for the reasons we believed 50 years ago. Instead, Fong argues that the psychedelic revolution merely made the world of capitalism and commodification easier to tolerate. Furthermore, it opened up a new market to exploit and a more expansive means to advertise the products sold to this new market.

This perspective on the nature of drugs and their usage in the United States is what underpins Fong's argument throughout the book. As he traces the history of alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, narcotics, amphetamines, diazepams (Valium, etc), anti-depressants, and other psychotropics, marijuana and cocaine, it is their usefulness to the capitalist economy at particular times that informs his discussion. In the telling, the role of the pharmaceutical industry and government regulatory agencies are major players.

Caffeine and tobacco remain the most unregulated legal drugs in the United States. Alcohol comes a close second or third. Fong argues that the most dispensed drugs at any particular historical moment are those that serve the needs of capitalism at the time; the continuing popularity of coffee makes almost perfect sense. After all, its consumption usually makes people more alert and more energetic; the perfect combination for maximum production in the service of capital.

It wasn't until the advent of the cigarette that tobacco became a popular means to relax among the working class. A smoke lasted just about as long as a 10-minute break from the assembly line or its equivalent.

Prior to the mills, factories and other larger worksites of capitalism, alcohol usage was not usually a political issue. There were always churches and other organisations that frowned on its use and pushed to close down saloons and taverns, but these campaigns were usually local.

When the so-called 'industrial age' became a factor in the employment sector, alcohol use began to be seen as a problem by a substantial number of powerful US citizens.

Encouraged by the Temperance campaigns – often composed of middle-class women, progressive politicians, and various capitalists – the drive toward alcohol prohibition took off. Some campaigners understood that the underlying reasons for alcohol abuse lay in the terrible working and living conditions many workers had to deal with.

Those campaigners pushed for legislation that would address those issues while they also worked to close places where alcohol was served and manufactured.

Other campaigners were more typical of other self-righteous moral campaigns and blamed the individual, not the social conditions existing as a result of capitalism.

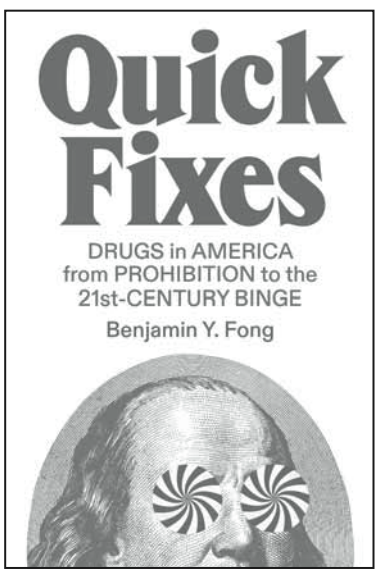
Fong describes the advent of amphetamines, first used in massive (and legal) quantities by the US military, then as a means toward greater production by individual US residents after World War II.

The explosion of modern US capitalism in the 1950s and 1960s carried with it an increase in what is now commonly known as anxiety. At first, psychologists correctly attributed this mental health symptom to the stresses of modern capitalist society. Those stresses were exacerbated by advertising which encouraged material consumption and ultimately a competition to see who could consume the most. According to people like US diplomat George Kennan, anxiety was a price US residents had to pay to be free.

The choice Fong notes, was between anxiety and communism, and communism was out of the question. In fact, the advent of drugs designed to deal with the stresses and traumas of modern capitalist society was also the beginning of an industry dedicated to placing the onus on the individual for mental health and removing any blame from the social systems actually creating unhealthy mental states.

It is Fong's assessment that when it came to marijuana in the United States, money won out. This is essentially true. Some states allow individuals to grow limited amounts of cannabis, others don't. Likewise, while some states set aside a certain number of cultivation and sales licences for underserved populations, others don't, thereby allowing corporate cannabis to dominate or completely control that state's market.

Quick Fixes is a useful and concise history and discussion of drugs, the drug war, and the less-than-honest role capitalists and their governments play in the regulation and propagation of drugs and those who partake of them. At the same time, its discussion of these phenomena shows how the drug marketplace is an almost perfect template for how modern monopoly capitalism works.



Morning Star (edited for reasons of space)

Quick Fixes: Drugs in America from Prohibition to the 21st-Century Binge by Benjamin Y Fong, was published by Verso. ✪

Affected Communities Statement

To the Second Meeting of States Parties to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, 2023

We are people bound together by what nuclear weapons have inflicted. Our lives, our lands, our waters, and our communities were permanently changed by the development, testing and use of nuclear weapons. Our struggles against radioactive violence have continued for many decades, throughout the generations. We have the right and responsibility to speak about what nuclear weapons really do.

