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A calculated step to war

William Briggs

The 940 kilogram 'bunker-buster' bombs that killed Hezbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah have been applauded by US leaders and celebrated by Netanyahu. The murder has been called an 'assassination.' Israel's spy-agency Mossad has a long history of assassinations. This was not just a single murder. While the massive bombs were designed to kill Nasrallah, they were also meant to terrorise a population.

The US leadership maintain the lie that they had no prior knowledge of the Israeli action. However, the swift responses from senior officials were carefully rehearsed. US Secretary of Defence, Lloyd Austin, after a discussion with his Israeli counterpart, stressed yet again that Israel had a "right to defend itself". He also warned that the USA "is committed to deterring Iran and Iranian-backed partners and proxies from taking advantage of the situation or expanding the conflict."

The response from Israel's sponsor and puppeteer in Washington has been predictable. Biden described the killing as "justice."

White House national security adviser, John Kirby once more pledged American support for Israel and effectively goaded Iran, saying "we'll watch the rhetoric coming out of Iran and we'll watch what they do. We have capability to defend our troops and our facilities as well as Israel itself if it comes to that ... Our support for Israel's security remains ironclad and that's not going to change."

What becomes clear is that Israel, acting on behalf of its American ally, is doing all it can to provoke a wider conflict and one that either humiliates Iran or draws it into war with Israel and, by implication with the United States.

Kirby, in an attempt to deflect from this reality, brought his remarks back to what is being presented as a positive act of state-sponsored terrorism in killing Nasrallah. He called Nasrallah " a known terrorist with American and Israeli blood on his hands," adding that "we certainly mourn the loss of any civilian life." Seriously?

Kirby refused to criticise Israel's use of such devastating materiel and that the massive bomb used was made-in-the-USA. On the contrary, he cynically assured reporters that" having decimated the command structure of Hezbollah certainly works to Israeli's advantage and is good for the region and good for the world."

This act that is so "good for the world" has resulted in a wholesale bombing campaign against Lebanon which has already claimed 1,000 deaths and a million people being driven from their homes. Israel says that it will continue until its objectives have been met.

People in the Middle East don't see the murder and resulting military assault as "good for the region." Hassan Nasrallah's murder has resulted in waves of outrage. Days of mourning were declared in Lebanon, Iraq and Iran. Israel is no stranger to launching acts of terror against individual figures or leadership groups. The people of the region have never bowed to terror and they will not now.

Israel's stated objective is to destroy Hezbollah, as it has stated that it will destroy Hamas. The lunacy of such a claim is obvious. Israel is seeking to destroy resistance by making those who resist more determined. It promotes a cycle of hatred. That seems to be the desired outcome for Israel. The USA has a bigger and more sinister objective. It is to draw Iran into war and secure the entire region for US imperialism.

Nasrallah's murder was not simply an act of Israel but part of a bigger and more dangerous strategy.

End Israel's war

CPA Statement

The Communist Party of Australia condemns Israel's genocidal war against the Palestinian people. For 76 years Israel has committed crimes against humanity and the world has witnessed 12 months of genocide against the people of Gaza. This must stop now!

We demand an immediate end to Israel's aggression and crimes and call for the complete withdrawal of all Israeli military forces from Gaza and the West Bank.

We call:

- The United Nations to insist upon the implementation of its resolutions which require Israel to withdraw from Lebanon, the Syrian Golan Heights and all Palestinian land illegally occupied during the 1967 Israeli war.
- Israel to dismantle all settlements constructed on occupied territories.
- The Australian government to withdraw its support of Israel's aggression and to support intervention by the United Nations to bring about a peaceful settlement incorporating the above measures.

We call upon Australians to rally in defence of the Palestinian people who are in the frontline of the struggle for an independent homeland in the face of the plans of the Israeli and US governments to embroil the whole Middle East in war. Such a war could once again lead to a world war with enormous destruction and loss of life.

For many years, Israel has been systematically seizing Palestinian land, establishing settlements and driving Palestinian people into exile and refugee camps. The aim of the Zionist leaders of Israel is to create a 'Greater Israel' and to impose their domination on neighbouring Arab countries.

This is behind Israel's current war drive, now also bombing Lebanon and Yemen, killing thousands of people and displacing a million people.

Israel has been financed, armed, and politically supported from the time of its foundation by successive US, and British administrations. The present war being waged against the Palestinian people is fully supported by the Biden administration which has facilitated and given diplomatic cover to the aim of dominating the whole of the Middle East, an aim shared by the Israeli, US and British governments, and supported by the Albanese government.

We call on the Albanese government to cut diplomatic and military ties with Zionist Israel and to expel the Israeli ambassador to Australia.

The CPA fully supports the right of the Palestinian people to establish their own independent state. The Palestinian State must incorporate the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

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Guardian

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Duopoly, collusion and 'competition'

It's official, but not surprising: our two biggest supermarkets Coles and Woolworths have been deceiving customers through fake 'sales.' It's a pretty simple trick; you lift prices for a few months, then lower them to a bit over where they started, and hey presto, you get to call it a sale and put up big red 'sale' signs, while making a fat profit. An associated benefit is that it makes the competition (IGA and Aldi) look more expensive, because they don't have the big red 'sale' signs.

Unions described this about a year ago, along with other pricing tricks, as part of an anti-gouging campaign, but now it's been confirmed by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC). The ACCC has monitored this practice with extreme precision. They've done a report. Prime Minister Albanese has said he might do something about it by changing the Grocery Code of Conduct. Some fines are expected, probably nothing 'Colesworth' can't afford.

Of course, that's not all the duopoly has been up to. There's also collusion in the form of prices which alternate, almost as though they're colluding instead of competing. First Coke is cheaper at Coles, then it's cheaper at Woolies, then back to Coles again, always by very small margins.

To quote The Australia Institute, "rather than setting prices due to demand, or to compete against each other, it appears Coles and Woolworths often take turns offering specials." It's collusion.

None of this comes as a shock to communists. Marx and Lenin described very clearly how capitalist competition leads to monopoly. The ACCC might have 'competition' in its name, but we know that 'competition' is not a magic spell. It's a temporary state of affairs on the way to monopoly. That's why there are so many different brands owned by the same conglomerate. The anti-competitive behaviour of 'Colesworth' isn't a bug of the capitalist system, it's a feature.

Still Coles and Woolies have been caught out with their rigged 'sales,' so all good, right?

Wrong. Corporate wrongdoing isn't punished much in this country, if at all. That's why the CFMEU gets placed into receivership over untested allegations, while proven incidents of crime by the big banks just get fines that they can easily afford. No administration, nobody loses their job.

More importantly, regardless of how much or how little punishment this latest scandal causes, no amount of pro-competition behaviour by the government and the ACCC will change the facts of life in Australia. The conditions that lead to the duopoly and its fake sales and apparent collusion are still there. Big corporations will always be organised for the interests of capital – making big returns. Competition, customers and the ACCC are just temporary obstacles.

What we need is socialism, and a system where working people are the owners, not just suckers, a system in which the big corporation are owned and run by the people. That's what would really fix 'Colesworth', but we're not going to get it just by wishing for it. Get into your union, support the Party and let's work towards a real bargain.

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'Build to rent' scheme demolishes communities

Renters' union slams government scheme

While the government's *Build To Rent* bill proposes to put more money in the hands of speculative housing investors and building conglomerates, governments across the country continue their plans to tear down and sell off public housing.

Iconic public infrastructure that has stood for generations – like the Waterloo Estate in Sydney, once considered such an achievement that in 1977, Queen Elizabeth II attended the opening ceremony – will soon be demolished and sold off to profit-driven developers.

However, similarly aged buildings in and around Sydney's CBD – such as the famed MLC Centre, or the now luxury ex-state owned Sirius Apartments – have mysteriously escaped demolition, instead receiving complete refurbishments amounting to hundreds of millions.

Now not only will these brutal "redevelopments" displace thousands of people from what should be rent-controlled homes, they will also transfer all assets and authority over to the malevolent not-for-profit sector.

While the comments from federal LNP members denouncing the Build To Rent bill as "a thinly veiled attempt to corporatise the Australian housing market" may seem positive for renters, they are simply falling in line with conservative tradition of locking Australians into home ownership, turning every family into "little capitalists" in order to smash the labour movement. We won't be surprised when the LNP calls to scrap subsidised rentals all together.

The Renters And Housing Union (RAHU) demands that the federal government legislate:

- Affordable housing be based on income rather than market, where rent can not be more than 30 per cent of income.
- No grounds evictions be abolished in every state and territory.
- Rent increases be frozen for 24 months.
- Future rent increases be capped to the increase in minimum wage.
- Public housing be built until the housing waiting list is empty.

According to Flora Smith – RAHU member, and long time renter:

"The private market has demonstrated again and again that it will not solve the housing crisis. Private equity is determined to continually chase profits, and the market is rife with short stay rentals, and out-of-reach luxury apartments geared towards speculation. In this country housing is treated as an investment, instead of a human right. Every day tens of thousands of people experience housing insecurity, because the Albanese government is gambling with our future."

Renters and Housing Union

'Weird' Dutton plays with our future

Despite Peter Dutton's grand claims, the Coalition has failed to produce any new numbers to back their nuclear obsession. Meanwhile, a new report from the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) reveals the true cost of nuclear: an average increase of $665 per year on household electricity bills.

Nuclear power is slow, costly, and dangerous, while clean energy solutions, like wind and solar backed by storage, are already powering Australia today

Climate Council CEO Amanda McKenzie said: "Peter Dutton's weird nuclear obsession is a distraction from the fact that he wants to delay building new power for a generation. A child riding their bike to primary school today will be driving to work by the time even one nuclear reactor is producing electricity.

"Delaying building new energy means more dangerous climate pollution from coal and gas. This will hit our kids hard, fuelling worse floods, fires, and heatwaves.

"Delaying means our ageing energy system failing without investment and support."

Greg Bourne, Climate Councillor said: "Peter Dutton's nuclear obsession doesn't pass the pub test and would meet just a fraction of Australia's energy needs by 2050. The cost blowouts, delays, and energy shortages nuclear power would cause are staggering. Renewables are faster, cheaper, and cleaner.

"While nuclear sits at the starting blocks for another decade or more, renewable energy is surging ahead, already providing 40 per cent of the electricity in our main national grid and set to reach over 96 per cent by the time Dutton's first reactors might be operational. Dutton and his colleagues will be long retired before a single nuclear plant is built in Australia, whereas the renewable solutions we need are ready today.

"Dutton's refusal to provide any analysis, costs or modelling proves what we already know – nuclear is a high-risk, low-reward scheme. Nuclear power will not bring down power bills or solve Australia's energy challenges. This obsession will only stall the progress we desperately need to safeguard our planet and our kids' futures."

Climate Council

(*Guardian* View: this masthead has previously outlined another problem with Dutton's nuclear 'plan' – it's a distraction from the harm Labor governments, State and Federal are doing by opening new fossil fuel projects.)

Melbourne comrades enjoyed a curry afternoon and AFL Grand Final day, on September 28.

Housing: speculators clean up

Anna Pha

The controversy around Labor's 'Help to Buy' Bill (see explainer, page 5) has brought to the fore the question of capital tax gains concessions and negative gearing. These two tax rorts, overwhelmingly accessed by the wealthy, are not only driving up the price of housing and rent, but are contributing to the massive accumulation of wealth by a small minority of investors.

At the same time housing is a major contributor to the cost of living crisis.

The housing crisis and the question of taxation reform are interconnected.

The capital gains tax (CGT) discount and negative gearing are used by property speculators to line their pockets with billions of dollars. They bid up the price of housing at auctions knowing there are huge rewards to be reaped.

The government claims that its Help to Buy Bill will assist low to middle income earners to purchase new or existing homes. It is a drop in the ocean, with 10,000 homes a year across Australia over 4 years, hardly more than a token gesture.

As with previous Liberal and Labor government schemes, Labor's focus is on home ownership, not the rental crisis facing millions of Australians or the perverse taxation system that is a major contributor to the rising cost of housing. Lack of supply is also a problem which the government is not taking serious measures to address. They're leaving it to the profit-driven private sector, the major cause of the problem.

Over the next 10 years the federal government will hand out an estimated $176 billion through tax minimisation by property investors through negative gearing and the CGT discount, which overwhelmingly flows to the wealthy. This is money that would be better spent on public housing. These investors drive up the price of housing and shut genuine home buyers out of the market.

