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Gaza: blood on West's hands

Anna Pha

Since 7 October more than 14,000 children have been slaughtered by Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip. An estimated 4,000 children are buried under rubble, and 17,000 or more are unaccompanied. Another 21,000 are missing as Israel continues its genocidal assault on the Palestinian people.

Save the Children also reports that an unknown number have been "detained and forcibly transferred out of Gaza, their whereabouts unknown to their families amidst reports of ill-treatment and torture."

Countless others experience devastating psychological and physical trauma that will remain with them for the rest of their lives.

There's a high risk of famine as more than 495,000 Palestinians are experiencing "catastrophic" food shortages, a draft of a new report by UN and humanitarian agencies says.

"As we mourn the lives lost, we think about how much worse it has to get before the world finally says enough is enough. How many more people must die? How many more children have to lose their mothers, fathers, and body parts? How many more hospitals need to be turned into killing fields?" asks Haya Ismail, a young Palestinian writer and English literature student in Gaza.

"How many more massacres must we endure?"

"However tired, sick, and angry we are, we still go from one 'safe zone' to the next and back again – because we want to be safe and we want our families to be safe.

"We want to live," Ismail said in an emotional plea.

"Had it not been for the help of powerful countries, Israel would not have been able to carry out this perpetual occupation as aggressively as it has," Navi Pillay, the chairperson of the UN's commission of inquiry into the war in Gaza, said.

The inquiry accused the Israeli government of "extermination," "war crimes," and "crimes against humanity."

"The only conclusion you can draw is that the Israeli army is one of the most criminal armies in the world," said commission member Chris Sidoti.

"One million people in southern Gaza are trapped without clean water or sanitation in a highly congested area along the beach in the burning summer heat. We drove through rivers of sewage," said UN World Food Programme Deputy Executive Director Carl Skau during a visit.

Rally for Palestine held on Saturday 22 June Boorloo/Perth.

MASSACRES ESCALATE

In a raid on Al Nuseirat refugee camp on 8 June, Israeli forces killed 274 people including at least 64 children, and injured at least 700 more in about an hour. Israeli forces were "perfidiously hiding in an aid truck," UN Special Rapporteur of the Occupied Palestinian Territories Francesca Albanese said, "This is 'humanitarian camouflage' at another level." Israel has denied the accusation. It always denies.

"It adds insult to injury that influential governments are trying to frame this operation – this *massacre against a refugee camp* – as a 'rescue mission.' Murdering more than 270 displaced and innocent people living in unthinkable conditions can never justify a rescue mission. (This) could have been achieved instead by accepting ceasefire resolutions linked to reasonable demands," Ismail said.

Israel hailed the rescue of four people as "a great success!"

The attack follows Israeli assaults on the Shati refugee camp and the Tuffah neighbourhood in Gaza City that killed at least 42 people.

A Red Cross official said "there were piles of dead bodies, blood everywhere" after an Israeli air raid near the charity's compound in the so-called 'safe zone' in the al-Mawasi area killed at least 25 people.

TENSIONS WITH LEBANON

Since the beginning of its genocidal onslaught on Gaza, Israel has exchanged almost daily fire with Hezbollah across the border with Lebanon. Israeli air strikes and shelling have killed more than 350 people in southern Lebanon including civilians. Hezbollah rockets have killed 10 Israeli civilians and 15 Israeli soldiers.

Continued on page 2

influential governments are trying to frame this massacre as a 'rescue mission'

8

Assange free at last

12

Where our real national interest lies

The *Guardian* has a podcast
Search for "Communist *Guardian* Podcast" or use the QR code

Guardian

Issue 2105 1 July 2024

Nuclear Groundhog Day

Do you ever get déjà vu, the feeling that you've been through something before? Sometimes, that's because you *have* been through it before. So it is with Australia and nuclear power. It feels like yesterday that this paper talked about Peter Dutton's "energy plan." Here are the facts:

- **Climate change is happening now. Nuclear power would take too long to set up.**
- **Nuclear would cost around $100 billion. Dutton tries to make nuclear look less expensive by talking of 90 to 100 year time frames. We'd have to pay for it now.**
- **If set up, nuclear power would not be enough to replace coal and gas.**
- **If Australia got into nuclear, the cost would mean that we would have to do less about renewables, and use more coal and gas while the nuclear was being built. It's almost like that's what Dutton wants to do!**

You're not having déjà vu – this has all been gone over repeatedly.

A serious side-effect of nuclear *right now*, is that the Albanese Labor government is getting away with ignoring the same science they say Dutton ignores by cheating on Paris emission reductions targets, and allowing new gas and coal projects to open.

What are the media doing about this? Making it worse. There's a vicious circle whereby the media turn a non-issue into an issue, then report on that issue as though they had no role in it, because "everybody is talking about it." That's what's happening now. Journalists are reporting on Dutton's nonsense as if it's going to happen soon, then congratulating Dutton for being "bold" and for "setting the agenda" with zero admission of their own role.

Albanese and Plibersek are harming us now. Meanwhile the Very Serious People of Australian media are filling our eyes and ears with nuclear power plants that may never happen. Why are they doing this?

The easy answer is that our media are stupid, and that they follow popular narratives like sheep. That's simplistic and wrong; people who work in the media are, by and large, hard-working and intelligent. So why are they pumping up Peter Dutton's tyres instead of holding Labor to account?

It's partly a lack of independence. Murdoch's News Corp pretends that individual papers are independent, but there's a management line they stick to. The ABC, which is meant to be impartial and independent, is cowed after a decade of Coalition attacks and funding cuts. From top to bottom, the ABC knows that when they annoy the Coalition, they are annoying a very vindictive future employer.

Another part of the problem is the small pool in which the media swims – many high profile ABC staff got their start keeping quiet about phone hacking and persecution campaigns at News Corp. If they move on, News is one of the largest employers.

What this country needs is media that serves the people by speaking truth to power. We need a fully funded ABC that doesn't have to look over its shoulder.

Perhaps you're not so interested in who does what in the media. You should be. If Dutton's nuclear garbage gets going, we all have to live in a world made hotter by extra coal and gas emissions. If Albanese is off the hook for continuing to open coal and gas projects in the face of the science, everyone gets heatwaves, more bushfires, longer droughts, and massive climate migration.

Anyone who remembers the 2019-2020 bushfires has a reason for wanting a better media.

There is alternative media. We highlight it in this paper, and we recommend radio 3CR, as well as the sources we use.

Donate to 3CR's radiothon! Donate to this paper's Press Fund! Let's not let any of them get away with it.

Around 70 people from unions, conservation groups, the general community, and of course the Communist Party of Australia gathered to hear Speakers from the Conservation Council and the Electrical Trades Union at an LNP office in Brisbane. The speakers outlined the problems contained in the federal opposition's proposals for nuclear power.

Speakers called for the Coalition to stop withdrawing from climate action.

The problems of nuclear power which included costs, nuclear water disposal, as well as the cost of inaction on renewables.

The fact that coal fired power stations are being closed right now indicates the need to continue a stable approach to just transition.

David Matters

Blood on West's hands

Continued from page 1

There has been an escalation following Israel's assassination of Taleb Abdullah, a senior Hezbollah commander, and the release of drone footage of military sites and civilian infrastructure in Haifa by Hezbollah.

Israel is ready for an "all-out war" in Lebanon and has plans approved for an offensive targeting Hezbollah, officials have said.

"We are very close to the moment of decision to change the rules against Hezbollah and Lebanon. In an all-out war, Hezbollah will be destroyed and Lebanon will be severely hit," an Israeli official said.

"Operational plans for an offensive in Lebanon were approved and validated, and decisions were taken on the continuation of increasing the readiness of troops in the field," a statement issued by Ori Gordin, head of Israel's Northern Command said.

Hezbollah warned "no place" in Israel would be spared in the event of a full-blown war, and threatened nearby Cyprus if it opened its airports and bases to Israel.

"Let's be clear: The people of the region and the people of the world cannot afford Lebanon to become another Gaza," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stressed.

"One rash move – one miscalculation – could trigger a catastrophe that goes far beyond the border, and frankly, beyond imagination," he said.

"The world must say loudly and clearly: immediate de-escalation is not only possible – it is essential," Guterres said, declaring that "there is no military solution."

The Zionist agenda of Greater Israel (Eretz Yisrael) includes swathes of territory from Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, as well as the occupied territories and Israel itself.

While attention has been focused on Gaza, there has been a surge of settler vigilante violence in the West Bank where military raids and arrests have claimed the lives of over 500 Palestinians and led to the arbitrary detention of thousands more, including children.

PROTESTS

Western governments, including Australia's, continue to supply Israel with weapons while repeating the falsehoods that Israel is 'acting in self-defence' and that it is a 'rescue operation.' They have the power to halt the war crimes, to defend the Palestinians but they look on at these horrors as if they do not exist.

They have blood on their hands.

At the same time, the people of these same countries take to the streets in their millions every week in support of Palestinians, calling for the genocide to cease. The student encampments have spread around the world.

In Australia, the demonstrations continue with thousands of people still turning up every week after almost 9 months.

In Israel hundreds of thousands of people take to the streets demanding elections, the removal of Prime Minister Netanyahu, an end to Israel's war on Gaza, and the safe return of the Israeli captives.

TIME TO ACT

"Israel must immediately stop its military operations and attacks in Gaza, including the assault on Rafah," said the chair of the United Nations commission that carried out the investigation.

Hang your heads in shame, PM Anthony Albanese, Foreign Minister Penny Wong, Defence Minister Richard Marles and all those Labor, Coalition and independent members of Parliament who support genocide of Palestinians and falsely claim support for Palestinians is antisemitic.

Support for Palestinians is NOT antisemitic. It is anti-Zionist.

More strength to Labor Senator Fatima Payman who has bravely spoken out against the genocide. Payman has written that "Australia must reinforce the fundamental moral principle at the heart of the conflict: the right to self-determination." On 25 June Payman crossed the floor in support of a Greens motion for Palestinian self-determination.

UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese summed it up: "Israel's genocide of Palestinians in Gaza is an escalatory stage of a long-standing settler colonial process of erasure."

The Australian government must call for:

- An immediate and permanent ceasefire
- The free flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza
- The withdrawal of all Israeli military forces
- The release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel under arbitrary detention, including women and children, in exchange for hostages held by Hamas

It must cease diplomatic and trade relations with Israel, end the export of weapons or weapon parts to Israel, and recognise the state of Palestine in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions.

Readers can join the Boycott Disinvest Sanctions (BDS) campaign. Companies being targeted by the BDS include Siemens, Soda Stream, Puma, and HP, as well as products labelled 'from Israel.' ✪

Climate disasters force Australians to move a quarter of a million times

Australians have been forced to move more than 240,000 times in recent years due to worsening disasters, with the hardest hit communities experiencing extreme weather events at least 25 times.