War rages around us. It's heartbreaking that nuclear weapons still exist in the 21st Century. Are we adding to life or are we adding to death? Our common humanity is undermined by the existential threat hanging over us, that nuclear weapons will again unleash mass terror, contaminating our homes and our bodies, again.

Nuclear weapons do harm every day. From the mining of uranium to the creation of the bomb and the everlasting radioactive waste, our planet carries the scars of so many nuclear sacrifice zones. Nuclear colonialism has disproportionately impacted Indigenous Peoples and marginalised communities. Indigenous Peoples lands were taken. Bodies were used, people were bombed.

Indigenous Peoples carry responsibility and share connections to the lands, air, oceans, and waters, acting as guardians of life. This includes all living creatures, animals, and plants, some of which are sacred and others of which are food and medicine. Environmental violence impacts all of Mother Earth. Our sacred cultural heritage has been under attack, creating displacement for many survivors. We feel as though governments are waiting for us to vanish, hoping their responsibilities will die with us. But the effects continue for our children and grandchildren and beyond. We are anxious about the future. How much longer will we suffer?

As affected communities, we acknowledge the initial and robust advocacy of our predecessors and Elders. We have rights and dignity to firmly reclaim the life force that nuclear weapons attempted to take away. With the next generations, there is not only hope but also an assurance of continued advocacy for justice, as long as nuclear colonialism is not ended, and justice is not granted to our communities.

Together with the global community, we have banned nuclear weapons. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons holds great potential and is the first of its kind to take into account communities affected by nuclear weapons.

Healing comes through action.

We call for all states to do everything in their conscious power to implement Articles 6 and 7.

We call for the clean-up of our contaminated lands and waters. We call for assistance for victims and survivors, whether we are Indigenous Peoples, hibakusha, hibakunisei, nuclear veterans, test survivors, downwinders, or anyone whose lives are scarred by the intergenerational harms caused by the development and production of these weapons of mass destruction. We deserve recognition, respect, and reparations.

States, institutions, and companies that are enabling and funding nuclear destruction must stop. We call for the nuclear-armed states, in particular, to join the Treaty and be accountable for their actions.

We call on States Parties to the TPNW to push relentlessly for its universalisation.

We hope that governments of the day recognise that Indigenous Peoples rights matter, as do the rights of all victims of nuclear bombs everywhere.

Finally, let us all commit to put an end to the possession, development, testing, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons, so that not one more person will suffer as we have.

For list of endorsed by (affected communities) and supporters see https://cpa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Affected-Communities-Statement-2023.pdf ✪

Phillipina feminists: 'War Is Violence Against Women'

On the first day of an 18-day global campaign to end violence against women, feminist groups in the Philippines highlighted the call for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza as a step towards a permanent solution to the question of Palestine. 25 November is commemorated across the globe as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

"War is violence against women," argued Judy Ann Miranda, secretary general of Partido Manggagawa. "The history of conflicts reveals this ugly truth. Thus, we call for a stop to the war in Palestine and elsewhere. And demand a just peace."

One hundred women leaders from various organisations that comprise the World March of Women-Pilipinas marched to the grounds of the Commission on Human Rights today to launch the Violence Against Women campaign. Community assemblies in several working-class areas in metro Manila followed later in the day.

The launch of the campaign served as an opportunity for women to raise the urgent call for solidarity with the people of Palestine. In the statement released for the event, the World March of Women-Pilipinas stated that "Israeli forces through persistent bombings on Palestinian communities, kill[ed] more than 14,000 Palestinians. Most hurt were women and children, as hospitals were also bombed. World March of Women members in Palestine were [also among those] attacked."

"The so-called humanitarian pause should give way to a sustained ceasefire ... A permanent ceasefire then enables political negotiations to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine," Miranda stated.

Globetrotter ✪

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Half the Sky

Surrogacy – desperation and exploitation

On 24 August 2023, Greek officials took action to break up a suspected criminal group engaged in human trafficking and illicit adoptions. The focal point was a surrogacy clinic located in Chania, Greece.

Surrogacy is a reproductive arrangement in which a woman, known as the surrogate mother, carries and gives birth to a child on behalf of another person or couple. This process is usually used by individuals or couples who are unable to conceive or carry a pregnancy to term themselves.

In this incident, the illegal Greek surrogacy centre was called Mediterranean Fertility. The Greek police claim that the clinic operated as a criminal organisation, allegedly exploiting 169 vulnerable foreign women for egg donation or surrogacy. They are accused of defrauding patients through deceptive embryo transfers, and engaging in illegal adoption brokering. The entire medical team of the clinic has been arrested and detained, facing charges of child trafficking. Half of the clients of this clinic are Australian, and Australian media and diplomats have spoken out about the would-be parents' desperation.