Homes have become commodities for profit-churning, not houses for living in. These tax concessions are nothing more than tax minimisation schemes.

OPPOSITION

Both the Greens and Coalition voted against the Bill but for very different reasons.

The Coalition supports the private sector. It rejects even the minimum of government assistance to home buyers or renters but is always willing to hand over taxpayers' money to for-profit investors.

The Greens, on the other hand, seek to end the tax rorts associated with housing, and are calling for rental controls and government-built public housing.

Greens Senator Max Chandler-Mather said, "the problem with our housing market is we have a tax system that basically continues to force house prices up, often far in excess of wages."

Since 2000 the price of housing has risen at more than twice the rate of wages.

Mather continued, "When you're saving up for a deposit and house prices are increasing faster than you can even save up for a deposit that ... is one of the most demoralising things you can possibly experience."

STARK REALITY

Greens Senator Mehreen Faruqi in her second reading speech opposing the Bill pointed to the stark reality of the housing crisis:

- Rents have skyrocketed 53 per cent since 2020
- Housing prices have increased 46 per cent since 2020
- The shortage of public and social housing is projected to increase from an already unacceptable high of 750,000 homes
- The Labor government has committed zero dollars of new ongoing direct spending on public housing.

Labor has committed $500 million a year for social (not public) housing through the Housing Australia Future Fund.

Millions of renters are under significant and massive financial stress at risk of homelessness. Millions of home buyers are at risk of homelessness following 13 successive interest rate rises from 0.1 in the official rate to 4.35 per cent between May 2022 and November 2023.

That means interest rates are 43 times higher than they were in 2022. The average mortgage repayment has increased by $1,700 per month.

Consequently, the number of working poor is rising rapidly. Some of them are working 2 or 3 jobs.

As interest rates rose, investors increased rents. Since Labor came to office, rents have soared by 30 per cent.

Photo: pexels.com (CC0)

There is NO affordable rental accommodation for someone on Youth Allowance or JobSeeker. Very little rental accommodation is affordable for pensioners.

Yet Labor still refuses to budge when it comes to standing up to its wealthy mates/political donors by ending the tax rorts.

The other key question is lack of supply. This can only be addressed by a massive construction program of public housing by all three levels of government.

The whole system needs an overhaul, with a combination of measures including tax reform, public housing and rental controls.

Housing is a fundamental human right. Australia has the wealth and capacity to eliminate homelessness. It is a question of political and ideological priorities.

Tax rorts explainer

CGT

Put simply a capital gains tax (CGT) is paid on the increase in the value of property (or other assets) since it was purchased. It is only applied at the point of sale (or the signing of a contract of sale) and is taxed as if it were income at the appropriate marginal rate. The family home is exempt if lived in for 12 months or more.

It is treated as part of your income and taxed accordingly.

The Hawke Labor government introduced a CGT in 1985. Prior to that, there was no tax on capital gains in Australia.

In 1999, the Howard Coalition government introduced a 50 per cent discount on the CGT, meaning that only half of the increase in value of assets was taxed. This tax concession served as a magnet for property investors and developers.

Between June 1989 and June 2000, the average annual growth of both average household disposable income and average dwelling prices was 4.4 per cent. Since June 2000, following the CGT discount, household incomes rose on average 6.8 per cent, compared to average dwelling prices soaring an average 15.9 per cent.

These concessions for property owners serve as tax minimisation opportunities for investors, making some wealthy individuals even wealthier at the expense of those who are struggling to buy or rent a home.

NEGATIVE GEARING

A property investment is negatively geared if the net rental income received is less than the interest on a mortgage. The loss is then offset against other taxable income, such as salaries, or income on shares, thus reducing the amount of income tax payable. At the same time the value of the property (investment) increases over time.

Negative gearing was first introduced in Australia during the 1930s as a response to housing shortages and the need to encourage investment in rental properties.

Investors were attracted to the idea of purchasing property, incurring rental losses, and using those losses to reduce their overall taxable income. This created a situation where investors were willing to pay more for properties thus driving up property prices and shutting genuine homebuyers out of the market.

The Hawke Labor government abolished negative gearing on rental properties in 1985, but under pressure from investors reinstated it in 1987.

Capital gains and negative gearing are unearnt income. The idea of not taxing them or applying a discounted tax rate is obscene. Workers sweat and toil for their meagre wages which are taxed with no discounts.

These tax concessions are incentives for investors, wealthy individuals and corporates to profit at the expense of those who are struggling to buy or rent, a home as they drive up the cost of housing.

They should be phased out.

RTBU support for CFMEU against Labor's attacks

The Rail, Tram and Bus Union Retired Members Association (Queensland Branch) statement

[The Branch] is deeply concerned by the unprecedented actions taken by our federal government against the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union, and in particular the political extra-judicial process which has effectively found the CFMEU 'guilty' of criminal activity prior to any police investigation or court process and which has reversed the onus of proof against the union. We believe that these actions are un-Australian.

Background: Sensationalised media allegations that outlaw motorcycle gangs had infiltrated the CFMEU's branches, with bikies allegedly appointed as delegates on major projects, amid wider claims of bullying, intimidation and corrupt conduct.

The federal government has embraced this targeted attack on construction workers, undermining the CFMEU's rights, and the principles of procedural fairness. This action by the federal government is unprecedented and without foundation. The government's actions smack of a political knee-jerk reaction.

The media have sensationalised these issues, but they are not a court, and until allegations have been tested by the legal system, the CFMEU and its members are entitled to fair process including the presumption of innocence.

We've all witnessed shocking revelations from Royal Commissions into misconduct in the banking and finance sectors, the Robodebt scandal, and the aged care industry. Despite damning evidence, no one was fired, no company was forced into administration, not a single person faced gaol time! Meanwhile, the CFMEU, one of Australia's most powerful unions, is being forced into administration over unproven rumours and allegations. This hypocrisy and double standard is unbelievable!

While the allegations put by the media are concerning, they have been taken seriously by the CFMEU which has launched an independent investigation, commissioned a governance review and removed or stood down individuals from the union pending the outcome of the investigation. It is important to bear in mind that these allegations remain exactly that – allegations – completely untested in the legal system.

While corruption, criminality, and abuse are intolerable within the union movement and should be exposed and rooted out, militancy and strong bargaining positions are nothing to be ashamed of, and should be acknowledged as a legitimate function of unions.

We demand that the police expedite the investigation of these sensationalised allegations made by media organisations against the CFMEU, and if any criminality is uncovered, the individuals concerned be charged and brought before a court.

We demand that once charges are laid, or if no criminality is found, the administration be ended and the CFMEU be returned to its members forthwith.

We demand that once the police, financial and other reviews are completed, that the administration be ended and the CFMEU be returned to its members forthwith.

We demand that the legislated three year term of administration be repealed, and that administrators be removed as soon as the CFMEU and its branches are cleared.

Australia Cuba Friendship Society Perth participated in the international campaign Bridges of Love on Sunday 29th September 2024 at Elizabeth Quay, Perth, Western Australia, with key demands to end the blockade on Cuba, the return of Guantanamo Bay to the Cuban people, and the removal of Cuba from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism.

Classes cancelled as union members launch national strike action

Classes have been cancelled for hundreds of students at SAE University College campuses across Australia, with staff launching strike action.

National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) members at SAE University College walked off the job as their push for reasonable workloads and a fair pay rise escalates.

Almost all classes in Perth during the five-hour strike have been affected, with NTEU members at the Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, and Byron Bay campuses also taking industrial action.

Staff will also ramp up work bans, including an indefinite stop to using online systems to mark attendance and a week-long refusal to use internal communications platform Slack.

In the lead up to the strike action, SAE's senior management team sent misleading communications to students that backfired and resulted in an outpouring of support for the teachers.

SAE is offering staff a pay rise just 1.1 per cent above the minimum legal amount they must be paid under the award.

It has represented to staff that the pay rise is 2.5 per cent, by misleadingly counting award-mandated leave loading.

The pay offer was unanimously rejected by NTEU members earlier in September.

Management has also refused to budge on maximum class sizes and teaching caps designed to reduce out-of-control workloads.

NTEU National President Dr Alison Barnes said:

"This is the second time in less than three months staff have been left with no choice other than to vote to go on strike.

"SAE staff are incredibly passionate about students' outcomes, which are at risk without meaningful progress on reasonable working conditions and a fair pay rise.

"SAE management's conduct has been nothing short of insulting. They unilaterally cancelled bargaining meetings before pulling out of negotiations altogether, and threatened to put their terrible pay offer to a vote without the union's approval.

"Staff deserve a pay rise that helps them keep up with the spiralling cost of living, but SAE is offering just a fraction above the legal minimum award rate.

"SAE management could avoid this strike action and any disruptions to classes by ending its refusal to budge on reasonable workloads and a fair pay rise."

One SAE student said:"The facilitators, support and service staff at SAE put in tremendous amounts of time and care to make students' study-life balance as easy as they possibly can. The fact that they need to fight for better workloads and appropriate pay is appalling, and the student body is universally disappointed that industrial action needs to happen in order for changes to be implemented."

National Tertiary Education Union

The nights are (still) made for love

In the 1940s the Waterside Workers' Federation campaigned against the dreaded 24-hour shifts. During the campaign, the legendary wharfie and communist Stan Moran famously declared "the nights were made for love."

2024, and in Port Kembla this week Qube refused to discuss fundamental conditions around safety, fatigue and rostering unless wharfies dropped some of these safety related claims and withdrew their wages claims entirely.

The response of workers was to ban night shifts for 14 days.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"China continues to behave aggressively"

(US President Biden at the QUAD meeting 24 September)

Bombs and missiles used by the USA on other countries in the last 20 years: 337,000
Bombs and missiles used by China on other countries in the last 20 years: Zero

Dingo bytes

United Nations secretary-general Antonio Guterres has vented his frustration at the security council's failure to end wars in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, and the Middle East. Addressing the 15-member council last week, he said: "Peace demands action. And peace demands leadership.

"Instead, we're seeing deepening geopolitical divisions and mistrust."

He highlighted that, amid repeated violations of the UN charter and international law, conflicts have been multiplying and becoming more deadly, with civilians paying the highest price.

The council has been blocked from taking any action on Gaza because the United States has repeatedly wielded its veto. The US is also a party to the conflict through its provision of around 80 per cent of the weapons used by Israel in its war on the Palestinians.

A new report – *A decade of inequality: How Australian governments have funded private schools above public schools since 2013*, shows that inequity in school funding has increased significantly over a decade, and that more than half of private schools now receive more combined Commonwealth and State government funding than public schools of very similar size, location and with similar student needs.

The report finds that:

In 2013, there were a total of 1,146 private schools (45 per cent of all private schools) receiving more combined Commonwealth and State Government funding per student than comparable public schools

By 2022, this had increased to 1,550 private schools (56.3 per cent of all private schools)

Private schools where students come from households with above average levels of social/educational advantage showed the most growth in being funded above similar public schools – from 856 to 1,197 between 2013 and 2022, an increase of 39.8 per cent over the decade

The funding gaps between comparable schools are as large as $7,282 per student.

The Australian Education Union warns that new agreements that will determine school funding for the next decade are being negotiated between the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments right now.

The AEU says that to finally make the promise of a "better and fairer education system" a reality, the Albanese government must keep its commitment to get every school to 100 per cent of SRS by replacing the 20 per cent cap on Commonwealth SRS contributions to public schools with a 25 per cent floor followed by ensuring that the new funding agreements hold State and Territory Governments to their commitments.

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: WA Labor. Australia's Kimberley region has some of the largest, intact natural landscapes left in the world. It has globally significant wetlands, free-flowing river systems, and pristine oceans. It provides refuge for threatened wildlife that has disappeared from most of Australia. In response to the 2018 fracking inquiry, the McGowan Labor government promised Traditional Owners the right to veto fracking production projects on their country. At least four Traditional Owner groups in the Kimberley oppose fracking, but the Labor government is yet to respect the government's commitment and enshrine the veto right.

As Mangala Martu Traditional Custodian Nuriah Jadai says: "We are a very spiritual people and we've been here a very long time, thousands of years, and we know how to look after the country, we know how to look after the animals and the plants, and the water.

"We stand for a frack free Kimberley and a frack free Australia … our voice is not going to stop … let's tell them to frack off and leave this Kimberley alone!"