A new report by Emergency Leaders for Climate Action, 'Too close to home' lists steps the Australian government needs to take to better protect communities from climate-fuelled disasters. The report reveals the communities hit hardest by consecutive disasters and makes the case for why more investment into community preparedness is critical.

Greg Mullins AO AFSM, Founder of Emergency Leaders for Climate Action said: "As communities around the country face more fires and floods, fuelled by climate pollution, it is inconceivable that the Federal Opposition would seek to delay necessary climate action for the sake of a false solution like nuclear.

"Nuclear can't drive down climate pollution fast enough, which endangers millions of Australian lives and homes, and flies in the face of the lived experience of Australians, including those who serve to keep us safe.

"Firefighters and other emergency responders are being pushed to their limits by increasingly frequent, intensifying disasters, fuelled by climate pollution. They are tireless in their efforts to protect Australians but, as we saw during the Black Summer bushfires and subsequent record floods, they're regularly being overwhelmed by climate-fuelled disasters.

"We must make urgent cuts to climate pollution in order to protect communities facing worsening impacts right now, and to ensure our kids and grandkids are kept safe from even worse disasters.

"It is past time we tilt the balance from responding to disasters to preventing and preparing for them, and building community capacity, rather than relying solely on responses by emergency services. Unprepared communities lose more homes and lives than prepared communities. We need more resources to be available so people in our communities can keep each other safe when disasters strike."

Sean O'Rourke, Director of Emergency Leaders for Climate Action said: "Australia's investment in disaster preparedness is no match for the fury of climate-fuelled disasters. After years of neglect from previous Australian governments, our efforts to protect vulnerable communities from climate harm are just getting off the ground.

"We can do so much more to help communities understand the risks they're up against, and to manage those risks. In fact, we must – lives depend on it. Everything we do this decade determines how safe our kids and grandkids are from supercharged fires, floods, and storms."

Dr Rebecca McNaught, President of South Golden Beach Community Resilience Team based in NSW's Northern Rivers said: "We are a nation of people who care for our neighbours in times of crisis. Through floods and fires, we've watched communities provide food and support for each other, and we've seen innovative community-led initiatives meet needs in the wake of climate-fuelled disasters. These efforts need to be better acknowledged and resourced.

"Communities have lost homes, animals and people they love to climate-fuelled disasters. Supporting communities to prepare for disasters benefits their individual and collective wellbeing. By better resourcing efforts to get prepared and protect one another, communities can move from a place of trauma and fear, to healing and hope."

Emergency Leaders for Climate Action ✪

Cessnock November 2013. Photo: Quarrie Photography – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

We must make urgent cuts to climate pollution

Huge win for mesothelioma victims against asbestos giant

In a landmark case for victims of asbestos related diseases, a Queensland jury has ordered Amaca Pty Limited (formerly known as James Hardie) to pay a total of $1.21 million and a sum of $800,000 for general damages and loss of life expectancy to Kim Martin, a 77-year-old suffering from mesothelioma resulting from exposure to asbestos products manufactured by James Hardie & Coy Pty Limited.

The grandfather of three was diagnosed with asbestos-related pleural disease in 2013 and with deadly mesothelioma in 2021. Despite his declining health, Kim was determined to bring his fight directly to the asbestos manufacturing giant.

Martin's case marks the first pain and suffering award for a mesothelioma victim in Queensland and the highest pain and suffering award for a mesothelioma victim in Australia.

Slater and Gordon Legal Counsel in Dust Diseases, Sean Sweeney, said the news is a huge win for all Australians who have been exposed to the deadly fibres which continue to impact workers and home renovators decades later.

"This is a watershed moment for victims of mesothelioma, marking the first occasion that a Queensland Court has assessed damages for a plaintiff suffering from asbestos-related disease," Sweeney said.

Martin handled James Hardie products and attended their factories in Western Australia and Queensland regularly between 1967 and 1975 Additionally, he cut and installed James Hardie products during private renovations in Western Australia in 1978 and 1979.

More than 50 years later, he can still recall working with James Hardie products in factories and warehouses – often with his bare hands.

"I didn't see any warning labels about asbestos or dust released from the asbestos cement sheets I carried and worked with. There were no signs at the James Hardie factories about the dangers of what we were handling," Martin said.

Slater and Gordon has called the decision an important step towards holding asbestos manufacturers accountable for their actions.

Sweeney said "James Hardie knew for decades that there was no safe level of exposure to asbestos, but they prioritised their profits over the health of the public, creating a horrible legacy of asbestos-related disease and death.

"We commend the members of the jury for providing justice for Mr Martin and his family. However, there are no winners in a case like this when a wonderful life has been cruelly cut short by an entirely avoidable disease.

"Mr Martin has demonstrated extraordinary courage in his fight against James Hardie & Coy Pty Limited obtaining the first award for damages for mesothelioma in Queensland. However, what is important to Kim and his family is the recognition that James Hardie failed him, and so many others, and has been held accountable for their actions"

Slater and Gordon Lawyers ✪

Fears for new police search powers

Batu Petani

Police in Victoria could be given broader powers to search people suspected of being armed with a knife under proposed amendments to the Control of Weapons Act. As things are, the present Act allows police to search someone for a weapon without having a warrant to do so only if the police have a 'reasonable suspicion' that the person they're about to search has a prohibited weapon in a public place. This means there's a degree of protection for the community against racial profiling and/or harassment from searches; if the officer searches someone and it can be shown that they did not have a reasonable suspicion, that could cost the police in damages later on.

The proposed changes make it easier for police to classify a location permanently as a 'designated place.' The fact that a person is in the 'designated place' would justify the police having the 'reasonable suspicion' needed for a random search.

Criminology academic Dr Ross Hendy, has raised concerns, saying that "democratic policing principles might necessitate a high threshold to justify permanent designation or, indeed, provide a review of the necessity after a certain period of time."

We agree with his caution. Police in Melbourne's western suburbs have been shown quite capable of stereotyping particular ethnic groups, and if a location can be 'designated' permanently without any oversight or review, it could be a recipe for victimisation for already disadvantaged groups. ✪

Queensland Unions: LNP views of women antiquated, unsupported

Queensland Unions, the peak body representing 400,000 Queensland workers, says Liberal Senator Hollie Hughes' comments that employers would be "reluctant to hire or promote women" if they're afforded paid reproductive health leave contradict research and regress women's fight for gender equality.

Breaking research by the McKell Institute into paid reproductive health leave supports the union's call for an extension of reproductive leave as a minimum national employment standard for working people of all genders.

Jacqueline King, General Secretary of Queensland Unions said in the fight for gender equality, improved workplace productivity and participation and work/life balance, leave which specifically addresses working people's need to manage issues and planning related to reproductive health is an entitlement that works for everyone.

"Comments like those ... simply confirm how out of touch the Coalition is when it comes to their views on women and women's participation in the workforce, and don't at all resonate with the McKell Institute's research findings."

McKell Institute Executive Director Dr Gemma Beale said a minimum entitlement of 10 days paid reproductive health leave makes sense, acknowledging every person may be impacted at some stage in their working life by a broad range of issues related to their reproductive health.

"Our research looked at the many ways reproductive health leave can impact people's ability to participate in work, and found leave of this specific nature would reduce absenteeism and increase productivity," Dr Beale said.

"Our report found the inclusion of paid reproductive leave in the Fair Work Act would level the playing field for workers experiencing, treating and managing their reproductive health, as well as help address the stigma and silence around many of these issues."

King said women do not see their experiences reflected in statements like those of Senator Hughes, which imply that women should suffer in silence when it comes to issues relating to menopause or reproductive health if they're going to keep up with their male colleagues.

"It wasn't that long ago sentiments of a similar attitude were being thrown around in relation to women's equal pay and maternity leave, meaning when it comes to breaking down gender barriers relating to women's workforce participation, the LNP are dependably prehistoric," King said.

Queensland Unions have led the campaign for paid reproductive health leave, progressing the entitlement for access later this year for Queensland public sector workers and gaining support for this claim as a National Employment Standard at the ACTU Congress.

A national employment standard for paid reproductive leave is all-encompassing and will cover all reproductive health matters, including fertility and IVF treatment, reproductive health conditions like endometriosis, preventative screening for things like breast and prostate cancer, and other treatments like hysterectomies and vasectomies.

"We know that one million Australian women have been diagnosed with endometriosis. One in six couples will experience fertility issues. Early detection of breast or prostate cancer can save lives. Access to additional leave and flexible work options will help them manage these issues better."

Queensland Unions/The McKell Institute ✪

Union calls out FedUni mismanagement

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) has warned FedUni's newly released plan to slash jobs will inflame the university's financial problems.

FedUni Vice-Chancellor Duncan Bentley has confirmed he is pushing ahead with the "Future Fed" cuts despite widespread community opposition.

A change paper confirms most of the cuts will be applied to FedUni's professional staff, who provide critical support to other staff and students.

The plan proposes cutting 105 roles on top of more than 40 positions removed earlier in the year.

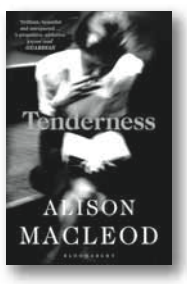
The change paper argues the cuts are necessary to make FedUni financially sustainable, however the proposal does not address the core issue facing the institution: declines in enrolments and difficulties retaining students.

"FedUni management is trying to address a revenue issue by cutting costs," said Dr Mathew Abbott, President of the NTEU Branch at FedUni. "The problem is that these mass cuts only stand to exacerbate our revenue problems, making our university a less attractive place to study by undermining the quality of our programs and student support."

These cuts represent the fifth round of mass redundancies at the institution in the past five years, with 64 positions cut in 2020, 28 cut in 2021, 44 cut in 2022, and 18 cut in 2023. This week's change paper proposes to disestablish a senior Provost position that was created only last year in a previous restructure. In 2022, FedUni management cut its Arts program only to reinstate it two weeks later after a successful NTEU campaign.

"Chaotic decision making and distressing levels of job insecurity are taking their toll on staff at our institution, and these negative impacts are simultaneously felt by our students whose learning conditions are undermined as staff working conditions are," said Dr Abbott. "Staff members feel that the future of our university is under threat."