"I've got women in tears to me on the phone every day saying 'I just don't know what to do.' It's been really tough, it's awful," said Fertility Society of Australia and New Zealand President Dr Luke Rombauts. Despite the emphasis on the disappointment of Australian would-be mothers, the surrogate mothers who were caught by this illegal clinic are the ones facing real despair. All the voices from the Australian side are as hypocritical and ignorant as they could be.

Melbourne-based Dr Nicholas Lolatgis, Director of the Centre for Infertility Solutions, recommended the Mediterranean Fertility Institute to Australian couples dealing with infertility. Despite the turmoil, he praised Greece's donor egg program. This doctor who introduced the illegal clinic to Australian customers faced no investigation at all, and was able to speak publicly condemning the Greek government's denial of intended parents' visitation. This shows total irresponsibility towards Australian clients, but we haven't seen complaints on that so far.

There are so many ethical concerns for commercial surrogacy unanswered. Does the surrogate mother count as the mother to the baby? What's the consequence if the surrogate mother dies in the process of giving birth? What happened to the disabled infants that are returned to the clinic by their intended parents?

The large wealth and power differentials between intended parents and surrogates cannot be ignored. Advocates of commercial surrogacy argue that it is a woman's right to enter a contract and make decisions regarding her own body, overlooking the pressures on the surrogate mothers.

Poverty is not a choice, and the pressure that compels a woman to sell her uterus for money is not freedom or women's rights. The intended parents with higher economic status have taken advantage of the poorest women in foreign countries. Commercial surrogacy is exploitation.

To quote from *People's Daily*, "To regard procreation as a kind of labour, and life as a commodity is a disgrace to humanity." Australia should be responsible and banish commercial surrogacy for the protection of women everywhere.

The future of the Gaza Strip is an internal Palestinian matter

Some political positions are presented by Western officials about their vision for the future of the Gaza Strip after the aggression. Israel expressed its position that it wants to install "a new security system in the Gaza Strip" in addition to what it describes as "liquidating the infrastructure of the Palestinian resistance." In another place, the Israeli prime minister said: "After the war, there will be no civil authority in Gaza that teaches children to hate Israel." These positions are consistent with the positions of the United States and some European countries, who spoke of a different reality for the future of the Gaza Strip.

Regardless of the details of the projects being discussed, it is clear that they go beyond the stakeholders concerned, namely the Palestinian people, in a repetition of previous mistakes committed by the international community decades ago that contributed to establishing a conflict that is still continuing to this day, when the international community ignored the Palestinian people and their desire for independence.

The Oslo Accords, on which some Palestinians and Arabs relied, with hopes and illusions of the possibility of achieving them, even if they were limited, have become futile. Security control in the West Bank, despite the presence of the Palestinian Authority, is still in the hands of Israel, whose grip has increased, and the incidents of settlement and land theft are expanding, and the settlers' practices and crimes have ceased to exist. The conditions of the Palestinians in terms of security and economics have become worse than they were even before 1993, and the laws enacted by the Israeli Knesset years ago have established the fact that it is impossible to coexist with the occupation, as a result of the growing state of extremism within Israeli society.

Any political project that does not take into account the real causes of the conflict, and does not respond to the national rights of the Palestinian people, will naturally be rejected by all forces of the Palestinian people, and an additional reason for producing more escalation and tensions. The experiences of the past decades confirm this fact. Therefore, any talk about transitional projects and visions drawn behind the backs of the Palestinian people will only be seen as a cover-up for the crimes of the occupation and an integral part of the projects to liquidate the Palestinian issue, and you will not find it from all the Palestinian political and popular movements. Expect rejection and resistance.

Therefore, based on the rejection of any political project that does not include stopping the aggression and placing the Israeli's leaders and supporters before international courts, we affirm the following:

Palestinian people have the right to resist as long as the occupation and illegal settlements are perched on Palestinian land, which, according to international resolutions, is considered occupied Palestinian territory. All countries have a legal, humanitarian and moral duty to support the Palestinian people and enable them to exercise their national rights and self-determination on their land freely, away from All forms of oppression and colonialism.

The Gaza Strip is an integral part of the one unified Palestinian land that does not accept any form of division under any political, geographical, administrative, or legal name. The future of the Strip is a Palestinian national matter, and this means rejecting all mandate projects, in which the Israeli occupation has a direct or indirect role. The Palestinian national forces are concerned with shaping the future of the Gaza Strip in the ways they deem appropriate. The sham of placing the Gaza Strip under the rule of 'external authorities' will only ever be code for putting Palestine under colonial guardianship, the shortest path to liquidating Palestinian national rights.