Australian capitalist crisis

The working people pay the price

William Briggs

A quiet desperation is gripping Australia's bourgeois economists and political leaders. The economy, virtually flatlining, is about to be hit with the effects of a potentially destructive and long-term fall in the price of iron ore. Not only has the price dropped, but exports have collapsed. The price for iron ore has tumbled to just $133 a tonne, a fall of 20 per cent since May. The Chinese market has contracted and the demand for Australian ore has dropped.

Shipments from Port Hedland have fallen by more than 20 per cent. The bulk of the ore sold is normally destined for China. Iron ore and the Chinese economy have been keeping Australia afloat for decades. Australia survived the GFC of 2008 almost entirely because of China's boom economy. Last year, iron ore injected $136 billion into the Australian economy.

China's economy, while not at the levels of the last few years, remains set to grow by about five per cent this year, making it the most resilient and stable economy in the world. That is of little comfort to Australian economists, government officials or capital. The unpalatable truth for Australia is that China is cutting imports.

If the rivers of Chinese gold begin to dry up, it will mean a massive shortfall in tax revenue. The loss of revenue will, according to many analysts mean a rise in taxes and a cut to services. It will not affect the burgeoning military budget. Those who will pay the price will be the poor, the working class, and the struggling.

There have been desperate attempts to increase exports to other markets, but none of these can come close to compensating for the cuts in exports to China. Even with a 'slowdown' in the Chinese economy, it still produces more than half of the world's steel. The second biggest user of iron ore is India which has huge reserves so does not need to buy from Australia.

Another iron-ore crisis is on the horizon in the form of what is being described as a 'mega-mine' in Guinea. There is already a global surplus of iron ore. The price will continue to fall.

The situation facing people in Australia is already grim. The economy is in recession in all but name. The spectre of added crisis from a drop in revenue from ore sales is a disaster in the making.

Pawn shops are doing a roaring trade, in a tragic echo to the dark days of the 19th century and of the depression years. Pawn shop proprietor Rob Herron has reported that people are increasingly pawning personal possessions in order for them to pay household bills. He is seeing more people selling personal possessions and taking out loans at high interest rates. Cash Converters has revealed that across the country they have received a massive 780,000 loan applications. These are driven by cost-of-living pressures. These are people already in serious debt to banks and other lending institutions. There are reports of the most vulnerable being forced into prostitution in order to survive.

The world that Engels wrote of in the *Condition of the Working Class in England*, or that of Dickens is no longer an historical document or a work of fiction. The RBA governor might casually say that 'some people will have to sell their homes' because of the failure of the economy. Nearly 20 per cent of mortgagees or 975,000 homes fall into the 'extreme risk' category.

Over 30 per cent of Australians are renters. Anglicare Australia Executive Director Kasy Chambers has called the crisis "the worst it's ever been ... this is not hyperbole. It is Australia's new normal. We've never seen such bad results for people on the minimum wage, with affordability halving for a single person in the last two years. Even couples with both partners working full-time are locked out of nearly 90 per cent of rentals. People on Centrelink payments are being pushed out of housing altogether. A person on the age or disability support pensions can afford less than 1 per cent of rentals. For a person out of work, it's zero per cent – and that includes the highest rate of rent assistance."

These figures reflect just one aspect of a failing economy and a failed state that can't provide for its people.

The abject failure of capitalism and our state structures to meet the most basic needs of the people is there for all to see. The loss of revenue that will come from a downturn in mineral prices simply makes that failure greater. Australian capitalism and the Australian state blithely drifted, in a fantasy world where the good times would continue to roll and Australia could live the good life from digging up and selling on.

The working class will be made to suffer for the crimes and neglect of capitalism. Australia is just one country, one economy in a capitalist world. The story is no better in any of the 'developed' capitalist economies. The crisis that is reaching into the very heart of the Australian economy will hurt capital but have disastrous effects on the Australian people. ✪

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

Iron ore and the Chinese economy have been keeping Australia afloat for decades.

Good news for sexual harassment victims

Peter Farmer

The union movement has welcomed the Senate's passage of the government's Costs Protection Bill, which will make it easier for victim-survivors of workplace sexual harassment to pursue legal action against perpetrators.

The Bill removes one of the main deterrents that victim-survivors face when considering court action – the risk of being burdened with the other side's legal costs, which can result in significant debt or bankruptcy.

Under the Bill's new 'equal access' costs model, workers can assert their rights in federal courts, without fearing hefty costs. The new model applies to all Commonwealth sexual harassment and anti-discrimination laws, restricting courts from ordering applicants to pay respondents' costs except in limited cases.

The ACTU is part of a broad coalition of over 85 organisations, the Power to Prevent coalition, including National Legal Aid and the Kingsford Legal Centre, which have been advocating for the new costs model.

According to ACTU research, only 1 in 230,000 victim-survivors of workplace sexual harassment bring proceedings to an Australian court.

The Australian Human Rights Commission estimates that nearly 1 in 5 workers are sexually harassed at work each year, yet only 444 cases have ever been brought to court since 1984 according to the ANU, allowing many perpetrators to evade accountability.

The model already exists in international jurisdictions, including federal civil rights and anti-discrimination laws in the United States.

ACTU President Michelle O'Neil called the bill "a massive step forward in holding perpetrators accountable and making workplaces safer for everyone."

Victoria Legal Aid Special Advisor Melanie Schleiger said that the change "removes a significant barrier and addresses the power imbalance between victim-survivors and their employers – who often have legal teams and large budgets to defend claims."

Victorian Legal Aid ran over 1,000 case files, but during that time, only 4 clients proceeded to hearing and final judgement.

Kingsford Legal Centre Director Emma Golledge hailed the decision, saying that sexual harrassment "has lasting and damaging effects on people. To prevent sexual harassment, we must support victim-survivors to assert their rights.

"Enforcing your rights shouldn't bankrupt you, and people who experience sexual harassment shouldn't be forced to end their claims because of this fear."

"Community Legal Centres have long campaigned for this reform, and we hope this not only increases justice for people who are affected by sexual harassment but contributes to the prevention of it and creates safer workplaces for all." ✪

Help to Buy Bill

Labor's Help to Buy Bill was blocked by the Senate on 18 September and is set to return on 26 November. It is doubtful it will achieve more than pushing up housing prices for first home buyers.

Here's how it works. The government makes a contribution of up to 30 per cent of the purchase price for an existing property, or up to 40 per cent of the purchase price of a new build. The government then has a corresponding share in the home; if they kick in 20 per cent, they own 20 per cent of the home, if they put in 30 per cent, they own 30 per cent. If the home is sold, the government gets their percentage back.

Only first home buyers are eligible. There is an income test (maximum $90,000 annually for individuals, $120,000 for couples) and caps on the price of the property which vary according to capital city and regional cities or the rest of the state.

These caps are extremely tight. For example, the cap for a Sydney property is $950,000 compared with a median house price of $1.4 million. It will not be an easy job to find a property. The purchaser must have a minimum deposit of 2 per cent.

In effect, the government is buying a share of the property alongside the home owner and if housing prices continue to rise at the present rate it should prove to be a lucrative investment.

The number of places offered is limited to 10,000 per annum over 4 years allocated on the basis of population.

Purchasers may be required to start repaying while still living in the property depending on their income. Upon sale of the property the government takes a percentage based on its share in the asset.

The scheme is administered by Housing Australia Future Fund which will work out details such as thresholds for repayments. ✪

Indigenous health

Violent history, present failures, and 'deficit discourse'

Part One

C Bartholomew

More than a year after the release of Coroner Wilson's findings regarding the deaths of three Aboriginal women in the remote Queensland town of Doomadgee, little has been done to address the underlying causes of Indigenous health disparities identified by the report. At a time when the NDIS and aged care have been the topic of national discussion, and when health and legal practitioners have warned that Victoria's inquiry into the gender pain gap will be a rude awakening, the history and present reality of First Nations health must be better understood.

First and foremost, it's important to dispel the myth of Indigenous deficit – the myth that Indigenous Australians are just a mass of problems to be fixed. Communities like Doomadgee's are strong and dedicated to maintaining Law and Culture. It is time for governments to acknowledge and empower these communities while taking responsibility for the underlying causes of health disparities, instead of imposing paternalistic measures which do more harm than good.

LOCK HOSPITALS

Between 1908 and 1919, more than 800 Aboriginal men women and children in Western Australia were removed from their homes and taken to facilities on Bernier and Dorre Islands. These were the first island 'lock hospitals.'

The lock hospitals were an invention of the British Empire, first used to detain women suspected of sex work in English garrison towns. Lock hospitals were more to protect the soldiers in these towns than to help women imprisoned there. While public opposition saw the practice end in Britain, they continued in other parts of the Empire. Lock hospitals for "common prostitutes" continued to operate in Melbourne and Brisbane, for example.

Western Australian lock hospitals for Aboriginal people were very similar. Police and other officials without medical training 'diagnosed' Aboriginal people with venereal diseases and brought them to the islands, often with force or in chains. About 40 per cent of the prisoners never returned home, while more than 100 died on the islands and were buried in unmarked graves. Other states also used the practice, such as Queensland's facility on Fantome Island near Townsville, which operated as a lock hospital from 1928 to 1945, and as a lazaret (leprosarium or leper colony) from 1939 to 1973. Like its Western Australian counterparts, the Fantome facility made use of invasive procedures. Death rates were high.

Following increased concern about venereal diseases after the First World War, many states introduced compulsory notification and treatment for the general population, with education and even free treatment. The lock hospitals of WA and Queensland, in contrast, show how First Nations patients were given imprisonment rather than medical care. The communities impacted by these practices have remembered them, but governments and health services seem eager to forget.

EUGENICS AND STERILISATION

The lock hospitals were part of a system of segregation and colonisation. State authorities sought to prevent sexual relationships between Indigenous women and white men, while the detention of Indigenous people as prisoners and the removal of Indigenous children were ramping up. Meanwhile Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Queensland, WA, and the rest of the country were active in bringing attention to and campaigning against issues such as police brutality and segregation from education and healthcare.

Australian eugenicist and segregationist policies continued to evolve. Figures such as Western Australia's Chief Protector of Aborigines and Commissioner of Native Affair AO Neville, a believer in eugenics, designed and oversaw the beginnings of the Stolen Generations and other assimilationist policies intended to 'breed out' Indigeneity. Following the 1967 Referendum, programs were initiated to curb Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population growth, such as covert 'family planning' practices imposed upon Indigenous women.

While birth control has meant liberation for many women across the world, it has also been wielded as a means of institutional control over the ethnic composition of the population. While white women fought for their right to have access to contraception and abortion, Indigenous women fought for their right to have and raise their children. While the narrative used to justify previous segregation and assimilation policies had been that of the 'dying race' and the white man's responsibility to "smooth the dying pillow," census results after the '67 referendum proved the Indigenous population was growing.

Figures such as Jarvis Nye, founder of the Brisbane Clinic, gave dire warnings about the "alarming situation" of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities potentially outbreeding "our intelligent and provident European and Asian citizens." Nye,advocated for "instruction in contraception" and free sterilisation. Even at the national level, politicians such as Douglas Everingham, who would go on to be Whitlam's minister for health, called for free sterilisation to combat "excessive" Indigenous birth rates. The University of Queensland's professor of preventative medicine, John Francis, criticised health policies that addressed disproportionate Indigenous infant mortality rates without also curbing population growth.

Governments such as the Northern Territory's implemented 'family planning' schemes which, among other things, utilised what a district welfare officer referred to as "direct persuasion" to compel Aboriginal women to receive IUDs. The success of the program was measured by the percentage of Aboriginal women who had received contraception. While it is unclear to what extent Aboriginal women had free choice under this program, it is important to note that the Director of Welfare who oversaw the program also had control over Aboriginal women's rights to work, travel, marriage, enrol their children in education, and even retain custody over their children.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women across the country did not simply accept these programs. The organised efforts of Indigenous women led to the creation of the Aboriginal Medical Service, as well as community-based healthcare providers, to reassert control over their own health and bodily autonomy.

Newly built huts for the lazaret on Peel Island, 1907. Photo: State Library of Queensland

Communities like Doomadgee's are strong and dedicated to maintaining Law and Culture

The Battle for Cumberland Council

Local government elections have just been held across New South Wales and many seats remain undecided. The biggest controversy was the failure of the Liberal Party machine in NSW to nominate hundreds of their candidates on time, much to Labor's delight. Unfortunately, most of the Liberal candidates that failed to nominate were in traditional safe Liberal seats and have been replaced by the even more conservative Libertarian Party.