National Tertiary Education Union ✪



Adelaide

Workers' Book Club

1:00 to 2:00 pm Wednesday, 17th July

Fidel's Workers' Library – 66 Wattle Avenue, Royal Park

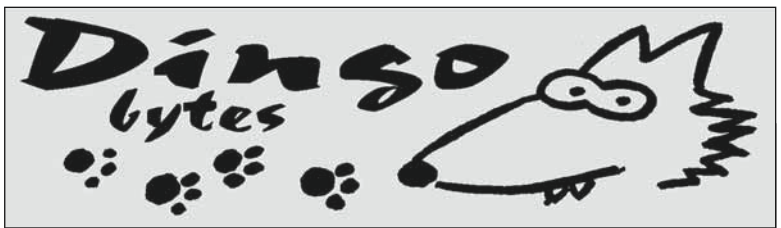
July Reading: *Tenderness* by Alison MacLeod

This is a fictionalised account of the court case involving an attempt to ban the D H Lawrence novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

You may find the SA Libraries' xApp useful to locate this or other books.

Even if you haven't read the suggested books you are very welcome to join the session to find out more.

Information: 0416 769 555



This week's US imperialist intervention is **Germany 1950s:** The CIA orchestrated a wide-ranging campaign of sabotage, terrorism, and psychological warfare against the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). This was one of the factors which led to the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

Last week Dingo noted the contemptuous rejection by the Climate Council of the federal opposition decision to abandon Australia's 2030 climate targets. Now Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action (BSCA) have also spoken out in response to Dutton's statements that the Federal Liberal Party would dump Australia's interim emissions reduction targets. The organisation, founded and led by bushfire survivors, has labelled the move reckless and devastating.

"Here we are watching communities face climate-fuelled disasters roll around again and again, with insurance costs rising and homes in some regions becoming uninsurable, yet the Opposition leader is prepared to delay climate action until the 2040s. To say our members are distraught is an understatement," said Serena Joyner, Chief Executive Officer of BSCA.

Joyner said what's particularly hard to understand is how the Coalition can justify the ever-growing expense of worsening climate disasters. The bushfires of 2019-2020 and the 2022 Northern Rivers floods each cost insurers more than $4 billion, and the cost to farmers of the Black Summer fires was $5 billion. Nearly 60 per cent of all local government areas were disaster-declared in 2022 and councils everywhere have been unable to keep up with repairs to local infrastructure.

"And insurance costs are just beginning when accounting for the personal financial and emotional costs to people and communities across the country from more frequent and destructive fires and floods. There's only so much we can take. Does Peter Dutton expect our regions to just give up and move to the city?

"Scientists tell us if we delay urgent climate action we guarantee that global temperatures will keep rising. That would condemn Australia to face summers like Black Summer on a regular basis, if not worse. It is beyond belief that the Opposition leader thinks that is an acceptable future for this country."

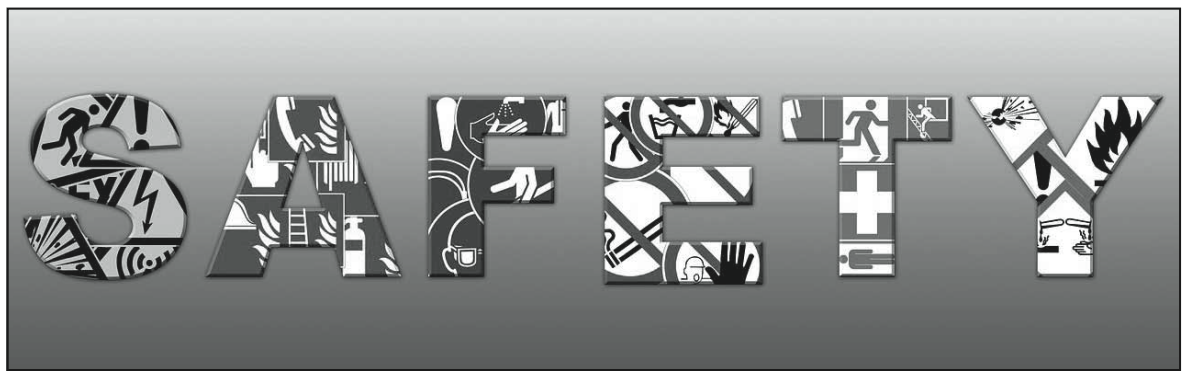
PARASITE OF THE WEEK: Albanese and his government. Under state monopoly capitalism, the government is a committee for managing capital and industrial resources for their corporate masters, first and foremost suppression of the labour force. When its overriding focus becomes military – the armed forces and the military industrial complex – the primary beneficiaries are the arms manufacturers.

Which brings us to the Albanese government and its quisling role in AUKUS. To subjugate the entire world the US has to conquer both Russia and China. That is the real objective of AUKUS, the "pivot to the Indo-Pacific" and the "war against terrorism" before it. It is the real aim of the war against Afghanistan and Iraq and all the bases that the US is constructing with the complicity of a whole string of governments which have treacherously bent the knee before US power and money. It is these objectives to which the Australian government willingly and enthusiastically subscribes. It does not have to be bought. It welcomes the unlimited war plans of the criminal US administration.

Such is the class allegiance of the Albanese government.

‘Tens of thousands of work years’

New study shows cost of poor workplace safety



Australia loses 41,194 work years annually due to work-related injury, disease and mental health conditions, a new measure of the national burden of workplace injury and illness has found.

This equals more than 41,000 lost jobs.

The Monash University team developed the new ‘Working Years Lost’ metric to measure the national burden of work-based injury, illness, and disease resulting in compensation claims.

Published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, the study aimed to quantify the national burden of working time lost to compensable occupational injury and disease and how working time lost is distributed across age, gender, injury and disease.

Professor Alex Collie from Monash University’s School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine said it was the first time such figures had been collated.

“Normally we track injury and disease at work by counting the number of people making compensation claims or the amount of time they spend off work,” he said.

“This new measure combines those two concepts and presents it as something more meaningful, which can be summarised as the number of people off work for a full year.”

Professor Collie said the working years lost (WYL) measure provided a different view of the ‘challenge’ of workplace injury.

“The impact of some types of injury and disease are more accurately represented in this new metric,” he said.

“For instance, mental health conditions have a much higher percentage of working years lost than of workers’ compensation claims. This is because we take the long time off work for each mental health claim into account, whereas simply counting claims does not do this.”

The national study covered people with accepted workers’ compensation claims and receiving wage replacement benefits for time off work, lodged between July 2012 and June 2017.

Male workers incurred 25,367 (61.6 per cent) WYL while female workers accounted for 15,827 (38.4 per cent). A total of 21,763 WYL (52.8 per cent) were from workers aged over 45 years, despite these workers accounting for 66,742 (44.1 per cent) accepted claims.

Traumatic injury resulted in 16,494 (40 per cent) WYL per annum, followed by Musculoskeletal disorders (8,547 WYL; 20.7 per cent) and Mental health conditions (5,361 WYL, 13 per cent).

“Annually, compensable occupational injury and disease in Australia results in a substantial burden of lost working time, equivalent to over 41,000 lost jobs,” Professor Collie said.

“The distribution of burden reflects the higher labour force participation of males, slower rehabilitation in older workers, and the relative impact of common occupational injuries and diseases. Effective occupational health surveillance, policy development and resource allocation will benefit from population-based monitoring of working time loss.”

Monash University ✪

‘More needed’ for housing in NSW

The NSW government’s housing and homelessness package has been called a step in the right direction, but more is needed to meet soaring demand for help.

Homelessness NSW CEO Dominique Rowe said $5.1 billion over four years to build 6,200 new social houses and rebuild 2,200 homes would start to undo decades of neglect. Another $1 billion to repair 3,350 dwellings would also help lift housing standards.

“The long overdue investment in social housing, including priority access for domestic violence victim-survivors is essential to turn around this once-in-a-generation crisis,” she said.

“The NSW government needs to double the amount of social homes to one in 10 homes if it is serious about tackling the waitlist of more than 58,000 families, many of whom are in the queue for a decade or more.”

Specialist homelessness services will share in $250 million over four years to support people at risk of homelessness, including those leaving correctional centres and mental health services.

Another $260 million will fund crisis accommodation and support services for people who are homeless, including women and children forced to choose between violent homes and sleeping rough.

“This $527 million investment in critical homelessness services is welcome, but must not represent our best efforts to tackle this once-in-a-generation crisis,” Rowe said.

“While it remains below what’s needed to meet soaring costs and community demand, today’s announcement is a step in the right direction. Homelessness NSW looks forward to working with the government to ensure the money goes where it is needed most.

“Spending on crisis measures such as temporary accommodation are vital, but remain a band aid fix without substantial investment in preventing homelessness and long-term housing. The government’s plan to transform the temporary accommodation is a welcome move.”

“Without additional funding beyond 2025 for Together Home, which helps rough sleepers access long-term housing, hundreds of vulnerable people will be left without support.

Homelessness NSW’s key budget recommendations included:

- $1 billion a year for the next 10 years to build 5,000 social houses annually
- A 20 per cent funding boost for specialist homelessness services, or $64 million a year for two years
- Funding for homelessness provider contracts to be indexed at 6.2 per cent to keep pace with the cost of service delivery
- $30 million over three years to secure additional temporary accommodation, including 20 per cent reserved for women and children experiencing domestic violence
- $62 million over three years to extend the state’s Together Home program.

Homelessness NSW ✪

PEACE NOTES

The other nuclear

Peter Farmer

By the time you read this everybody will have had a gutful of Peter Dutton’s idea of building nuclear reactors around the country while crippling action on renewables. For Dutton nuclear power, is a transparent delaying tactic designed for mainly the purpose of delaying action on climate change.

For a lot of the 20th Century, ‘nuclear’ meant the other sort – nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons used to be a major concern. Now we only need to worry about climate change, right?

Wrong. The fact that most people aren’t thinking about nuclear weapons does not make those weapons go away. The nuclear weapons that were on everybody’s minds during the 1980s and earlier are all still there. In fact they’re worse, and the relations between the countries that have them are worse.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) all nine nuclear-armed states are modernising their weapons, relying on those weapons more, and boosting spending on them.

The nine nuclear states are the USA, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, France, the UK, Israel, and the DPRK (North Korea). Together, those countries spent US $91.4 billion (AU$137 billion) on their nukes in 2023. That was an increase of $10.7 billion. The USA made up 80 per cent of the increase.

Unsurprisingly the US spends more on nuclear weapons in total than the other eight nuclear-armed nations put together.

Alicia Sanders-Zakre of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) has made the obvious point that the spending “is not improving global security.”

Another worrying trend is that, according to SIPRI, there is less transparency regarding nuclear forces in both Russia and the US, who own most of the deployed missiles.

Last year, Russia suspended its participation in the New Start nuclear treaty, after Washington suspended its ‘bilateral strategic stability dialogue’ with Russia. This is serious stuff; the nuclear treaties did a lot of things that made the world less dangerous, like getting the major nuclear powers talking with each other, warning each other of accidents, as well as limiting development of new forms of nuclear weapons.

Australia is not a bystander here. Australia does not have nuclear missiles, it’s true, although our radar stations and the US bases here have a role to play in the US nuclear arsenal. So does the runway at RAAF Base Tindal, which can now support nuclear-armed bombers, thanks to us spending millions upgrading it.