The Palestine Liberation Organization, the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, is the one that represents the State of Palestine in any discussion related to the present and future of our national cause. It is concerned with working to confirm and consecrate its representative status for the Gaza Strip, in terms of its land and population. It is also concerned with rejecting every project that detracts from its right to be the authority. Political and legal issues for the Palestinian people, regardless of the observations and discrepancies in some people's view of the organisation and its current reality.

The discussions about the future of the Gaza Strip contradict the most basic values and rules of democracy that the United States and Western countries pay lip service to. As long as the occupation is the main pillar of the problem, no realistic and applicable approach can be proposed except from the recognition that the basic root of the conflict that has dragged on since 1948 is the occupation; its criminality, its aggression, and its political projects that are not based on any legal or historical justification. All US projects were, and still are, primarily based on the interests of the imperialist countries first, and the historical myths and myths of the Zionist movement second, whose existence poses a threat not only to Palestine and the Middle East region, but also to world peace.

Palestinians inspect the damage following an Israeli airstrike on the El-Remal area in Gaza City on 9 October 2023. Photo: Palestinian News & Information Agency (Wafa) in contract with APAimages – Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0).

It is not a coincidence that Netanyahu's desire for "a civil authority that does not teach Palestinian children to hate Israel" is consistent with what the 'Deal of the Century' carried five years ago in terms of incitement against UNRWA and the educational curricula in its schools, claiming that they incite violence and hatred, and the lure of some Western countries behind false propaganda. Led by Zionist institutions and associations. Although the Israeli curricula are full of hundreds of texts that not only incite hatred, but also explicitly call for the killing of Arabs.

International trials and detention of the leaders of the Zionist occupation and its supporters should be the natural result of the aggression, murder, and genocide campaigns against the Palestinian people, and not granting them a reward for self-determination of the Gaza Strip, which was and will remain an integral part of the Palestinian land, and its people will remain an integral part of the people.

Responding to the desire of the Israeli occupation to discuss political projects related to the future of the Gaza Strip would repeat the same mistakes committed by the international community since the first day of the signing of the Oslo Accords in terms of letting the occupation do what it wanted in the West Bank, not caring about the cries of the Palestinian people, who found nothing but ignorance, helplessness and complicity.

From the international community and from the Arab official system, October 7 was a reaction to all the practices and policies the occupation did that were gradually leading to the liquidation of the Palestinian cause.

Department of Foreign affairs
Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine ✪

Halifax International Security Forum: a thieves' kitchen

William Briggs

The Halifax International Security Forum has just completed its annual summit in Nova Scotia. It describes itself as a forum and network for international government and military officials, academics, and entrepreneurs on global security issues. Canadian media call it the 'Davos of international security.' More than 300 delegates from 70 countries attended.

Agenda items included: 'Making the world safe again: victory in Ukraine,' 'Ancient antisemitism arrives again' which offered advice on the best way of promoting genocide in Palestine, 'NATO in Asia or NATO to Asia', 'Hide your power, bide your time: China eyes Taiwan', 'A message to the CRINKS', and 'O say can't you see? The indispensable role of the exceptional superpower.' This shows where the thinking of this forum leads.

The reference to 'CRINKS' is something of an imperialist in-joke. It refers to China, Russia, Iran and North Korea and is used in a catchy little Forum topic, 'Never Mind the BRICS here's the CRINKs.' It runs the line that these states are an 'axis of evil.' This noxious tag has been revitalised with the candidacy of Republican Nikki Hayley who is even more gung-ho in her hatred of these countries than Trump or Biden.

The homage paid in the conference to the USA as an 'exceptional superpower' indicates the degree of subservience and acquiescence to the USA among its allies.

US President Joe Biden had an op-ed in the *Washington Post* at the same time as the Forum. He returned to a well-used theme that the USA was the world's "essential nation." He reassured his readers that other nations could always rely on the US, and that "if we walk away from the challenges of today, the risk of conflict could spread, and the costs to address them will only rise. We will not let that happen."

These comments were not the words of a politician preparing to hoodwink an electorate in the run-up to election season. They reflect a very deep seated and disturbing reality that infuses the very psyche of America and all political leaders. It is rooted in the concept of American exceptionalism; a belief that the USA was, is and will remain the global leader. It is a view that sees the country having a God-given right to rule. All presidents, Republican and Democrat alike make the same exceptionalist claim and what is worse, believe it!

The Halifax Forum, claims it promotes 'international security.' It is, rather, a thieves' kitchen of war-mongers, imperialists, and capitalist hawks who have yet to recognise that they are very much on the wrong side of history. Their master, the USA, has the power to destroy but no longer the capacity or the wit to build. ✪

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