In the five wards of Cumberland Council, Labor appear to have lost 2 Councillors including the incumbent Mayor Lisa Lake who appears to be replaced by a newly elected Greens Councillor in Wentworthville Ward. In the 2021 Local Council elections the Liberals did not endorse candidates for Cumberland Council, with some running as Liberal Independents. The Liberals have won 3 seats on the new Council with a potential fourth seat in Regents Park Ward where preferences are yet to be counted.

The stand out is South Granville Ward which covers a large part of the former Auburn Council area and has a large Middle Eastern population. No candidate has achieved a full quota yet. What is clear is that former disgraced Auburn Councillors standing as Independent and Liberal candidates will not make up the new Council. It's not clear yet if Labor and Liberal Party support for Israel had a big impact on the way people voted. Most candidates, including those from Arabic and Muslim backgrounds did not publicly declare support for Palestine and the small number that did respond to campaigns like the Vote Yes for Palestine didn't see an increase in their vote.

The Battler, an alliance of Left and progressive residents in the Cumberland Local Government area organised two tickets in the elections, Regents Park and South Granville Wards with the team in Regents Park Ward polling 1,174 votes at last count with approximately 7.15 per cent of the vote. The Battler last ran in the 2017 Council elections where it polled 1,595 votes and had a Councillor on the former Auburn Council from 2012 – 2015.

The former Auburn Council, Holroyd Council and the Woodville Ward of Parramatta Council were part of a forced merger to form what is now the Cumberland Council initiated by the Baird Liberal government in 2016. The council has been corporatised. The amalgamation has made it more difficult for local grass roots organisations to have residents elected to Council. The number of Councillors to be elected in each ward was reduced, and the number of votes required to get elected has more than doubled.

The Battler campaign focused mainly on local specific issues, like the closure of the Auburn Post Office (an important service for the most ethnically diverse suburb in Australia). The Battler campaigned in Lidcombe to convert the now-abandoned Sydney University Health Sciences Campus on East St into a secondary and public school, a better use of our public resources. In Berala, the Battler campaigned to have the suburb removed from the State Government Rezoning (TOD) where heights would increase to six storeys high 400 metres from the railway station despite Transport NSW admitting the local infrastructure did not support an increase in population.

The Battler campaign was run on a shoe string budget in comparison to the big budgets of most other candidates, particularly the major parties who spent tens of thousands on direct mail outs and paid booth workers. The Battler relied on volunteers, and our campaign went to the streets with stalls and leafleting railway stations, mass letterboxing and door knocking.

The big difference in our campaign is that it doesn't stop with the polling day and it will continue up until the next Council elections in fighting for concrete outcomes for local residents. Our message has a real difference because we don't claim that we achieve anything on our own. Its only together as a community we can go forward. Together we are better.

The homeless are not just statistics

Photo: rawpixel.com (CC0)

William Briggs

Geelong is a depressed city. Among its least affluent suburbs are two of the poorest in the country. It gets cold in the winter and the homeless suffer. Statistics tell us that life expectancy for the homeless in Australia is just 45 for men and 40 for women. Carly, Guy, and Jack are three of the more than 120,000 people who are homeless in Australia. They are broken people living in a broken society.

These three are often seen outside a Woolworths Supermarket in Geelong. They are never together but they probably know each other. They sit, quietly hoping that someone will drop a coin into their caps. They dare not ask too obviously. The management of the supermarket has signs declaring that 'loitering or soliciting for monies' is prohibited. Staff regularly come out to tell them to move on. They meekly comply. They do no harm. They rarely 'solicit' for monies, unlike the busker a few metres away who is permitted to solicit, or the stall that sells paper poppies and ribbons for Remembrance Day or Anzac Day. The three homeless, however, might just remind us that the system is not working.

Sometimes someone is seen in the supermarket trying to hide a couple of tins of food in their jacket. Staff descend on them, physically handling them and often chasing them out of the building. The staff have been told to do this. Some are sheepish about it. Some are happy to 'follow orders.' Woolworths returned a profit of $1.7 billion this financial year.

Carly is quiet. She knows not to draw attention to herself. Occasionally someone offers her some food. She was enjoying a packet of doughnuts the other day. She does no harm, but a capitalist system that refuses to support the most vulnerable has discarded her. She is broken and has been broken. She is doggedly polite, profuse in her thanks but as she is in her late 30s her cards are well and truly marked. The government talks of mental health but there is no care for Carly's mental health.

Guy sometimes rails at the world. His demons drive him to loud protest, but he is easily calmed. A quiet hallo, a "how are things?" and the mention of his name is all that is needed. He is becoming a pitiable sight. Small wounds and abrasions are no longer healing. His body, in its late 20s, is beginning to break down. Drug-use and a world that refuses to notice or care has left him a living shell. You can only wonder about his early life.

I don't see Jack anymore. He was young. His life is over. He would have been no more than 23 years old. In his more lucid moments, he would chat. He was articulate. He had pneumonia and came back talking about feeling much better, but winter in Geelong can be cruel if you have no permanent shelter.

As the economy crumbles, as more and more people have to work longer for less, compassion becomes problematic for many. Charitable organisations perform herculean feats but must help more people with less resources. The state, capitalism, government all turn their backs.

Grotesque amounts of money are spent on funding new ways to wage war. Edifices to capitalism are erected. All manner of bread and circus 'entertainments' are staged and the press waxes lyrical about how many dollars are brought into the economy. Precious few of these dollars go to solving the problem of homelessness, of poverty, of the mental health crisis that allows Carly, Guy, and Jack to ready themselves for an early death.

There is a debate going on about law and order and youth justice. Fixing the problem at the root will cost a lot of money and it is highly unlikely that the money will be spent. These are societal problems, problems of state and capitalism. They are expensive problems but the cost to society of not fixing the problems will be far greater. As the crisis of capitalism grows, so too does the cost in human degradation grow. The squalid world that Engels described in *Condition of the Working Class*, written so many years ago, is being revisited upon us today. The deprivations that affect body and mind are here for all to see.

When you walk past Carly, or Guy, or Jack, when he was still with us, and travel along Geelong's highly regarded café and shopping strip, you will see other broken people. These are the victims of a society that has neither the time nor the inclination to care.

There are many Geelongs in wealthy Australia. There are many Carlys, Guys and Jacks. Their numbers grow and remain a constant reminder to us all of the neglect and contempt that the system has for its most vulnerable.

PEACE NOTES

Peter Farmer

"For peace and socialism be ready – always ready."

That was the slogan of the Young Pioneers a scouts-like club in the socialist German Democratic Republic, also known as East Germany. Communists like to talk about peace, but doesn't *everyone* dislike war? What's particularly communist about wanting peace? Doesn't *everyone* think peace is a good thing? It turns out there are some very good reasons why communists particularly strive for peace. They understand war clearly.

Communists work for the aims of the working class. War affects the working class much more than it affects other classes. Whenever there's a war, it's mostly the working class who are required to do the killing and the dying. It's the working class who suffer the brunt of the injuries of war. The wealthy can have "other priorities" as US vice president Dick Cheney said when asked why he hadn't gone to war at a time when other men his age had to.

The working class also have less resources for coping with the effects of war. War brings poverty from loss of jobs and destruction of houses. At this very moment, Israel is bombing the poorest parts of Beirut, quite possibly because that will harm the most vulnerable people and put the most strain on the state.

War and preparing for war is used as a distraction for the working class, to keep them from pursuing their class interests. The nationalism that leads to war encourages workers to ignore their real enemies, and focus their energy on foreigners, or groups who look different. War keeps workers serving capital under the belief that they're serving their country. This is a strategy as old as time, which is why the saying that 'Patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels' persists. It's especially true of capitalist scoundrels. The 1996-2007 Howard government, led by free-market zealot John Howard invested a huge amount of time and money into pumping up ANZAC day into a sacred national holiday, and tipped enormous sums into the Australian War memorial, turning it into what someone called "a Yasakuni Shrine for the Liberal Party."

Even when there's no war, war spending hurts working people more. Look at 'defence' spending in Australia. A government that says it can't afford to make unemployment benefits livable, or really improve medical funding, can afford to spend $368 billion dollars on the AUKUS project, signing up for nuclear powered submarines we don't need. It can also afford to sign contracts with Israeli military company Elbit worth around $900 million. We could fund free dental care with that money.

Or, look at the USA, which has the world's largest military budget, crumbling infrastructure, and some of the developed world's worst health outcomes.

Communists are internationalists. They understand that class interests have no borders. Workers in the UK, France, Australia, and Japan, are all being ripped off by companies like Amazon. Capital is not nationalistic,although capitalists like to pretend they are.

Socialists have fought against fascism and in defence of socialist revolutions. Without the Soviet Union, the outcome of World War II would have been very different. However, socialism doesn't need to use war as a cloak for the interests of capital.

So while anybody can dislike the idea of war, communists have the best reasons for opposing it. That's why we have a Peace Notes column and that's why we campaign to give peace a budget!

TIME FOR A REAL WORKERS' PARTY!

COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

LABOR'S BETRAYED

- INDIGENOUS PEOPLE
- TRADE UNIONS
- THE ENVIRONMENT
- PALESTINE

THE LIST GOES ON...

Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
74 Buckingham Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010

email: editor@cpa.org.au

Cesspits of misinfo

Dear Comrade editor,
I enjoyed Alex McKinnon's article (23 September 2024) on the complexities of banning social media for kids. While I agree with some aspects of it there are two things I think that need attention.

One is that, even though reportage of Palestine in mainstream media is dismal, and often now nonexistent, the problem of Western social media in general still needs addressing. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, as McKinnon points out, are cesspits of misinformation, obscurantism and even harassment. It's a dark place which has created all sorts of social problems for today's youth and societal relations; from hyper-individualism to anxiety, ghettoisation, and the narrowing of avenues for debate and rational thinking.

Two is that it must be fixed. A solution is sorely needed. Heavy regulation, prosecution of misuse of the systems, and nationalisation of social media remains necessary. The Labor and Liberal governments are unlikely to do this in a socialistic manner, by which we mean turning social media into a safe space that nurtures harmonious and joyous social relations. But a socialist government would. This is the case with Chinese-owned social media, for instance WeChat, and Weibo. More and more the government ensures these are uplifting spaces, spaces for people's education, and indeed Marxist-Leninist education.

So I think there are two things here – the need to heavily regulate capitalist social media, and the need to use whatever means we have, including social media and alternative media, to challenge the mainstream narrative on Palestine and all forms of Euro-US imperialism.

A Carruthers

Israeli impunity

Dear Editor,
The fiendish nastiness of the exploding pagers and radio devices by Israel is plain for all to see. The prosecution of the project would have involved the criminal trespass and disregard of many commercial traffic laws. There is no way it is legal for a third party to alter a product to make it an explosive device, and no way of legally transporting these products without an 'explosives' label on the package. There are laws to forbid the use of a transport service to send lethal material to individuals. What would have happened to the truck, plane or boat which carried these items to Lebanon if the explosive material was detonated during transit?

Israel is guilty of interfering in international trade and has caused 14 deaths and 3,000 injuries to many people in Lebanon. Yemen's Houthis stopped international trade by stopping and boarding ships and delaying them for a while, but did not kill anyone. The UK and US carried out over 80 bombing sorties over Yemeni/Houthi neighbourhoods, killing many people and inflicting much damage and trauma. The US announced that Houthis "cannot be allowed ... to threaten global trade and the lives of innocent mariners".

Israel inflicts terror on international trade and doesn't just threaten the lives of the innocent; they inflict death and injury. Yet the great purveyors of a 'rules-based order' remain silent and inactive while Israel enjoys impunity.

Yours sincerely

Denis Doherty

Tenacity in these times

Like Roger Waters, other artists from different regions have joined the campaign to end the massacre, but their voices have been overshadowed

Oni Acosta Llerena

When the Zionist massacre of Palestine began, a singular artist would start a global campaign against the annihilation. I am talking about rock 'n' roll icon Roger Waters. The British musician's career had long shown signs of public rejection of such practices, and his strong criticism of the constant aggressions suffered by the Palestinian people was more common. Waters' stance has made him perhaps the most influential figure in music to speak out for the cause. He has been accused of bullying by musicians such as Nick Cave, whom he politely asked to join in boycotting Israel.