The AUKUS alliance is supposedly for our safety, the idea being that becoming even more a working part of the US military will mean that Washington protects us from China. The *Guardian* has explained many times why the idea of being protected from China is a furphy – we don’t need protection from a friendly nation which is our major trading partner, has exactly one base outside its borders, and which has a win-win approach to foreign relations.

If the Albanese government really cared about our safety they would be demanding that Washington restart its bilateral strategic stability dialogue with Russia. While they’re at it, they should ask the USA to accept China’s offer to have a ‘no first use’ policy. That’s right, Beijing has made it clear it’s prepared to commit to not being the first to use nuclear weapons, but Washington has knocked them back.

There’s a lot our government could do about the threat of nuclear war. They’re not doing it.

Peter Dutton & the nuclear shit show

Denis Doherty

We watched in horror as Peter Dutton and a whole cavalcade of Coalition ministers rolled out their nuclear nightmare in a blatant attempt to keep burning coal and gas.

Nuclear is simply too expensive, will take far too long to build, is far too dangerous, and is little more than a political tool in the Coalition strategy to delay renewables.

Let's deal briefly with some of the reasons why nuclear energy is not an option for Australia.

COST

The cost is prohibitive. At a minimum, Dutton's 'policy' would cost $100 billion. With health, housing, and the NDIS coming apart at the seams, the nuclear option is reckless and uncaring.

What kind of blowout would we get with Dutton's nuclear power stations – double the cost (Dutton has not given us any figures yet) or multiplied by five or six? This is the usual pattern of cost blowouts with major infrastructure projects in Australia.

With $30 million a day for the next 30 years to be spent on the AUKUS nuclear submarine project, we must now add many more billions for nuclear reactors.

TIMING

The reactors will take ages to build. There is not one recognised expert on nuclear reactors who agrees that Dutton can bring this home by 2035 or 37 – in 11 to 15 years from now. 'On time and on budget' is a line that comedians use to get a good laugh at the expense of governments.

SAFETY

Can we be confident that Australia would not have the same problems as South Korea's Nuclear Safety and Security Commission which has been accused of disregarding the safety regulations it is meant to enforce – while the nuclear power industry is closing down after discoveries of corruption, graft and dangerous short cuts.

Nuclear accidents as a result of mechanical or human error do happen – Five Mile Island, Chernobyl, and Fukushima prove this. The Fukushima nuclear reactor was hit by a tsunami. Australia is not immune from natural disasters.

The Fukushima meltdown disaster is not over and will never end.

Massive quantities of radiation escaped into the air and water from the damaged reactors. This contamination was widespread in vegetables, fruit, meat, milk, rice, and tea in many areas of Japan. The radioactive fallout which covers large swathes of Japan will never be cleaned up and will contaminate food, humans, and animals virtually forever.

Radioactive water has been discharged into the Pacific. Tuna caught off the coast of California are already contaminated by cesium 134 and 137 from Fukushima. Large quantities of radioactive water are still escaping into the Pacific Ocean from leaking ground water and other sources.

Nuclear radiation interferes with genetics and causes cancers and deformities in children. Three eyed fish, two headed lambs and "jelly-fish" human babies are real. This is not scare mongering but a risk inherent in using nuclear reactors. Why take the risk when there are safe, cheap and reliable alternatives?

NUCLEAR WASTE

The added cost of storing spent fuel rods was not mentioned but the controversy about storing spent rods at Kimba South Australia was. This projected site in SA has been rejected by the local people and now far bigger storage sites would be needed for tons of radioactive material that would be generated by the Dutton project. Imagine the fights with traditional owners as a site is chosen.

AUKUS

We feared from the outset that AUKUS nuclear-powered submarines would be used as a lever to allow nuclear power into Australia. The Coalition and friendly journalists are trying that on now, with the farcical argument that since we will one day have to store waste from the AUKUS submarines, it'll be a breeze to store waste from seven nuclear reactors.

The fear now is that the introduction of nuclear power will be used as a lever to allow Australia to acquire nuclear weapons.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Peter Dutton is remembered for his crack about water lapping at the doorstep of the people of South Pacific. At one stroke he alienated many in the South Pacific as he fails to deal with climate change.

His policy to reject the Paris emissions reduction target, and to limit funding for renewables will impact negatively on investment in new renewable technologies, benefitting the polluting gas industry.

Dutton's nuclear nightmare will not help with the floods, fires and other natural disasters we have been warned will increase in the coming decades.

But the future in renewable energy is bright as is the jobs potential.

COMMUNITY ACTION

The Opposition Leader's uncosted plan offers very little detail, while committing Australia to the most expensive form of energy and undermining cheap and abundant renewables.

It is beyond dispute that solar, wind, and other forms of renewable energy are cheaper than coal fired power stations, cheaper than gas-fired stations, and cheaper than nuclear power plants. The International Energy Association describes solar as the cheapest electricity in history.

We cannot rely on the ALP government. We must activate the community to reject this madness with every fibre available to us. ✪

Image: Nicolas Raymond – freestock.ca/flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

Nuclear Australia? The Pacific reacts

Australia's opposition leader, Peter Dutton has announced a Coalition government's future nuclear energy plans. Dutton named seven proposed sites for nuclear plants after implausibly claiming the plan would cost less than Australia's renewable energy development.

Nuclear power plants are currently banned in all states and territories in Australia. While the final cost has not been revealed, it is estimated that the total cost for Dutton's imagined reactors would be around $100 million.

Jacynta Fa'amau, 350.org Pacific Campaigner says:

"This nuclear fantasy is a distraction from genuine climate action on Australia's part. The Coalition claims to have the concerns of Australian people in mind, but we know for a fact that nuclear power is up to eight times more expensive than large-scale wind or solar power. As a Pacific Islander living in Australia, of course I want our government to meet their climate commitments and keep the hopes of the Paris Agreement alive. But swapping out one destructive energy source for another is not the answer. A "Just Transition" means no one is left behind and from what we've seen, coal workers have not been consulted, communities near proposed plant sites are worried, and the nuclear timeline does not keep us below the target of 1.5 degrees."

Alisi Rabukawaqa, Pacific Climate Warriors Council Elder says:

"The Pacific has a painful and horrific nuclear history. Australia currently doesn't have a place to store its nuclear waste, and finding a spot has proved difficult. Why gamble on a dangerous industry when they have access to safer solutions like wind and solar? The fact that we share an ocean with this Coalition means that we will have to pay close attention to Australia's elections, and the direction that their energy transition takes."

350.org

NAIDOC Week 2024

Aboriginal heritage under threat from biopiracy

Ron Hall
Secretary Aboriginal Advancement League SA

Aboriginal cultural knowledge is under threat of being stolen through the skilful, but sometimes deceptive, use of patents laws. Indigenous communities are frequently targeted, for example, by pharmaceutical corporations wanting to appropriate traditional remedies without acknowledgement or compensation.

In Australia some limited progress has been achieved as a cosmetics company was successfully challenged over its use of the Kakadu plum in some of its products. However, it's still able to market these overseas. The need for a fairer legal system around patents has been taken up by Dr Evana Wright of the University of Technology Sydney. The aim is to develop more effective intellectual property legislation, especially to benefit First Nations Australians, in conjunction with developments in WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organisation).

Currently India and Peru are leading the way in protecting Indigenous communities from biopiracy, a term used for the devious practice of appropriating cultural knowledge for profit. So often biopiracy adversely affects Indigenous communities around the world. In India, for instance, the exploitative marketing of turmeric has inspired attempts at the national level to protect traditional knowledge through the formation of a Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) in cooperation with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

Australian legislators have much to learn to improve intellectual property legislation, especially through increased involvement in WIPO. It is encouraging that recently Australia has become much more involved in WIPO and its Indigenous Caucus. Currently, WIPO is working on sanctions that could apply when breaches to patent disclosure requirements occur.

Today traditional knowledge and practices such as fire stick farming and knowledge of bush tucker have become widely known. However, for the argument that such knowledge is in the 'public domain' and therefore available to all, Dr Wright dismisses as the intellectual equivalent of *terra nullius*. For instance, determining when and where burning should happen is important in preserving the right of First Nations to care for and govern their own country.

According to the National Fire Knowledge Forum there are "concerns that the institutionalisation of Indigenous fire management can lead to the simplification and diminution of local Indigenous fire knowledge and practices."

In South Australia, a Narungga Elder would like to see exclusive rights granted to First Nations communities to access traditional food sources, particularly quandongs. This would include an exclusive right to catch butterfish as it is source of fat or oil which has medicinal benefits enjoyed in pre-colonial times such as the prevention of respiratory diseases and the promotion of both physical and mental health.

A wider application of such rights for First Nations communities, in turn, will be a real benefit to the prestige of the nation and significant savings to the health care budget, in particular. First Nations organisations such as AIATSIS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) lament the lack of protection for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) as a significant limitation in the fulfilment of their demanding roles. As a consequence, positive legislative action has become an imperative.

This definitely applies at the national as well as international level where Indigenous expertise needs to be to the fore to achieve the 'Blak, Loud and Proud' First Nations community so important to the national psyche. ✪

Palestine: remember the doctors

Vijay Prashad

In the first week of June 2024, the Palestine office of the World Health Organization (WHO) released figures about the atrocious attacks on health care facilities and workers in Gaza since 7 October 2023. Thus far, according to the WHO, the Israelis have attacked 464 health care facilities, killed 727 health care workers, injured 933 health care workers, and damaged or destroyed 113 ambulances. "Health care," the WHO's Palestine office argues, "is not a target." Yet, during the past seven months, health care workers have faced relentless attacks by the Israeli military. Each of the stories about the deaths is heartbreaking, the names of the dead are too long to list in any article (although a group called Healthcare Workers for Palestine did read the names of their dead colleagues as a protest against this war). Some of the stories are worth reflecting on because they tell us about the commitment of the workers and the great loss to humanity from their murder.

Dr Iyad Rantisi, who was 53 years old, ran the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahiya, which lies in the northern part of Gaza. There are many Rantisis in Gaza, but they are not native to that part of Palestine. Like many Palestinians who live in Gaza, they have roots in other parts of Palestine from which they were expelled in the Nakba of 1948; the Rantisis come from the village of Rantis, northwest of Ramallah.

On 11 November 2023, during the Israeli military assault inside northern Gaza, Dr Rantisi was taken into custody at an Israeli military checkpoint when he tried to leave northern Gaza for the south, following the orders of the Israeli military. Since then, his family had not heard anything about his whereabouts. Now, months later, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reports that he was taken to the Shikma Investigation Center of the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency), which is inside the Ashkelon Prison. Dr Rantisi was tortured and then killed six days into his detention. His family was not informed of this until the *Haaretz* report. Then, Dr Rantisi's daughter Dima wrote of the death of her father, a social media post that she paired with photographs of him in medical scrubs performing surgery on a patient.