Like Waters, other artists from different regions have joined the campaign to end the massacre, but their voices have been overshadowed, or at least minimised, by the mainstream media and industry consortia. In Madrid, names such as the actor Juan Diego Botto, the singer-songwriters Ismael Serrano and Marwan (the latter the son of Palestinian parents), and the band Vetusta Morla, who accompanied students from the Complutense University and camped out on its campus in May as a sign of protest. The result was little press coverage and no media follow-up to the artists' action.

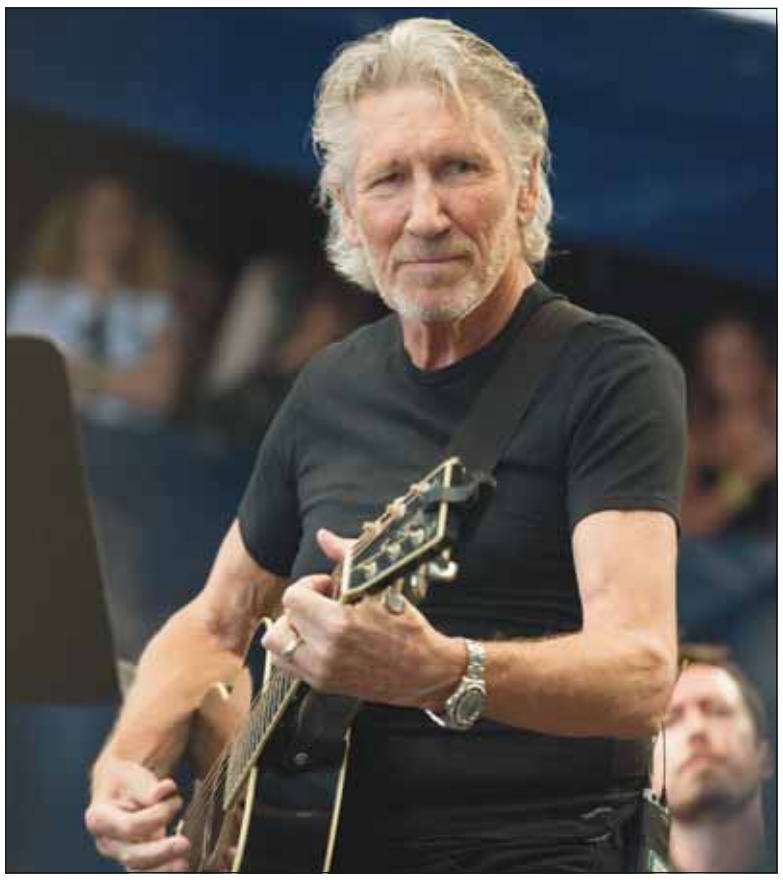
Puerto Rican rapper and composer René Pérez, known as Residente and formerly of Calle 13, recently released the song Bajo los escombros (Under the rubble) with Palestinian singer Amar Murkus, including a video clip. The musician was devastated by the bombings that killed thousands of Palestinian children, and was also very critical of the inertia of some of his colleagues. Low media visibility – although the media did pay more attention to responses to his criticism – was again a constant on the issue of pro-Palestinian activism.

Once again, the same patterns of media invisibility are repeated against musicians who take a stand on genocide, and the questions that no one in power wants to answer return: How is it possible that headlines about celebrity divorces or infidelities saturate the industry's information market? Why the censorship of the Palestinian issue? Why the insistence on trivialising consumerism?

If we draw a parallel between the industry and the trends of thought that are currently induced by the real establishment, the real power, we will notice too many coincidences in terms of standardisation and glorification of musical frivolity. They are expressed both in concrete proposals that flood the traditional and digital broadcasting channels, as well as in positions with social and political aims that obviously do not turn the dominant power against its own interests.

It doesn't matter about the careers of Waters, Silvio, or any other famous artist whose work is great; what matters, sadly, is whether or not they opposed the hegemonic system that subjugates peoples and turns a blind eye to the massacre. Tenacity in these times comes with a high price, which not everyone has chosen to pay. It is clear that some are more concerned about their pockets than about the children murdered in Palestine.

Granma (with additional material from Peter Farmer)



Roger Waters at Newport Folk Festival, Rhode Island, 2015.
Photo: digboston – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

Aeross;

3. Redistribution of estates from the landlords (4-6)
5. The primary working class in China during the revolution (7)
7. Chinese region invaded by Japan, liberated by the USSR (8)
9. Famous military retreat (4-5)

Down;

1. Provided financial and military aid to fascists during the conflict (6-6)
2. Collection of quotations (3-4)
4. Revolutionary, Writer, Chairman (3)
5. Last Emperor of china, Fascist collaborator, later became a Communist (4)
6. City in Shaanxi province, birthplace of the revolution (5)
8. Official anagram of communist party in China (3)

Answers to crossword *Guardian* 23 Sept, #2117

Across:

3 **Submarines** (What cost tax payers hundreds of billions for no positive return)
4 **Unipolar** (International system AUKUS is in aid to)
6 **Peace** (Our lives will have none of with AUKUS in place)
7 **Pacific** (Region where AUKUS impact will be felt the most)
9 **Nuclear** (War What we are heading towards)
10 **Guam** (American colonial territory where threats to global security may be held)

Down:

1 **Public** (The sector that's been stripped of funding for AUKUS)
2 **Isolationism** (AUKUS is seen as a move towards)
5 **Malabar** (Annual naval exercise involving AUKUS members)
8 **France** (Country with strained relations)

Israeli peace movement: ‘Accept the deal, end the war, out of Gaza’

Uri Weltmann

Tel Aviv: “Accept the deal, end the war, out of Gaza!” Thousands of placards carrying this message, in both Hebrew and Arabic, were distributed last weekend in the weekly anti-government protests in cities throughout Israel.

Some looked with suspicion at these signs, as they preferred sticking to the popular “Deal now!” signs. Others approached the activists of Standing Together who were handing out these purple bilingual signs and asked to carry them, too.

This reflects a changing attitude among many within the anti-Netanyahu protest movement – especially as our government expands its deadly war into Lebanon – with a wing that develops towards an openly anti-war message.

A year has passed since 7 October 2023, when Hamas attacked towns and villages inside Israel, next to the Gaza Strip, and our government responded with an even more brutal war.

The death toll in the Gaza Strip exceeds 40,000 casualties – among them more than 15,000 children – and as the lack of food and basic medical supplies continues to grow, a humanitarian catastrophe unfolds.

As the war has gone on, there has been growing discontent towards Netanyahu’s government. In all serious public opinion polls, Netanyahu’s party and its coalition allies – who currently have a 64-seat majority in Israel’s 120-seat Knesset (parliament) – are set to lose their parliamentary majority.

Another public opinion poll by *i24news* shows that there is now a 52 per cent majority that supports a hostage release deal that includes ending the war and a complete withdrawal of the Israeli army from Gaza.

The poll did not yet take into account changes in opinion sparked by the heavy bombardment and pending ground invasion of Lebanon.

But simply demanding a hostage deal to end the war, while urgent and necessary, is not sufficient.

Not only Netanyahu but also those set on replacing him seem to believe that solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a burning necessity, and that the decades-long military rule over millions of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, who are devoid of citizenship and denied basic rights, is something that can be maintained indefinitely into the future.

The bankruptcy of this idea became evident following 7 October. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be “managed.” This is merely a recipe for more October 7s, for more wars, aggression, and escalations that will cause the loss of many innocent lives.

Rather, what is needed is to recognise the basic truth: There are millions of Palestinians in this country; none of them are going anywhere. And there are millions of Jews in this country; none of them are going anywhere.

The only hope for safety and security lies in an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement that will end the occupation, allow the Palestinian people their right to national self-determination in an independent state alongside Israel, and respect the rights of both peoples to live in freedom, justice, and independence.

This perspective is being presented within the mass anti-government protest movement by the activists of Standing Together – the leading grassroots movement that organises and mobilises Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel to campaign for peace, equality, and social justice.

Photo: Rebecca W – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Our interventions inside the protests – including such media stunts as unfurling a huge banner at the heart of the mass anti-Netanyahu rally in Tel-Aviv that reads “Out of Gaza!” to a cheering crowd – is our way to initiate a conversation, argue for our views, and change the political weather within the protest movement.

This work received expressions of solidarity by trade unions abroad, including in Britain. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU), in its recent annual conference held in Blackpool, adopted a policy statement submitted by the union’s executive committee, stating that FBU “supports the small but growing movement in Israel, opposing the war and calling for a just, peaceful and democratic solution addressing the rights of the Palestinian people.

“The union pays tribute to those in Israel, such as Standing Together, who fight against racism and discrimination and seek to build dialogue and unity between Palestinians and Jews. Despite the current isolation of such initiatives, they offer a source of hope for the future.”

Similarly, the UK train drivers’ union ASLEF passed a resolution at its recent conference to “support those voices on both sides who have shown tremendous courage in promoting peace and dialogue and a just settlement and a democratic solution, such as Standing Together, a joint Palestinian-Israeli social movement, which is organising anti-racist, anti-war, and solidarity activity within Israeli society.”

At a time in which our own government has launched an all-out war against Lebanon, we remember that international solidarity is a weapon in the hands of the working people of the world.

The solidarity of the trade unions with the peace movement and the solidarity of people across borders who share mutual interests that stand in opposition to the interests of their respective governments can overcome injustice, and it will.

People’s World

China-Brazil peace push

China and Brazil, together with a number of countries from the Global South, have established a ‘Friends of Peace’ platform on the sidelines of the 79th Session of the UN General Assembly, in a bid to seek peace amid the Ukraine crisis, which has dragged on for more than two years.

The move is another step forward after China and Brazil jointly issued a six-point consensus on their common understanding of the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis in May.

Ever since the Russia-Ukraine conflict started, Global South countries have avoided taking sides in the conflict. They also don’t see eye to eye on the way the Western countries deal with Russia in an international system that has long been dominated by the US-led West. The Global South countries, represented by China and Brazil, have delivered a message that is different from the self-centred West.

Historically speaking, Global South countries were beset by the dominance of the Global North through political and economic exploitation, and had long been outside the centre of the international political arena. In other words, they were in a weak or even marginalised position. In recent years, Global South countries have emerged and their voices can be heard clearly on the world stage. Even Western countries have taken notice of this trend. This is because Global South countries think independently and have the courage to pursue a fair and just international order.

The root cause of the Ukraine crisis is clear. So is the reason why it is dragging on for so long. The US and the West, with their inherent arrogance and self-righteousness, have been pushing forward NATO’s eastward expansion without taking into account the special historical and geographical sensitivities of Russia and Ukraine, which ultimately led to the situation being out of control. As the initiator of the conflict, the US would rather prolong the conflict than end it, only to sustain its hegemony. Over more than two years, many opportunities for peace have been missed.

This time, again, the US has tried to dismiss the efforts made by Global South countries. When asked about the latest peace proposal, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken resorted to the cliché of China’s “support” for Russia.

Cui Heng, a lecturer from the Shanghai-based China National Institute for SCO International Exchange and Judicial Cooperation, believes this reflects the paucity of US diplomatic rhetoric.

“The US only wants to shirk its responsibility in the Ukraine crisis. Few countries now buy the ‘China responsibility’ rhetoric,” said Cui.

Cui noted that if the US were in the situation of Russia, it could have kicked NATO out of its sphere of influence.

“In an international order dominated by the US, there is no such a thing as fairness and justice. In this context, why can’t Global South countries push forward changes?” he asked.

The Ukraine crisis is a tragedy of international politics and a tragedy for the world. In the past, when faced with major regional conflicts or international conflicts, it was often Western countries that decided the final direction or ultimately played a role. But this time the situation is different. Unlike Western countries that choose sides, most countries in the Global South uphold a balanced and neutral position and champion peace.

The emergence of Global South countries is offering hope to the Ukraine crisis. Perhaps the US and the West should ponder why they only bring war, but the Global South could create conditions and atmosphere for peace talks.

Global Times

Assange addresses Council of Europe

Julian Assange has addressed the Council of Europe giving evidence following a report highlighting the implications of his detention on human rights and the freedom of journalism.

The Pace inquiry report found that the WikiLeaks founder qualified as a political prisoner and called on Britain to conduct an independent review into whether he was exposed to inhuman or degrading treatment while incarcerated.

Thorhildur Sunna Avarsdottir, report author and general rapporteur for political prisoners, emphasised how Assange’s case is a high-profile example of transnational repression.

The report discusses how governments employ legal and extra-legal measures to suppress dissent across borders, posing significant threats to press freedom and human rights.

Assange gave testimony before the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights on 1 October, making it his first since before his imprisonment in 2019.

Campaigners have said that his appearance before Europe’s foremost human rights and treaty-setting body emphasises the broader implications of his case.

Morning Star

Chinese modernisation in the service of the people

William Briggs

Photo: Huchuansong – Creative Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0)

China's advances are almost universally slandered and slighted by our 'democratic' media, by 'learned' commentators and by bourgeois governments around the world. We've come to expect it. The fact is that China's rise allows for great advances in society and in the well-being of the people. This does not make head-lines, it does not engage the minds of the commentators, and it is not in the 'best' interests of bourgeois governments to point out that the lives of over a billion people get better as the lives of those struggling under capitalism get worse.

The Chinese government and Communist Party are working under the slogan of 'Advancing Chinese Modernisation.' It has the goal of developing China into a 'great modern socialist country' by the middle of this century.

To achieve this, the level of productive forces in China must grow and develop. This is happening, and the quality of life of the Chinese reflects this.

Socialism must benefit the people. That is what it is for. The 'modernisation' of China is doing just that. A few simple examples and comparisons prove this point.

China is still technically a developing economy. Its social achievements are, therefore, all the more remarkable. Latest statistics show that infant mortality in China has now dropped to an historic low of 4.5 per 1,000 live births. This figure, in the words of Liang Xiaofeng, vice-president of the Chinese Preventative Medicine Association, means that for the first time China has reached the 'advanced' levels of middle and high-income countries. The significance of this was stressed when he observed that maternal and child health is the 'cornerstone' of national health.

Infant mortality in the USA, the most powerful nation on earth, with a much greater GDP and home to the world's biggest economy, is 5.6 deaths per 1,000.

The national maternal mortality rate, infant mortality rate and mortality rate of children under five have all reached record lows.

Maternal mortality rates in China have plummeted. In 2002 the figure was 43.2 for every 100,000 women. Twenty years later and the figure is 15.7 per 100,000. The US is recording a figure of 22.3 per 100,000.

In 1949, when the Revolution was victorious, life expectancy was just 35 years. Despite the difficulties of the first decades, it rose to 65 by 1980. Today life expectancy is 77.6 years. Once more the USA lags, with a figure of 76.3 years. What is damning here is that life expectancy in the US has actually decreased in the most recent period.

Some in the bourgeois media have reported that China has announced an increase in the pension age. This is correct and reflects an ageing population, but those same commentators might have added a couple of things. The pension age for male workers is rising to 63. Female 'white-collar' workers will have to work until they are 58. Women 'blue-collar' workers will toil until they are 58. Workers in the USA receive an aged-pension at 67 as is the case in Australia.

All of these statistics tell a story. The story is centred around the slogan that is driving Chinese policy, that of 'Advancing Chinese Modernisation.' The statistics also reveal that hospital births are now at a figure of 99.9 per cent and that cervical and breast cancer screenings cover more than 90 per cent of the population.

Liang Xiaofeng proudly revealed these figures at a recent conference but still cautioned that "we should realise that there are still challenges to maternal and child health." In the West, in the USA, here in Australia, health services suffer, waiting lists for treatment grow, services are under threat, there is never enough funding, and crisis stalks.

Modernisation means many things to many people. Here in capitalist Australia, it has little to do with the betterment of people's lives. The Chinese see things differently. They are building something better. Modernisation is in the service of the people.

Green development on the Yellow River

C Bartholomew

The Yellow River or Huang He feeds 12 per cent of China's population, irrigates 15 per cent of arable land, and provides water to more than 50 cities. It's crucial to China's human and natural worlds. However, the Yellow River's ecology is particularly vulnerable to degradation, and the Yellow River basin suffers some of the worst water and soil loss of any river basin in the country. This contradiction between the Yellow River's great importance and environmental vulnerability has given rise to a need for what China calls "high-quality development" with sustainability at its core.

China's eastern regions, particularly along the coast, contribute more than half of the country's GDP. However, economic development is accelerating in inland China. Technological innovation and cutting-edge industry of all kinds, from laser TVs to wireless data transfer, have found homes in China's west. The growth of these kinds of tech industries are a major part of China's program of high-quality development. But what exactly is high-quality development?

In short, quality over quantity. In 2017, Xi Jinping said that China's economy was entering a transitionary stage between rapid growth and high-quality development. China's previous growth model had achieved great results but also faced problems such as resource constraints and income inequality. High-quality development featured prominently in 2024's plenary sessions. The new model changes the focus from the quantity of growth to the quality of growth. Outdated production and technology will be phased out as innovative and renewable technologies are developed. The goal is green development which sustains a healthy relationship between humanity and nature. High-quality development also aims to establish more equitable income distribution and the equalisation of public resources between urban and rural areas.

The Yellow River basin has been identified as a key area for high-quality development. During a visit to Yinchuan, capital of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, President Xi emphasised the need for ecological conservation to improve both the environment and the lives of the people. Having met many residents of the highly ethnically diverse region, Xi stressed the importance of strong communities able to make use of leadership and innovation from all sectors. The Yellow River Protection Law, mirroring similar legislation for the other great river, the Yangtze, has sought to address key issues such as water shortages, ecological vulnerability, and flooding.

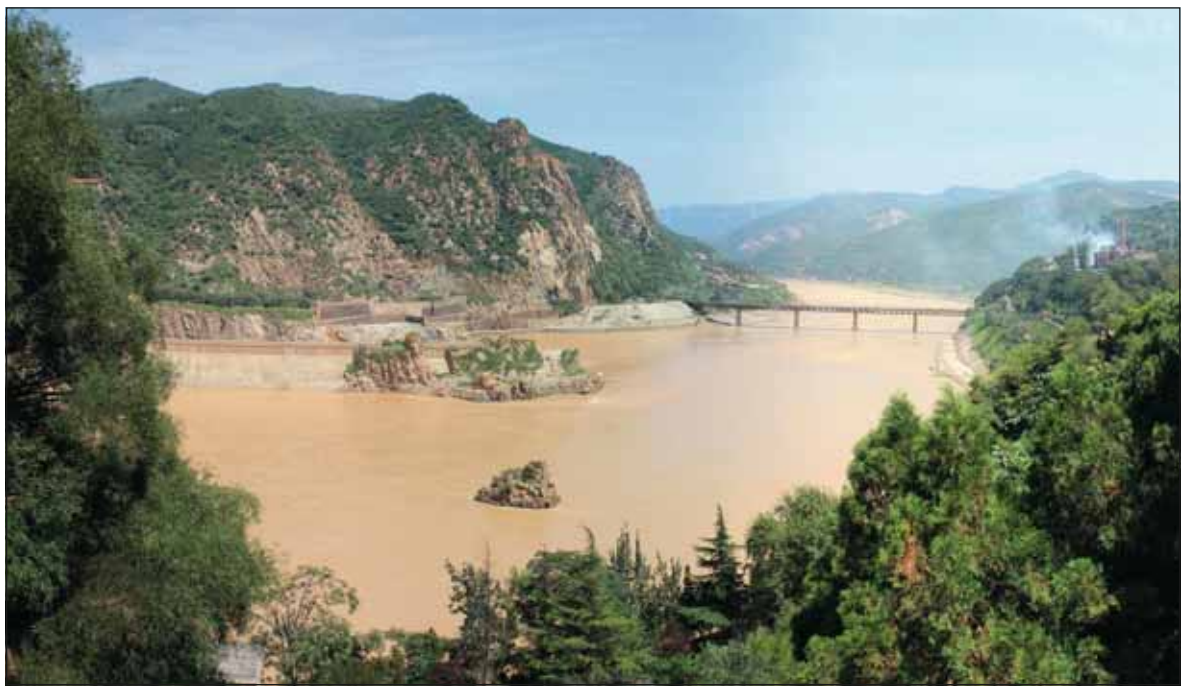


Photo: fading – Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Communities along the Yellow River have striven to implement green development. Over the past year, the Yellow River basin has seen improvements to its environment, which in turn has improved the outlook for crucial lakes and reservoirs. Water replenishment techniques have restored almost 1.5 billion cubic metres of water, so the Yellow River's main stream will flow for decades to come. A "double reduction" of both the area and intensity of soil and water loss has also been achieved. For example, the Three-North Shelter Forest program, also known as China's "Great Green Wall," has been able to control 61 per cent of water and soil loss area, while annual sediment flow into the Yellow River has been reduced by around 400 million tonnes.

Gansu Province, another region key to the health of the Yellow River basin, has made strides in ecological regulation, environmental monitoring and renewable energy production. Xi has called for similar efforts to develop a green, low-carbon economy across the country. Coordination and planning is at the heart of China's push for new large-scale wind and solar projects, as well as the transition away from fossil fuels in key industries.

The Yellow River is the birthplace of Chinese civilisation. It's also home to promising examples of the high-quality development set to define China's future.

Europe's economic 'existential challenge'

President Joe Biden poses for a photo with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and other leaders, 25 September 2024, in New York City. Photo: Official White House/Adam Schultz – flickr.com (CC0)

William Briggs

Marxists often speak of the crisis of capitalism. The European Union commissioned a report to look into the future of the European economy. Economist and former Italian PM Mario Draghi was given the task of preparing the 600-page report.

Draghi has also been the head of the Italian central bank, and president of the European central bank. His task was to find a way of saving European capital from falling behind global capital and precipitating an even deeper crisis.

The findings of the report make grim reading for those who were hoping for some European miracle. Draghi describes the situation as critical. He goes so far as to say that European capitalism is facing an "existential challenge."

The Draghi report was released when Germany, Sweden, and Austria are in recession, and while the French, and Italian economies are recording nil growth. None of the EU economies are doing well. The average growth rate across the EU is just 0.2 per cent. When compared with either the USA or Asia, Europe is showing a relative decline in output and productivity growth, in living standards, and in technical progress in the European economy. The EU, it must be remembered, is an economic bloc of 440 million people that accounts for 17 per cent of total global GDP. To describe such an essential sector of the global capitalist economy as facing an "existential" challenge shows just how deep the crisis in capitalism is running.

The EU has long been held up as an example of the benefits that allegedly derived from the capitalist boom that was known as the 'golden age' from the end of WW2 until the 1970s. It leads the world in health outcomes, education, and higher education accessibility. It has been regarded as something of a poster-boy in sustainability and environmental protection. Cracks in this vital group of economies send shock waves across the capitalist world and bring into serious question the prospects for European capitalism.

The EU was a big winner from capitalist globalisation. Free global trade regimes benefited Europe. Globalisation was meant to act as a salve for the crisis in capitalism, and to halt and reverse the decline in global profit rates. It was a brief respite. There has been a retreat from globalisation, and a return to economic nationalism and trade war politics. According to IMF research, world trade is set to grow at just 3.2 per cent over the next several years. This is well down on figures from a decade ago. The EU share of world trade is declining even faster.

Draghi observes that Europe's capacity to grow is further weakened as its relative position in technological innovation declines. Just four of the leading 50 tech companies are now European.

Productivity growth is falling significantly. This is made much worse because the population is shrinking rapidly. It has been shown that from 2040 the workforce will fall by nearly two million workers per year. This will contribute to a reduction in the GDP growth rate of the leading European economies of Germany, Italy, France, and the UK, by as much as one per cent per year.