Dr Adnan Al-Barsh, also 53, trained in Romania before he returned home to Gaza to head the orthopaedic department at Al-Shifa Hospital. He has a reputation of being a very loved doctor, whose office was crowded with his diplomas (from Jordan, from Palestine, from the United Kingdom). When the Israeli military attacked al-Shifa, Dr Al-Barsh was forced to leave his post, but he did not leave his work. He first went to Kamal Adwan Hospital, where Dr Rantisi worked, and then to Al-Awda Hospital in the area east of the Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza, which was also attacked several times by the Israelis. On 18 December 2023, the Israeli military raided Al-Awda and took Dr Al-Barsh and other hospital personnel into custody. Included among those arrested was the manager of the hospital and another very popular doctor, Dr Ahmed Muhanna. On 15 October 2023, Dr Muhanna made a video – which went viral – in which he pleaded to the world for help and an immediate ceasefire. It is now reported that on 19 April 2024, Dr Al-Barsh was killed by the Israelis in Ofer Prison. Tlaleng Mofokeng, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health said, "Dr Adnan's case raises serious concerns that he died following torture at the hands of Israeli authorities."

Dr Hammam Alloh, age 36, was killed when an Israeli missile struck his home near his ward in Al-Shifa Hospital on 12 November 2023. Trained in Yemen and Jordan, Dr Alloh was Gaza's only nephrologist (kidney specialist). Concerned about his patients who were on dialysis, particularly with the lack of electricity and the constant attacks, Dr Alloh – who was known as "The Legend" during his residency in Jordan – refused to leave the hospital. On 31 October, Dr Alloh was asked why he did not abandon his post and go to southern Gaza. "If I go," he replied calmly, "who would treat my patients? We are not animals. We have the right to receive proper health care. You think I went to medical school and for my postgraduate degrees for a total of 14 years so I think only about my life and not my patients?" This was the calibre of Dr Alloh. Less than two weeks later, when he left his post to have a rest at home with his parents, his wife (pregnant with a child), and his two children, the Israelis struck his home. He died alongside his father.

Medics transport an injured Palestinian child into Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City following an Israeli airstrike, October 2023. Photo: Palestinian News & Information Agency (Wafa) with APAimages – (CC BY-SA 3.0)

At the International Court of Justice in January 2024, the Irish lawyer Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh made the closing arguments for South Africa's claim of genocide against Israel. In the course of her statement, Ní Ghrálaigh showed an image of a whiteboard with the following written on it: "Whoever stays until the end will tell the story. We did what we could. Remember us." These lines had been written by 38-year-old Dr Mahmoud Abu Najaila, who worked as a physician for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) at Al-Awda Hospital in northern Gaza. On 21 November 2023, the Israeli military bombed the third and fourth floors of the hospital, where Dr Najaila worked with Dr Ahmad Al-Sahar and Dr Ziad Al-Tatari. All three were killed.

On her LinkedIn page, Reem Abu Lebdeh, a physiotherapist who was an associate trustee on the board of MSF's UK branch, wrote, "Such a devastating loss for the medical community and humanity." These doctors, whom she knew, she said, "were true embodiments of selfless service and humanitarian dedication, tirelessly saving lives in the most urgent conditions." Then a few weeks later the Israelis attacked a residential area in Khan Younis and killed Reem Abu Lebdeh, whose own messages of solidarity now sit on the web like Dr Najaila's whiteboard note: "Remember us."

Globetrotter

74 years of US bullying

Dear friends,
Warm greetings from Pyongyang.
74 years has passed since June 25, 1950 when the US initiated the Korean War.

The Korean War is the aggressive war that the US planned, prepared and ran with the ambition to overthrow the DPRK, only two years after its foundation, and to dominate the world including Asia.

The US provoked the aggressive war against the DPRK on 25 June 1950, mobilising over two million troops including one third of the US army, one fifth of the US Air force, most of the US Pacific Fleet, troops from 15 vassal countries, Seungman Rhee puppet army and Japanese militarists into the Korean front during the 3-year war period. The US and its vassal forces destroyed cities and villages of the DPRK into ruins and committed war crimes with the aim of genocide by killing peaceful people.

But the vigorous struggle of the heroic Korean people under the wise leadership of the great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung broke the myth of US imperialism's mightiness and the US had no other choice, but to conclude the Korean Armistice Agreement.

Instead of drawing a lesson from their crushing defeat in the Korean War, for 70 long years after the ceasefire the US has persistently pursued a hostile policy towards the DPRK to realise their ambition to dominate Asia and the world by conquering the Korean peninsula.

From the beginning of this year to the end of April, the US together with its followers has staged more than 80 rounds of military exercises targeting the DPRK, while the Republic of Korea puppet forces staged more than 60 rounds of drills independently.

The large-scale Ulji Freedom Shield joint military exercises to be staged this coming August are scheduled for nuclear operation exercises which make the nuclear attack on the DPRK a fait accompli and the OPLAN 2022 for preemptive attack on the major facilities and regions of the DPRK will be fully examined and completed.

The reckless large-scale joint military drills of the US and its vassal forces bring the recent situation to the brink of a nuclear war in the Korean peninsula region.

In the present world where law of the jungle prevails, and in a hot spot where the danger of war has been lingering for decades, the Korean people are conducting a just struggle to defend their national sovereignty and safeguard peace and security in the region by firmly rallying around Comrade Kim Jong Un, president of the State Affairs of the DPRK.

The Korean Committee for Solidarity with the World People firmly believes that you, loving peace and justice, will pay due concern to the manoeuvres of the imperialist forces led by the US, the main cause of war and instability, and vigorously conduct anti-imperialist joint actions and struggles on the international arena.

Best regards!

Korean Committee for Solidarity with the World People

Detail of North Korean statue. Photo: Stefan Krasowski – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

Assange free at last

Wikileaks founder and journalist Julian Assange has been granted bail by the UK High court. The bail will be granted as part of a plea deal, under which Assange will be sentenced to 62 months. Since he's already been in Britain's high security Belmarsh prison for more than five years, this should mean Assange can go free. Assange travelled to the US territory of Saipan and pleaded guilty to a charge of mishandling documents under the US espionage act. He has since landed in Canberra, and is a free man.

Julian Assange came to global attention after founding Wikileaks in 2006, and going on to release 'Collateral Murder,' video footage which showed US troops attacking journalists from a helicopter in Iraq. Since then, Assange has faced charges of sexual assault, since withdrawn, political asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, and arrest and imprisonment by UK authorities on behalf of the USA. Assange has been hounded by three US presidents and five British prime ministers.

At this time, it's important to remember why Julian Assange has had so much time incarcerated in one way or another. In the words of Greens senator David Shoebridge, "Julian Assange has spent years in jail for the crime of showing the world the horrors of the US war in Iraq and the complicity of governments like Australia, and that is why he has been punished."

Julian Assange revealed war crimes. That's what he was punished for. The Iraq War logs revealed 66,081 civilian deaths in the course of the US invasion of Iraq, caused by US forces, US contractors, and Iraqi forces with full US responsibility.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has tried to walk both sides of the street on this. He has repeatedly said that Assange's incarceration "has gone on too long." Albanese will probably be given some credit for behind-the-scenes pressure on the US, but we will never know what that pressure was. Certainly it didn't stop the US from pursuing Assange.

Nouka Iwa ✪

Photo: Vinnie

Kanaky/New Caledonia: protests flare up

Martin Variety

There have been more protests in Kanaky after the arrest and deportation to France of seven local activists. Protests started after the French government introduced legislation that effectively promised to keep the local Kanak population in a permanent electoral minority by giving any French citizen who has lived on the island for longer than ten years the right to vote in local elections. The protests lead to the deaths of nine people including two police officers, hundreds wounded, and deployment of 3,000 additional French personnel.

The French government responded to the protests and general unrest by targeting of the Coordination Cell for Field Action (CCAT) a thinly veiled attempt at the smothering of an organised New Caledonian independence movement. Christian Tein, head of the CCAT and eleven other figures related to the new caledonian independence movement and CCAT were arrested by French colonial authorities. Police also searched the headquarters of the Union Calédonienne, the largest pro-independence party in Kanaky. The CCAT issued a statement asking independence activists not to respond to the latest provocation "to demonstrate our determination, and not to fall into the trap of this colonial manoeuvre from another era."

The chief prosecutor of Noumea has confirmed that seven of the individuals charged including Tein would be held in detention in France further highlighting the genuine colonial era nature exhibited by the French government. Tein's lawyer Pierre Ortent called the decision to imprison Tein in mainland France over 17,000 km away "totally exceptional." All this under the guise that the accused in some manner precipitated and caused the protests in New Caledonia despite the most potentially flamboyant statement from Tein being a call to protestors to "remain mobilised (and) maintain all (forms) of resistance" in the pursuit of "full independence." Daniel Goa President of the Union Calédonienne said these actions undertaken by the French represent nothing more than genuine "political deportation," adding that "The independence of the judiciary is a farce in New Caledonia."

The disconnect between Paris and Kanaky was highlighted by the French decision to remove the activists, days after Macron had called for the protests to cease in advance of the French general elections calling them "unacceptable."

The French decision to suspend the proposed legislation is by no means being attributed to the protests themselves but rather treated as a necessary act in preparation for the snap elections at the end of the month. Many in the New Caledonian independence movement regard reform from France as a genuine dead end. Ortent said that the magistrates pursuing this course of action were "answering to purely political considerations." The proceedings of French colonial authorities cannot be understated in their miscarriage of justice and genuine illegality serving only the suppression of the Kanak people.

If suspending the obnoxious legislation was intended to calm things down in Noumea, at least until after the coming French parliamentary elections are over, it has failed, with fresh violence breaking out on 24 June in response to the detention of Tein and the other activists. Buildings and cars have been set alight and the situation is volatile. There are genuine concerns that disorganised elements could fall for what is effectively a provocation by the French authorities and that the further protests could lead to more colonial crackdowns. ✪

US political prisoner gets hearing

On 10 June, Leonard Peltier, the longest-held political prisoner in the United States, got his first parole hearing in over 15 years. Peltier has been in prison for 47 years.

In 1975, Peltier was convicted of the killings of two FBI agents, a crime that his supporters maintain that he did not commit. The Indigenous movement as well as the movement for the freedom of US political prisoners maintain that Peltier's conviction was a frame-up to repress Peltier's leadership in the movement for Indigenous liberation.

The deliberation on parole takes place at a moment when Peltier's health is declining. The now 79-year-old political prisoner struggles with diabetes, and loss of vision in one eye, has had open heart surgery, has suffered from an aortic aneurysm, and experiences lingering effects from contracting COVID-19.