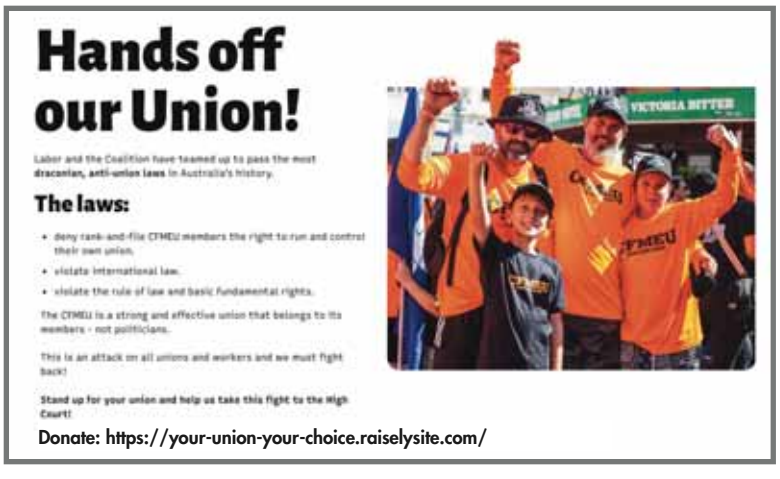
Draghi's report is bleak for European capital, and that obviously means that the working class will suffer. The report says Europe will have to lean more on productivity to drive growth. But if the EU were to maintain its average productivity growth rate since 2015, it would only be enough to keep GDP constant until 2050 – at a time when the EU is facing a series of new investment needs that will have to be financed through higher growth. As productivity growth is linked to both population growth and the potential for investments in technology, the future supports his 'existential' challenge prognosis.

Faced with a crisis of such magnitude, Draghi the former banker, former prime minister and ardent supporter of the capitalist *status quo* offers a solution. His recommendations are clothed in economic jargon, but translated into the language of the people it means that EU public spending must be reduced significantly.

The 'savings' from this policy would be invested in technology projects. There are two obvious and immediate problems. The first is that developments in technology and the capital investments are likely to remain where they are. Asian markets and American markets already lead the field. What sort of incentives could there be to move to Europe? The second problem is that the cuts to spending mean a cycle of austerity. Those least able to cope would also be those that benefit the least from any 'technological revolution.'

The poorer economies in the EU, the less developed, the more rural communities, and the eastern states of Europe could hardly be expected to cheer for on-going dislocation and increased poverty for the sake of boosting the bigger economies. The result might well mean a fracturing of Europe as capitalism continues to fracture and move deeper into crisis.

Mario Draghi is right when he labels the economic prospects as an 'existential' problem. Capitalism's golden age is over. All that remains is crisis.



Global Briefs

GERMANY: The co-leaders of the Greens, one of the three parties in Chancellor Olaf Scholtz's troubled coalition, are to step down after the latest in a string of disappointing election results. Under Omid Nouripour and Ricarda Lang, support for the Greens declined sharply in June's European Parliament elections. German voters ejected the party from two state parliaments in Eastern Germany last month, most recently in Brandenburg. Ricarda Lang announced that "new faces are needed to lead the party out of this crisis." "The goal now is not to stick to a chair, the goal now is to take the responsibility by making a new start possible," Lang said, noting that the party's current executive board will remain in place until November, when a vote is held at the party conference.

SRI LANKA: New president Anura Kumara Dissanayake swore in Harini Amarasuriya as his Prime Minister, making her the country's first woman to head the government in 24 years. She is the first prime minister of her party, and the third female to hold the position after Sirimavo Bandaranaike, and Chandrika Kumaratunga. Amarasuriya, a university lecturer and an activist, is a fellow member of the president's left-wing National People's Power coalition. Aside from her premiership, she was concurrently appointed as the interim minister of justice, health, women, trade, and industry, until a parliamentary election is held on 14 November 2024.

ALGERIA: Algeria has accused Morocco of sending Israeli intelligence agents with Moroccan passports to the country and acting against Algeria's national security and stability. The Algerian Foreign Ministry also accused Morocco of organising numerous crime networks, drug and human trafficking, smuggling, illegal migration and espionage. In view of all this, the Algerian government has decided to introduce mandatory entry visas for all foreign citizens with a Moroccan passport. The two countries have long been at odds over Morocco's claim to Western Sahara, where Algeria supports the Polisario Front, which has been fighting for Western Sahara's independence for decades. Algeria cut diplomatic ties with Morocco in 2021 after accusing it of spying on Algerian officials and supporting separatist groups.

JAPAN: Former Defence Minister of Japan Shigeru Ishiba has been elected as head of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and will become the country's next prime minister. It's known that he is an ardent supporter of an Asia-Pacific NATO and a boost to Japan's defence forces. He is a proponent of 'deterring' Russia and supporting the Kiev regime.

PHILIPPINES: United States and Filipino security officials agreed to keep a US mid-range missile systems in the north of the country indefinitely, despite the move alarming China. The Typhon missile system includes the Tomahawk land attack missile, which can travel over 1,600 kilometres and thus reach China.

VENEZUELA: Venezuelans have taken to the streets around the country to celebrate two months since the electoral victory of President Nicholas Maduro on 28 July. United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) members marched together with youth, peasants, women and fishermen in the island state of Nueva Esparta.

CHINA: President Xi Jinping and other Party leaders attended a ceremony to commemorate China's Martyrs' Day, which falls on 30 September, one day before China's National Day. Representatives from all walks of life and the relatives of fallen heroes, as well as Chinese Young Pioneers, offered flower baskets and bouquets in front of the Monument to the People's Heroes, in tribute to the martyrs.

Haiti has disturbed the US ruling class for two centuries

US: Republican presidential and vice-presidential candidates expressed horror a couple of weeks ago on apparently learning from social media that Haitian migrants in Springfield, Ohio, were "eating people's pets," as Trump put it. The reports,were false, the fallout was quite real. Bomb threats followed, schools and public buildings closed down. Longtime African-American residents felt threatened.

Some backstory: Springfield's economy lost jobs and industries over the years. Some 15,000 Haitians arrived, eager to work. Industry expanded, but social service providers were stressed. Most of the Haitians in Springfield are there under Temporary Protected Status, which enables migrants forced out of their counties by serious crises to enter the United States legally.

The bizarre twist of political behaviour stems in part from the migrants being Haitian. Haitians and their nation have been problematic for the United States' ruling class for more than two centuries.

The fact of migration itself does not account for the exaggerated hostility. Almost nothing of that order happens to the one-third of New York state residents and 40.9 per cent of Miamians who are immigrants, or to the foreign-born residents of nine other urban areas in the United States who comprise 21.1 per cent to 39.1 per cent of the several populations.

Stresses and frustrations associated with Springfield's economic decline could have stimulated hostility toward migrants, if we look at what has happened in other communities. Economist Franklin J James rejects the idea "that immigration hurts US natives by reducing job opportunities ... [and] that immigrants displace natives from jobs or reduce earnings of the average worker."

Being Black may indeed invite hostility in a racist society, however. In 2019 Black people made up 21.6 per cent to 48.5 per cent of the populations of 20 US cities. That year nine Ohio cities, not including Springfield, claimed between 32.0 per cent and 11.2 per cent Black people. In 2024, 17.4 per cent of Springfield residents are Black.

The scenario in Springfield may itself have been toxic: A large number of Black people from abroad arrived together in an economically depressed small city. But Somali migrants arrived in Lewiston, Maine under similar circumstances, and their reception was different.

They showed up in 2001, and a year later numbered 2,000 or so. In January 2003, an Illinois-based Nazi group staged a tiny anti-Black rally; 4,500 Mainers joined in a counter-demonstration.

Trump and Vance could have exercised their anti-migrant belligerence in many cities. They chose Springfield, presumably because the migrants there are Haitian. Why are Haitians vulnerable?

Black people in what is now Haiti boldly rebelled against enslavement on French-owned plantations. Remarkably, they expelled the French and in 1804 established the independent nation they called Haiti.

Haitians boy. Photo: Direct Relief– flickr.com (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Ever since, the United States has spelled trouble for Haiti. Preeminent abolitionist Frederick Douglas pointed out in 1893 that, "Haiti is black and we [the United States] have not yet forgiven Haiti for being black." Long after "Haiti had shaken off the fetters of bondage ... we continued to refuse to acknowledge the fact and treated her as outside the sisterhood of nations."

Scholar and activist William Edward Burghardt DuBois, biographer of abolitionist John Brown, explains that "there was hell in Hayti [*sic*] in the red waning of the eighteenth century, in the days when John Brown was born ... [At that time] the shudder of Hayti was running through all the Americas, and from his earliest boyhood he saw and felt the price of repression – the fearful cost that the western world was paying for slavery."

DuBois's reference was to the US slavocracy and its encouragement of collective fear among many white people that Black workers – bought, owned, and sold – might rise up in rebellion. They did look to the example of Haiti and did rebel – see Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*.

In the United States, from the Civil War on, the prospect of resistance and rebellion on the part of Black people has had government circles and segments of US society on high alert.

That attitude, applied to Haiti, shows in instigation of multinational military occupations, coups, direct military occupations and backing the Duvalier family dictatorship between 1957 and 1986.

Activist lawyer Bill Quigley says, "US-based corporations have for years been teaming up with Haitian elite to run sweatshops teeming with tens of thousands of Haitians who earn less than $2 a day."

Ultimately, it seems, threads of governmental callousness, societal disregard for basic human needs, and outright demagoguery coalesced to thrust Springfield and Haitian migrants into the national spotlight.

People's World
(edited for space)

Updating Russia's nuclear doctrine

Vasily Kashin

According to President Vladimir Putin, the update to Russia's nuclear doctrine has been in the works for at least several months. The catalyst was Ukraine's expansion of both the list of Western weapons it uses and the geography of its military operations against Russia. Obviously, based on these experiences, the country's leadership decided to refine its doctrinal documents and ensure they reflect all the threats that were previously considered insignificant, but which have now come to the fore.

As this is a long process, experts from different countries have been discussing the possible development of the situation for a long time. There is an understanding among our friends that Russia's nuclear deterrence policy will evolve in the current unprecedented conditions. We should not expect any expressions of joy, but neither will there be any significant negative consequences.

The West has a well-developed model for responding to any Russian actions in the nuclear sphere. Officially, it declares that it won't be affected in any way and that it doesn't intend to take Russian warnings into account.

It is worth remembering that during the Ukraine conflict quite radical options have been discussed, including the creation of a no-fly zone, the deployment of NATO troops, the stationing of fighter jets that could operate over Ukrainian soil, and much more. None of this happened, precisely because the Russian side expressed and articulated very painful options for its military response.

Further steps could be additional exercises or the abandonment of some previously accepted restrictions, for example on the storage of tactical nuclear weapons and their concentration in central storage bases. At some point nuclear tests are possible, although there have been statements that Russia will not conduct them before the US does.

The USA has always considered it normal to split bilateral relations in a certain way. On the one hand, they officially set themselves the goal of inflicting a strategic defeat on Russia, and on the other they wish to discuss the issue of arms control. Moscow rejected this approach in 2023. Statements by Russian officials made it clear that dialogue was impossible without a fundamental change in the nature of US-Russian relations.

Because they are only in the early stages of modernising their nuclear forces and it would take many years and a huge amount of money to bring them up to par with Russian forces, the US would like to impose some agreements on both Russia and China to limit them. When they have already established the production and deployment of new strategic nuclear systems, they will waive all restrictions, as they have already done many times with other agreements.

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Sri Lanka's new president, Indian media concern

Indian media has shown concern about the recent election of Anura Kumara Dissanayake's JVP-led National People's Power coalition.

Indian media outlet Deccan Herald talked of "Apprehensions in Delhi" based on the JVP's supposed "history of hostility toward India" and "pro-China leanings." The JVP is known for viewing India with suspicion, given its ideological ties with China and its opposition to the Indo-Sri Lankan Peace Accord of 1987 and India's presence on the island.

The *Times of India* called Dissanayake a "challenge," and a "relatively unknown quantity."

The *Deccan Herald* also noted that Dissanayake has stated in several interviews his willingness to acknowledge India's importance to Sri Lanka.

Lin Minwang, deputy director at the Center for South Asian Studies at Fudan University, told the *Global Times* that while it's true that anti-India sentiment was not hyped up too much during the presidential campaign, India remains concerned, because it believes that in terms of ideology, Dissanayake and the JVP have stronger and closer ties with China.

Hu Zhiyong, a research fellow with the Institute of International Relations at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, told the *Global Times* that Dissanayake's victory proves that the people of Sri Lanka desire change, and strongly disliked India's interference over their domestic issues in the past.

Global Times (edited for space)

US Congress funds propaganda campaign

Peter Farmer

The US House of Representatives approved 25 anti-China laws in just one week in September this year. US website geopoliticaleconomy.com calls this "a clear sign that Washington's new cold war is quickly heating up."