Activists have emphasised that President Joe Biden has the power to grant Peltier clemency at the stroke of a pen. "This administration, the Biden Administration, has said that Native American rights are a priority to them, and yet they've got the longest sitting Indigenous political prisoner locked up and we've seen no action from the federal government," said Nick Tilsen, leader of the NDN Collective, an organisation building Indigenous collective power in the United States. "If he dies in prison this will forever be a part of that administration's legacy as it relates to Native people."

Globetrotter ✪

UK: Mick Lynch calls for 'decade of struggle' after Tory defeat

Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) general secretary Mick Lynch has urged people to vote out the Tories but prepare for a decade of struggle under a Labour government.

Giving his keynote address at the union's AGM, Lynch credited RMT members for showing a "combative spirit" against the hostility of the Tory government, securing a pay deal and keeping ticket offices open.

He said: "Last year the challenges were piling up, with our members and our union being attacked on all fronts.

"The ticket office closures were meant to be the government's knockout punch in the rail dispute.

"But they over-reached and we defeated them."

Turning his attention to the upcoming general election, Lynch warned another Tory administration would "bring about the end of collective bargaining and negotiations on the railways."

He said: "A change of government gives us a better chance to fight to improve the lives of our communities, to improve our public transport network and to improve our members' jobs, pay and conditions."

Despite the watering down of aspects of the New Deal, Lynch was clear that it "will be significantly beneficial, including employment rights from day one and repealing the 2016 trade union act.

"The rail policy document promises to change the industrial relations framework, ending the attacks on us and providing for decent conditions, regarding the railway workforce as an asset to be nurtured rather than a cost to be cut."

Heaping praise on deputy leader Angela Rayner and shadow transport secretary Louise Haigh, Lynch did caution that, the election of a Labour government was the "beginning and not the end" of the union's struggle.

"We know that big business and the corporations are all over Labour," he said.

"They will be doing everything in their power to dilute, delay, and destroy these policies, not just over the next five years but over the next ten.

"So, we must be prepared for a decade of struggle under a Labour government."

Looking ahead, Lynch promised to put the union in the "front rank" of the trade union movement and to "inspire others" to change society."

He said: "This political and economic consensus must be smashed, and Labour must produce an alternative economic and industrial policy, because what [it is] currently offering will not fix the problems.

"Now is a time for change, but we, the working people, have to build it."

Morning Star ✪

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Book Review

Towers of Ivory and Steel

How Israeli Universities deny Palestinian freedom

by Maya Wind

Richard Mullen

Maya Wind's *Towers of Ivory and Steel: How Israeli Universities Deny Palestinian Freedom* saw its Dublin launch at Trinity College, mere minutes after the Trinity students celebrated the end of their encampment. The book launch was a chance to contextualise the euphoria of one of the first wins for the student encampments in solidarity with Palestine, and position the role of academic institutions in the ongoing oppression of the Palestinian people, and settler colonialist regime on the Palestinian land.

Through the six chapters of this carefully researched volume, Wind systematically tells the tale of the Israeli academic institutions in the 20th and 21st century: a tale that predates the creation of the Israeli state. The institutions like the Hebrew University, Weizmann Institute, and Technion were outposts of the Zionist project in time and space alike, advancing the "Judaization", as Wind puts it, in the region and laying the ground for the new state. These institutions became, alongside others, the key points in the new military-industrial complex. As other authors like Antony Loewenstein, in *The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports The Technology of Occupation Around The World*, have recorded this, complex, reliant on perpetual war away from home (much like the US-NATO military-industrial complex) sells technology of automated killing, surveillance, and torture as "battle-tested products". Companies like Elbit are the most famous examples, and as the CEO of Elbit put on record, "The Technion is woven into Elbit's DNA": Israel's leading universities are the research laboratories of the leading military corporations.

Of course, the role of universities in the "scholarly security state," as Wind calls it, does not stop at researching the next killer drone. Universities produce the intelligence, security, and army cadre, and oftentimes employ the operative personnel themselves. A Palestinian academic recently told me of an hours-long investigation in Israel they were subjected to: the interrogator was a fellow academic from an Israeli university. The integration of the university into the state apparatus is tight and all-encompassing. Wind borrows a striking illustration for this from Ilan Gur Zeev: the 31-story tall University of Haifa building towering over the (Palestinian-majority) land of Galilee. The roof of it was, until recently, manned by the army, hosting the critical telecommunications infrastructure. The top floor, just under the military boots, is where the university management sits; such are the ivory towers of Israel.

Again, this is not the only role universities of Israel play in the settler colonialist state. The system of oppression goes beyond the front line of security and army, and much of it relies on culture, ideology, and reputation. Universities engage in repression of Palestinian students, repression of critical voices, and create a distorted narrative of occupation and oppression from the perspective of "the only liberal democracy in the Middle East". This is the narrative of the "Middle East Studies" as the state project of propaganda for the international use. This project is complemented by the one promoting international Israeli research and teaching collaborations. Western institutions, by collaborating with Israeli institutions on projects seemingly unrelated to the settler colonialist programme, provide a fig leaf for the settler colonialism and normalise its actions.

Towers of Ivory and Steel makes for a great fact-rich read refuting commonly parroted claims from liberal western academia opposing boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) targeting Israeli universities. Oftentimes deliberately conflating boycott of individuals (useless and not called for) and boycott of institutions (as called for by PACBI, Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel), the opponents of cutting ties with Israeli institutions that provide the scaffold to the settler colonial state repeatedly invoke the concept of academic freedom. However, as Wind says at the end of her book, "there is no academic freedom until it applies to all". Ireland's trade unions organising university workers are adopting motions on cutting ties with Israeli institutions, student unions have already been leaders on this question, and the universities have started giving promises. It is vital to keep the pressure on and see the universities fulfil these promises, ending complicity in oppression and genocide; Towers of Ivory and Steel dares to show an emancipatory future of liberation beyond the horrible, unbearable status quo.

Socialist Voice ✪

Western Sahara: struggle continues

Marc B Sanganee

A recent press conference in a Sahrawi refugee camp in Algeria has highlighted the ongoing oppression faced by Sahrawis and the fight for a free and independent Western Sahara.

"Today, many children suffer from malnutrition due to the occupation," says Buhubeini Yahya, head of the non-governmental organization Sahrawi Red Crescent (SRC), which operates in the occupied territories. Journalist Bhakha said that while they have been trying to expose the crimes of the Moroccan government, some have received 27-year prison sentences, adding that "Moroccan police kidnap journalists and confiscate our phones and cameras. Media people are having their bank accounts blocked and our websites are being cyber attacked,"

An Amnesty International report recorded torture, house raids, de facto house arrests, and harassment of individuals for supporting Sahrawi independence.

Many local participants in the conference expressed frustration that the international community generally turns a blind eye to Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara.

The lack of focus is due to Morocco offering Western companies access to natural resources and other commercial opportunities in the occupied territories. European companies are involved in phosphate mining, wind power projects, agriculture, and fishing. Sahrawis have not accepted the economic activities in the occupied territories and do not receive a share of the profits.

There were expressions of support for the Palestinians who are currently suffering from Israel's genocide. All participants observed a minute's silence in solidarity with Palestine.

The Sahrawis and the Palestinians are fighting against their respective occupying powers, who are collaborating with each other.

Under Trump, the United States demanded that Morocco establish diplomatic relations with Israel in return for US acceptance of Western Sahara being Moroccan territory. Today, Morocco recognises Israel as a state and Israel recognises Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara.

(Edited for space)

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Global Briefs

Kenya: Biden promised to designate Kenya as the USA's first "major non-NATO ally" in sub-Saharan Africa as Kenyan President William Ruto arrived in Washington for a state visit. The declaration follows years of collaboration between the two countries, including Kenya's role in US operations in East Africa and intervention in Haiti. Other countries given the non-NATO ally title include Israel, Brazil, and the Philippines. Kenyan citizens have criticised the Ruto government's response to mass floods, including in the capital Nairobi, citing a history of government neglect for the poor and working classes. Past interventions in Haiti have also been criticised due to issues such as allegations of sexual abuse, while Kenya's police have faced accusations of extrajudicial killings and torture at home, including shooting crowds protesting cost of living.

Ukraine: Struggles with recruitment are being experienced by Ukraine's military as recent enlistment campaigns have been met with public scepticism. Aiming to recruit hundreds of thousands of young men, the effort has instead faced draft dodging and public criticism of unpopular attempts to pressure those who have not signed up. The struggles come as Ukraine, EU, and US leaders continue to refuse negotiations with Russia. Putin has proposed an immediate ceasefire and peace negotiations should Ukraine withdraw troops from the 4 regions admitted by Russia and issue a statement against joining NATO. Ukraine and the West continue to engage in negotiations with themselves, including a summit in Switzerland which excluded Russia.

Ecuador: Nationwide power cuts occurred as part of what officials call a "cascade disconnection," citing failures in transmission lines. Cities such as the capital Quito also experienced mass traffic light failure as part of the blackouts, as well as disruptions to tram and metro systems. Authorities were able to bring power back to Quito and other cities within the hour, but it is unclear what the impact of the event will be on infrastructure policy.

Brazil: Thousands have gathered to protest a bill in Congress which would equate abortion with homicide, even in cases of rape or risk of harm to the mother. Part of the growing 'A Girl is Not a Mother' movement, the protests aimed to defend the reproductive rights of women who would otherwise be allowed access to abortion services. Currently, Brazil outlaws abortion except in cases of rape, foetal anencephaly (a fatal condition, where a baby is born without part of the brain and skull), and pregnancy endangering the life of the mother. Criticism of the bill, labelled a product of religious fundamentalism and conservatism, includes that female victims of rape seeking abortions could face harsher penalties than the perpetrators.

China: Chinese tech companies have taken the lead in developing commercial fusion reactors with the successful operation of the Honghuang 70 (HH70) high-temperature superconductor tokamak device. Chinese company Energy Singularity has exceeded its US counterparts, and is already developing an even more advanced model (HH170) set for completion in 2027. The tech constitutes part of China's rapidly growing clean energy sector.

USA: McDonalds has ended the use of AI drive-throughs developed by IBM from more than 100 outlets after major issues with reliability. The voice recognition software's failures include bacon-topped ice cream, hundreds of dollars' worth of chicken nuggets added to orders, sauce packets and several sticks of butter being ordered instead of a bottle of water, and other mishaps. It appears McDonald's and other US fast food companies have flown too close to the sun in their attempt to avoid paying human workers.

Europe being drawn into US trade war

William Briggs

There has been a meeting of G7 finance ministers and central bankers High on the agenda was China and how the G7 should respond to America's new round of trade wars with China. US Treasury Secretary, Janet Yellen made it clear that the members of the big capitalist club had a job to do. That job is to harm China's economy, despite the fact that this will mean damaging the world economy in the process.

The European Union has announced that it will impose extra tariffs of up to 38 per cent on imported Chinese EVs. It is a move that is aimed at disrupting the Chinese economy, but could devastate the global economy.

The move to protectionism in Europe sits uneasily with some member-states. Germany, Sweden, and Hungary initially opposed the idea. German Chancellor Scholz warned that protectionist policies and trade barriers "makes everything more expensive, and everyone poorer". Germany relies on exports and sees the danger of a tit-for-tat trade war. Trade wars are, in the words of Germany's trade minister, Christian Lindner, "all about losing."

Before the G7 meeting, President Biden seriously increased tariffs on Chinese imports higher than the ones imposed by Trump. Yellen used the G7 meeting to insist that the EU and the G7 should 'forcefully' confront China's economic rise.

The USA is fearful of imports of Chinese green-technology products, and a "reliance" on China for solar panels, batteries, and electric vehicles. Yellen declared that she wants China to "face a wall of opposition."

This should ring alarm bells. Yellen seems to be keeping her fingers crossed that China will not defend its economic interests. Responding to Biden's economic attack she said that she "hopes" China won't retaliate. It is certain that they will.

China responded immediately. A statement said that "advanced economies are more interested in stirring up tension rather than promoting peace and cooperation …. If the so-called US allies blindly follow Washington's path of protectionism and conflict, their economies and consumers will face major losses."

Gao Lingyun, from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, in an interview, commented that "there is no doubt in my mind that China will take countermeasures."

The fact that there is an obvious element of coercion on the part of the USA was not missed in China. Li Yong, from the China Association of International Trade, commented that "G7 politicians are following the US out of political considerations. There is only one way for [the USA] to be able to achieve this: political coercion against the economy and capital."

Capitalist regimes say they love the "free market." This is the very opposite. The US wants to limit and crush China. It is also dragging its "partners" into an economic downward spiral.

To promote a new round of trade war and protectionism verges on economic suicide. EU countries may make statements in support of blocking Chinese products from entering the European market. They might try to make it sound a positive thing. They might go so far as to accuse China of 'unfair trading' which is a nonsense. The reality is that these economies are, in the face of a crumbling globalisation, promoting a dangerous policy of economic nationalism. The European economy as a whole is in tatters. The crisis in capitalism has become acute. The act to raise protectionist barriers is a desperate attempt to stave off the tsunami of crisis. It is at best a short-term buffer. Tariffs have never resolved capitalist crises. Protectionism has historically led Europe into war.

Protectionist policies, tariff walls and trade war harm the working class in all countries as economic downturn leads to recession and to austerity measures. The IMF, pre-empting the latest round of trade war attacks, predicted a potential loss of GDP of up to 4.7 per cent in some economies. This is where US capitalism is leading us all.

Capitalist globalisation has begun to unravel. It was a policy that sought to redress the crisis in capitalism and the tendency for profit rates to fall. It briefly held back the tide. When the crisis returned, nation-states returned to economic nationalism and protectionism. The crisis has not gone away, but China's path to socialism has seen its economic growth eclipse that of its capitalist rivals.

The anti-China protectionist campaign can only result in economic hardship and a weakening of an already stagnant global capitalist economy

For the US it is a case of economics being war by another means. There are precious few carrots and a whole lot of sticks. ✪

Photo: pexels.com (CC0)

The sham of the Ukraine 'Peace' Summit

William Briggs

The much-vaunted Ukraine Peace Summit in Switzerland came and went. The world media reminded us almost daily of the unanimity of support, of the depth of feeling and of the huge number of participant countries. We were told of Russia's intransigence and of the significance of China's refusal to attend. It was designed as a global show of force and of solidarity in support for Zelensky and the US/NATO-inspired and resourced war.

A hundred states attended. A communiqué was signed. Russia was denounced. China was criticised. But the end result revealed some splits in the global community.

The final communiqué was eventually signed by 78 countries as well as the EU. There had been talk that as many as 120 nations would participate. A significant minority not sign. No BRICS-member state was a signatory.

American President Biden was criticised by Ukrainian leader Zelensky for not attending. He had been in Europe in early June to attend the D-Day anniversary in France. He returned to Italy to attend the G7 meeting that was held between 13 - 15 June. More than a few eyebrows were raised when he failed to find time to go to Switzerland on the following day.

The whole affair was something of an anti-climax. To achieve consensus, 10 points from the 'peace plan' were whittled down to just three. These were nuclear safety, food security, and a return of prisoners of war held by Russia. No actual reference was made to the war.

Zelensky, in his opening remarks made the claim that "I believe that we will witness history being made here." The final document included a vague call for future meetings with no dates attached.

As a propaganda-fest, it might have had its moments, but has left no visible mark.

Russia was not invited. Even so, President Putin reiterated his desire to see an end to the conflict. In this, he has firm that there are non-negotiables for Russia. The four regions now regarded as being part of Russia must remain in Russian hands, and Ukraine must refrain from seeking NATO membership. The US and its coterie of supporters see this as blind aggression. Ukraine refuses to shift from its position regarding negotiations with Russia. Russia, in the Ukrainian scenario must completely withdraw from all those territories. These demands are seen in the West as being positive.

China, for its part, chose not to attend the conference. It has already proposed a path to negotiations, which has been bluntly rejected.

Beijing's *Global Times* has written that while China is not a party to the crisis, it "has been doing its utmost to promote peace talks. From the document entitled 'China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis' to the 'six-point consensus,' China's position has been consistent …. Who is creating divisions and who is bridging them?"

It is a fair question.

What once was a seemingly unbreakable chain of pro-Ukrainian, anti-Russian sentiment is looking shaky. The conference failed to secure any significant support from the global south. Many observers have made the point that the highly partisan nature of the conference was being viewed as a means to push Russia into a corner. The result was a rift between the West and non-Western nations. This, in turn, is being seen as a failure of policy for the USA and its NATO allies as the world splits into more and more irreconcilable camps.

The USA and NATO are pouring more and more weaponry into their war with Russia. Ukrainian armed forces are being given the green light to use these weapons against Russia and to strike more and more deeply into Russian territory.

The US has stated that more Patriot missiles, that are "rolling off the production line" will be directed away from existing 'customers' in favour of Ukraine. US national security spokesperson, John Kirby has made it plain that this would in no way disrupt shipments to either Israel or the Chinese island Taiwan.

Putin, speaking in Vietnam after leaving the DPRK, made it clear that he regarded arming Ukraine as a hostile act. South Korea has declared its intention to boost its arms shipments to Ukraine.

The situation grows more dangerous. Peace summits are a good idea in general, but serious attempts to resolve the war are needed, not propaganda offensives by Zelensky on behalf of his US and NATO paymasters. ✪

Divided by class: India's heat waves

Shirin Akhter,
Vijender Singh Chauhan

AS the sub-continent boils under extreme heat, Delhi touches 53°C and central India's largest city Nagpur exceeds 56°C. The heat is deadly. However, the impacts of increasingly frequent and intense heat waves in North India are differently felt by different groups, starkly highlighting the profound inequalities that exacerbate the impacts of climate disasters.

Recently in Bihar, extreme temperatures have led to numerous cases of heat exhaustion and heatstroke among students, with reports of children fainting in schools. There have also been tragic fatalities, including a high school student in Sheikhpura and several polling workers during the recent election.

Climate change and rising temperatures disproportionately affect the poor. Vulnerable communities often lack the resources to mitigate the impacts of extreme heat. Economic status is a primary determinant of an individual's vulnerability to heat waves.

Delhi's air quality has a severe impact on low-income gig workers, such as delivery drivers and couriers, who face significantly higher health risks compared with high-income counterparts. Poorer regions are often the hardest hit, suffering from both direct health impacts and economic losses due to reduced labour productivity and agricultural output.

Poor and marginalised people usually live clustered in ghettos, in inadequately ventilated homes with lack of access to electricity, water, or cooling methods. Their livelihoods often require them to work outdoors or in non-air-conditioned environments, increasing their exposure to heat-related health risks.

In contrast, wealthier individuals typically have better access to cooling technologies and can afford to stay indoors or even temporarily relocate to cooler places, reducing their risk. This disparity is reflected in the higher rates of heat-related illnesses and deaths among poorer populations, as they are more likely to face prolonged exposure to high temperatures and have limited access to healthcare.

This issue is further compounded by the urban heat island effect, whereby densely built-up urban areas experience higher temperatures than rural surroundings. The urban heat island effect intensifies the impact of heat waves on low-income communities living in densely populated areas with minimal greenery. The lack of vegetation and the high concentration of heat-absorbing materials like concrete and asphalt contribute to significantly higher temperatures in these areas. Residents, already constrained by economic limitations, face additional health risks due to the amplified heat.

About 85 per cent of India's workforce is informally employed, lacking formal labour protections, access to healthcare, or social security. These workers often endure extreme working conditions without adequate safety measures, significantly increasing their vulnerability to heat-related health problems. The informal nature of their employment means they cannot afford to take breaks or seek medical care.

Occupational exposure further complicates vulnerability for certain groups of workers such as construction and agriculture workers, whose work involve significant outdoor labour and prolonged exposure to high temperatures. These workers, predominantly from marginalised communities, lack protective measures and adequate rest periods, heightening their risk of heat stress and related health issues. Socio-economic status and employment conditions thus intersect to amplify climate disaster impacts.

Disparity in healthcare access exacerbates immediate heat wave effects and contributes to long-term health inequities, adversely impacting the income-generating capabilities of marginalised groups over the long term.

Limited healthcare access exacerbates the health impacts of heat waves on marginalised communities, suggesting the need for targeted healthcare investments. Groups like the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minorities, women, the elderly, and other low-income groups often have limited access to medical facilities and services. This delay in treatment for heat-related illnesses can lead to severe health outcomes.

According to the International Labour Organisation, the informal sector's lack of social protection and rights at work further exacerbates these issues.

The disparity also affects education; students in publicly funded institutions suffer because their schools often lack the infrastructure necessary to provide a viable learning environment during extreme heat. Without adequate air conditioning and proper ventilation, classrooms become unbearably hot, impeding students' ability to concentrate and absorb information. This situation disproportionately affects students from lower socio-economic backgrounds who rely on public educational facilities.

Prolonged exposure to high temperatures is not just a matter of discomfort; it can lead to severe health issues such as heat stress, increasing absenteeism and disrupting learning. Heat waves particularly impair cognitive function, which reduces students' academic performance. The lack of cooling facilities in publicly funded institutions means that during heat waves, students are more likely to miss school, further widening the educational gap between different socio-economic groups.