Congress has a Select Committee on the Communist Party of China. That committee called the passing of the laws "China Week." Support for the measures is bipartisan, and NBC news has observed that "viewing [China] primarily as a geopolitical rival is one of the few issues both Republicans and Democrats can agree on."

One of the "China Week" bills was called the "Countering the PRC Malign Influence Fund Authorization Act." It gives US$1.63 billion ($2.4 billion AU) to the State Department and USAID over five years to fund worldwide anti-China propaganda.

Other "China week" bills seek to weaken the renminbi, China's currency, and expand blacklists of Chinese companies. Continuing the US love of sanctioning other nations, other bills seek to impose unilateral sanctions on China and on other countries. Geopoliticaleconomy.com notes that the USA has already imposed sanctions on one-third of all countries on earth, including 60 per cent of poor nations.

UN refugee agency launches urgent appeal for funds for Lebanon

THE United Nations refugee agency has launched an urgent appeal for funds, amid the serious escalation of attacks by Israel on Lebanon.

The UNHCR has warned that the humanitarian consequences are "devastating" as nearly 1,00 people have been killed in the latest attacks at time of writing.

Tens of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes, with numbers growing.

Funds are urgently needed to help provide essential aid, such as shelter, blankets, clean water, cash assistance and medical care for people forced to flee their homes, the agency said.

UNHCR UK chief executive Emma Cherniavsky said: "This is a region that has already been devastated by war, and the toll on civilians is unacceptable.

"An end to the hostilities is desperately needed.

"In the meantime, we urgently need donations to help UNHCR scale up emergency aid, and avert further suffering and devastation."

Australia is ranked 17th in total contributions to the UNHCR, but is 13 on the list of economies by GDP.

Australia continues to cling to the fig-leaf of not directly exporting weapons to Israel, although it allows weapons components used by the IDF to be manufactured here, and abstained on a recent UN motion calling for Israel to cease illegal occupation.

FK

UK Defence minister skirts around demands for nuclear test compensation

British Defence Minister Luke Pollard has avoided addressing demands for compensation for nuclear test veterans at a fringe event at the recent Labour conference.

More than 20,000 personnel were present at British nuclear weapon tests between 1952 and 1967 in Australia and the South Pacific.

Former RAF worker David Kirby confronted the minister about how the Ministry of Defence had repeatedly "shut down" requests for blood records.

He said that the government "don't want bad liabilities coming out," but the veterans deserve to be paid out and know if their children will be affected.

Pollard took the opportunity to commend his own efforts in helping secure medals for the veterans.

He said that the Veterans Minister Alaister Carns has been discussing "next steps" but that he has no "precise update."

After listing other injustices such as the treatment of LGBT veterans and the contaminated blood scandal, Pollard said: "Although sometimes with those things there's questions of compensation, for me, having listened to people affected by many of those concerns, the thing that most of them want as a first step is just understanding that something went wrong, that someone's learned from it, that their pain has been addressed."

The fringe event was sponsored by arms giant BAE Systems, a key supplier to the Israeli military, which has over 50 sites across Britain, and is one of the largest defence contractors in Australia.

Pollard played down Britain's involvement in Israel's atrocities, saying that the country "doesn't export a huge amount of arms to Israel" compared to other countries.

"Every single piece of arms export that we should have as a country must comply with international humanitarian law."

Earlier that day, two activists from Youth Demand, who are calling for a two-way arms embargo on Israel, spray-painted "genocide conference" on the entrance of the conference gates, before being arrested by police.

Morning Star

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Half the Sky

Gender and the broken society

Amelia, Canberra Branch

It is school holidays where I live, and the usually quiet rural commuter bus has become a theatre of Gender War. On one route, a sizeable group of high school boys started bullying a smaller group of young goths, sneering sexist and homophobic slurs, and abusing any adult who tried to stop them. I saw one of the boys from that group on the same bus route the next day. As he enters the bus, a young woman throws a plastic drink bottle at him, shouting at him that he had sexually assaulted her friend. The bus driver tells the young woman to go to the police, worthy advice that would be better in a less broken system. Women know how difficult it is to secure a conviction for sexual assault (the Australian legal system isn't great at convicting rapists, but it certainly is at re-traumatising survivors). The young woman walks away, distressed. The bus driver works for a private transport company. He has to focus on driving. The boy laughs, gets on the bus. I write to the bus company when I get home, as I've done before.

Problems with our society and communities surface in the form of gender violence. Statistics on the sexual assault of girls and young women are harrowing, with a randomly selected sample of Australian women showing at least 45 per cent had experienced at least one unwanted sexual incident by 16 years of age.

Where does all this come from?

Marx and Engels used the phrase "social relations of production" to describe the kinds of societies that form from the economic superstructure of the day, from the way life is reproduced in any given historical period. The economic structure affects everything. Capitalism therefore has its own kind of social relations, as do colonial societies and indeed socialist societies. We can make changes to social relations, but to a large degree it is the social relations that determine us.

It is clear that what we see in our society, which is formed under capitalism, this kind of disharmony, anarchy, brutality – Gender Wars that spring up willy-nilly in the midst of a bus trip – all these phenomena have an origin: the broken social relations of capitalist society. In capitalist society, workers are made to be competitors, boys are taught to be predators, and in the absence of state guidance, groups turn against groups, ethnicities against ethnicities, men against women, subcultures against subcultures. Society deteriorates, it becomes sick, it splinters into warring individuals and groups. Capitalism reveals the brutality that was always at its heart.

But there is nothing universal about it. Society doesn't have to be this way. Societies exist and have existed that are not broken.

Who then is at fault? In a certain way, it's not society's fault. It's the government's fault. Without stewardship in social relations, and without transforming production, a broken society is entirely and completely inevitable.

Communism is the solution. The youth of our time need to be *given* purpose, direction, balance, order. Great propaganda campaigns need to be launched that support social harmony. We need an education that strikes out against the anarchy of our society. Building a socialist society and solving these problems requires infrastructure, real stuff. We need a legal and police system that is equipped to handle sexual assault and domestic violence. We need more women's shelters. We need youth and community organisations to give young people purpose. We need to build a society with hope and accountability.

Building a harmonious, communist society involves planning. It means not just developing the productive forces, but simultaneously addressing social relations – building socialist society *and* transforming the economic base.

Both bourgeois governments and liberal feminist approaches have failed miserably. Trying to make people "nicer human beings," without transforming the economic base simply doesn't work. Likewise, without funding and infrastructure, without education in social harmony, without order, social discipline and collective purpose, the anarchy continues.

Gaza: 12 months of terror

William Briggs

It is now 12 months since Israel's blood-letting in Gaza began. That awful anniversary comes as Israeli bombs rain down on Lebanon. Every day since 7 October 2023, an average of 113 people in Gaza have died.

They have died from bombs, tank shells, machine gun fire, and the combined force of Israel. The USA has funded each of those deaths. The weapons that the USA has supplied, and the component parts for weapons that Australia and all the rest have supplied damns these countries. Even as the bombs continue to fall in Gaza, even as a displaced people wander across the rubble, the bombs fall in increasing intensity on Lebanon.

SPIN AND REALITY

What is the response of the West to the latest acts of mass murder? The same empty phrases are uttered by the same soulless, hollow figures. US Secretary of State Blinken read from a familiar and well-thumbed script saying the region was facing a "precarious" moment. "The path to diplomacy may seem difficult to see at this moment, but it is there and, in our judgement, it is necessary. We will continue to work intensely with all parties to urge them to choose that course."

The truth is that the Biden administration has effectively rejected any calls to halt or even limit the military 'aid' it supplies to Israel. The US gives Israel US$3.8 billion in military assistance every year. Biden has authorised additional weapons sales as the slaughter goes on in Gaza and now in Lebanon. His regime has continued to offer diplomatic backing to Israel to fend off the international condemnation for the atrocities being committed.

The mass killings of Lebanese were furiously underway as the United Nations General Assembly was sitting. The International Criminal Court has sought a warrant for Netanyahu's arrest as a war criminal. Earlier this year, Netanyahu addressed the US Congress and now the same criminal had the floor at the UN.

WAR CRIMINAL PLATFORMED

The Israeli leader told the UN General Assembly that Israel would fight until "total victory." He has refused to consider the calls for a ceasefire in Lebanon. The US and the French have made noises to the effect that a 21-day ceasefire must be brokered. The words are empty ones. The 'breakthrough' in talks and the cessation of hostilities in Gaza has been 'imminent' since May, and yet each day the killing has gone on. Only the naïve could believe that Israel's actions in Lebanon would be any different.

PEACE PLAN

The UN General Assembly also heard Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. He denounced what was happening in Palestine. "This madness cannot continue. The entire world is responsible for what is happening to our people." Abbbas singled out the USA for special condemnation saying that "we regret that the United States, the largest democracy in the world, obstructed three times draft resolutions of the Security Council demanding Israel to observe a ceasefire ... The US alone stood and said, 'No,' the fighting is going to continue."

Abbas put forward a 12-point proposal for Gaza. This included a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, without the establishment of buffer zones or the seizure of any part of Gaza. He said the Palestinian Authority, should govern post-war Gaza as part of a Palestinian state. "We are not asking for more, but we will not accept any less." In the face of Israeli intransigence, brutality and refusal to countenance the idea of a Palestinian state, Abbas once more called for a two-state solution to the crisis. Regardless of US hand-wringing, and regardless of the sanctimonious words of Penny Wong and her global counterparts, Israel will not shift its position, and knows it has the backing of its 'allies.'

LEBANON

It is in the knowledge that it has the backing of the USA and its closest supporters, that Israel can now wreak havoc in Lebanon. It seeks to present the barbaric attacks as creating safe conditions for Israelis in the north of the country who have been evacuated. The evacuations were needed because Hezbollah fired rockets into Israel. This was done as an act of support for Gaza. Hezbollah has repeatedly said they will stop these attacks when a ceasefire is achieved in Gaza. The hostilities in Gaza continue and the disproportionate attacks into Lebanon have grown to the point where an open invasion seems highly likely.

Hundreds of thousands of Lebanese have been forced from their homes. Many have crossed into Syria which has not been exempt from Israeli attack.

The growing ferocity of the attacks, the call-up of reservists, the 'pep-talks' of military leaders to troops, and the demands made by the far-right in Netanyahu's have an air of certainty about them.

While Beirut is being bombed, the bombing goes on unabated in Gaza. Twelve months of horror. Twelve months of trauma. Nearly 42,000 dead Gazans, 113 a day, every day. ✪

Israeli airstrike on Gaza City on October 2023. Photo: Palestinian News & Information Agency (Wafa) in contract with APAimages – (CC BY-SA 3.0)

this madness cannot continue

Gaza Anniversary facts

Since 7 October 2023:

Injured Palestinians: 95,000+

Palestinians killed in Gaza: 42,000+

Palestinians killed in West Bank: 623

Lebanese killed: 1,400+

Amount given to Israeli weapons company Elbit systems by the Australian government: $917 million plus

Yemen fires on Tel Aviv

The Yemeni armed forces fired a ballistic missile 27 September that hit a military target in the Israeli capital, Tel Aviv, injuring at least 17 people, according to Israeli media.

A spokesman for the Yemeni armed forces, Brigadier General Yahya Sari, confirmed the action. The missile, named Palestine-2, overcame the defences of the Zionist entity and forced the closure of the international airport Ben Gurion. All take-offs and landings stopped.

The missile also forced thousands of people to hide in air-raid shelters. Images spread through the Lebanese media outlet *Al Manar* showed settlers running towards shelters. According to press reports, loud explosions were heard in Tel Aviv.

At the same time, Houthi rebels launched a drone into a target in the city of Ashkelon. They also claimed an attack on three US warships which were in the Red Sea supporting Israel.

The Houthis, officially known as the 'Ansar Allah' movement claimed that they used 23 ballistic missiles and drones, achieving a direct impact on the three boats. Simultaneously, they attacked the port of Eilat in southern occupied Palestine.

Through a statement, the Houthi rebels emphasised that their operations are "in support of the Palestinian and Lebanese people as well as in support of the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance," and in rejection of US and British aggression against Yemen.

They warned that further operations would be carried out until the Israeli aggression against Palestine and Lebanon stopped. The Houthis launched a ballistic missile on 15 September last against a military target in Tel Aviv.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi Islamic resistance reported that at about the same time it launched drones against Israeli targets in the occupied Syrian Golan and attacked with a strategic target in occupied Palestine with an al-Arqab missile.

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