As temperatures soar, district administrations, and the India Meteorological Department issue safety warnings. These warnings show the inequalities we live with; for instance, the directives ask people to avoid working outside of 12:00 to 3:00 PM, wear light-coloured, loose, and cotton clothes, drink water regularly and keep hydrated with homemade beverages, contact a doctor immediately when feeling unwell and to keep the house cool using curtains and shutters. Almost none of these measures can be seamlessly adopted by poor, working class people.

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

Heat waves: a summary

Saudi Arabia: Over 51 degrees. 530 participants in the Hajj have died.

New Delhi: 31 consecutive days at or above 40 degrees. 110 deaths, 40 thousand suspected heat stroke cases.

USA: 100 million people under extreme heat advisories.

Europe: Of the 30 most severe heat waves on the continent, 23 were after the year 2000, with five in the last three years. About 62 thousand people died from heat-related causes in the heatwaves of 2023.

Australia: It's winter here. Tanya Plibersek has given Santos approval to drill 116 new coal seam gas wells in Queensland. Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan has approved a gas extraction project near the Twelve Apostles tourist site.

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Editorial Office
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Email: guardian@cpa.org.au
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Half the Sky

'Used, misused, and overused'

Eileen Whitehead

The case that Brittany Higgins brought against Bruce Lehrmann exposed the inadequacy of our legal system when it comes to giving women a 'fair go' in the case of rape accusations. Even before the trial, her treatment at the hands of the police was reported as 'intimidating,' with five male police officers surrounding and questioning her during a second police interview. The overall impression of the way she was handled shows a culture of sexism and misogyny, not only in the police department but in Australian politics as well.

The attitude of Higgins' employers at the time of the incident showed a focus on how things would look for them, with Higgins' health and safety obviously not a high priority. Her former employer called her a "lying cow," and then-Prime Minister Scott Morrison's office tried to smear her partner.

In the subsequent investigation into police inaction regarding rape cases and subsequent under-charging of alleged sexual offenders, the Sexual Assault Prevention and Review steering committee showed that the proportion of alleged sexual offences which then proceeded to charge in the ACT was 7 per cent in 2021. It was 44 per cent in 2015.

Another example of legal paraphernalia designed to protect those in power are Non-Disclosure Agreements, whereby women survivors of sexual assault are unable to talk publicly about their experience. This was brought to global attention in the Harvey Weinstein case. In Australia, the Respect@Work NDA guidelines recommended that confidentiality clauses should assist the legal profession to meet the needs of *all* parties in line with a victim-centric approach. However recent research has found that "despite the Respect@Work NDA Guidelines, NDAs are continuing to be used, misused – and overused."

Of course, this leads to a bigger question of how do we trust the integrity of politicians, ALP or LNP, to do the right thing to stop the overuse of NDAs to silence women victim survivors? Our major parties have no problem misusing NDAs and other confidentiality agreements to conduct the business of parliament in secrecy. This leads on to the bigger issue of transparency and accountability, which the ALP claims to be keen on. Fortunately, former Senator Rex Patrick is currently on a transparency crusade.

To return to what also affects women in courts of law and any chance they may have of a fair hearing, another factor is the length of time it has taken for women to be eligible to serve on juries. Up until the last quarter of the 20th century, most female plaintiffs – many of whom were victims of sexual assault or domestic violence – and female defendants charged with serious crimes, were judged by all-male juries. This is certainly worth a mention as it exposes both women's unequal citizenship status and the hidden prejudices that have pervaded the law throughout the 20th century. I won't even mention the chances of an Aboriginal woman being accepted for jury service.

A visit from Premier Li Qiang
Where our real national interest lies

William Briggs

The visit of Chinese Premier Li Qiang to Australia has revealed much about this country and how it views its relationship with China. Two distinct and opposing versions of Australia are on view. It is a schizophrenic relationship based on mutually exclusive 'needs.' On one hand is the need to maintain a strong trading relationship. On the other is the need to show unwavering support for the USA in its efforts to maintain economic and political hegemony.

Australia needs to trade and export, and has a desperate need to avoid a collapse of an already flatlining economy. China remains Australia's most important trading partner. The Australian economy is barely registering a pulse. It grew by just 1.1 per cent in the last 12 months, and in the last quarter that figure was 0.1 per cent.

Trade with China represents roughly 4.5 per cent of Australia's total disposable per capita income, roughly $2,500 per household. Australian trade with China can also be counted in jobs. That relationship means 569,000 jobs, or 4.2 per cent of total employment.

Two-way trade sits at $326.9 billion a year. Australia needs China far more than China needs Australia, but the relationship is mutually beneficial.

The visit of Premier Li was heralded by some as a possible reawakening of a positive relationship after the trade war days of the last few years. Chinese media has certainly seen it that way.

Anthony Albanese was quick to point out the positive nature of the newly emerging relationship. He's proud of "stabilising" Australia's relationship with China, and talked about restoring "high-level dialogue and engagement ... through our patient, calibrated and deliberate approach." Dialogue, says Albanese, allows us to "pursue the national interest" in important areas such as trade, education, and climate change. Albanese is understandably keen to stress that his approach to China is more mature than the Morrison government's – not a high bar to clear. He also stressed that his approach is paying off for trade, saying that his government's "steady engagement" has lead to "the removal of almost all trade impediments on Australian exports to China." Albanese added that "there is still more work to do."

At the same time, there were clouds in the air. Behind the smiles and the photo opportunities were the political demands, largely to meet the needs of our American ally. The Australian government seemed obliged to raise alleged human rights issues, Taiwan, and the 'right' of Australian naval vessels to sail, unimpeded, in disputed waters. That nagging phrase 'national interest' kept bobbing up. It is a rather ambiguous expression. It is certainly in the interest of both countries to trade freely. China might say, and would be right to say that it is protecting its interests in maintaining a strong military deterrence against potential threat from the US and its allies, including Australia.

WIN-WIN?

Other demands rise to the surface. Demands that are opposed to those of free and fair trade, of economic interest and of mutual advantage. Australia sits poised to develop stronger economic and diplomatic relations with China. It could become what the Chinese repeatedly call a 'win-win' situation, and yet the siren call to defend the interests of the United States rings out.

Defending the USA's "interests" instead of our own means impoverishing the country. It means doubling the outlay on the military to $100 billion a year. It means developing an offensive military strategy that is based on 'projecting force' and has little to do with 'defence' of the country. Still the government of the day, be it ALP or Coalition blows dust into the faces of the people by talking up the 'threat' of an 'assertive' China while simultaneously talking up the benefits of a good and improved trading relationship with China.

OBSESSION

The anti-China media and pro-US analysts who work so diligently to form public opinion have no time for doubts, or shades of grey. They hold only one simple, and wrong belief: what's good for US global power is good for Australia. For them, there is only one line and one way forward. They are prepared to destroy the economy, shatter the futures of Australians, impoverish millions, on the altar of anti-China, pro-imperialist, pro-US politics.

Chief among those who have denounced any developments of better relations with China is the right-wing think tank and advisor to government, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI). A recent article by Michael Pezzullo, disgraced former Defence Deputy Secretary and lead author of the 2009 Defence White Paper, falls back on old arguments.

Pezzullo speaks of trade "coercion" that was "political warfare, where trade was used as a weapon to attack our sovereignty." He accuses China of using " political warfare," and seeking to "attack political and social fault lines and undermin[e] national resolve, setting the conditions for eventual subjugation to Chinese interests." He argues that Australia runs a the risk of dealing with an "imagined" China rather than facing up to what he ludicrously describes as its 'real' face, nature, and objectives.

Pezzullo uses Rush Doshi and his *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order*, as his guide. This virulent anti-China hawk is a key figure in the US Council on Foreign Relations which publishes the influential *Foreign Affairs* magazine. *Foreign Affairs* has the ear of the Pentagon.

Journalist and professional warmonger Peter Hartcher, in *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* was quick to attack the meeting between Albanese and Li. Hartcher described China as "a malign bully," and sneered at Premier Li Qiang's desire to "shelve our differences."

Australia has differences with every country. The point of relations with other countries, especially for Australia, which depends on trade, is to work around differences, reach some common ground and achieve some common good.

Albanese will continue a show of 'mending bridges' while building military ties with the US, whose express intention is to stop the rise of China. Pezzullo, Hartcher, Albanese, all talk of promoting the national interest. Our national interest is *not* the same as that of the United States. That interest is not advanced by blindly following the dictates of the United States. The real national interest of Australia is best served by promoting peace, economic independence, and economic policies that would increase national prosperity and therefore improve the well-being of the people. ✪

Chinatown Melbourne. Photo: Travis – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

Pezzullo: a reminder

P Farmer

Mike Pezzullo is being treated as some sort of oracle by people who only want to promote war with China. But what's his claim to fame?

Pezzullo was Home Affairs Secretary under the last Coalition government, where his boss was one Peter Dutton, now opposition leader. If Pezzullo sees China as a "bully," it might be a case of projection. An independent inquiry into his time at the top of the heap found that he used his power to seek a benefit for himself. He was also found to have breached the Australian Public Service code of conduct at least 14 times. While not an elected politician, Pezzullo tried to manipulate government ministers, and censor journalists. He also shared confidential documents when it suited him.

Crikey's Bernard Keane described Pezzullo as "an object lesson for anyone tempted to trust national security bureaucrats." Pezzullo was allegedly behind the Australian Federal Police raids on a journalist's house, and the ABC's Sydney offices. When he didn't like Independent Senator Rex Patrick's criticism of the raids, he telephoned the Senator in a way Patrick found "menacing."

The Albanese government sacked Mike Pezzullo after the independent inquiry, but he's still happy to offer opinions on Australia-China relations. We'll look elsewhere for advice on protecting democracy and freedom thanks, Mike.

Communist Party of Australia

www.cpa.org.au cpa@cpa.org.au

Head Office (Sydney)
74 Buckingham St,
Surry Hills, NSW 2010
phone: 02 9699 8844
email: info@cpa.org.au

General Secretary
Andrew Irving
andrew@cpa.org.au

Party President
Vinnie Molina
president@cpa.org.au

Media guardian@cpa.org.au
amr@cpa.org.au

Canberra	act@cpa.org.au PO Box 35 Dickson ACT 2602
Darwin	Vinnie Molina darwin@cpa.org.au 0419 812 872
Melbourne	Andrew Irving cpavic@cpa.org.au Box 3 Trades Hall, Lygon St, Carlton Sth, Vic 3053
NSW State Comm	Christian Goopy nsw@cpa.org.au 02 9699 8844 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010
Perth	Elly Hulm perth@cpa.org.au 0421 113 343 PO Box 98, North Perth, WA 6906
Qld State Comm	0499 476 540 qld@cpa.org.au
SA State Comm	sa@cpa.org.au 0411 805 356 PO Box 56, Royal Park, SA 5014
Tasmania	Andrew Irving tas@cpa.org.au 03 9639 1550