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# Whose side are you on?

**Twenty-seven workers died in the construction industry in 2023. Without the CFMEU that figure, in this spectacularly dangerous industry, would have been much higher. The recent Administration Act imposed by the ALP upon the CFMEU leaves construction workers exposed to more deaths and increased levels of employer criminality and neglect. The legislation is not about CFMEU criminality despite the mass media veil and subterfuge.**

Administration of the CFMEU is a political act and we need to defeat the anti-union politics it embodies.

Rally in support of CFMEU, Sydney. Photo: MUA

## WHO BENEFITS FROM ADMINISTRATION?

The government has created the "Scheme of Administration" that drills into the union, not employers and their associates, nor their organisations. It is repressive and effectively a full-scale assault on democracy.

These undemocratic and arbitrary powers of the administrator include:

- Suspension or removal (dismissal) of union officers
- Declarations that offices are vacant
- The timing and control of elections
- Disciplinary actions by the administrator, including expulsion of union members and disqualification of officers for up to 5 years without the need to comply with the union's rules (next elections are due in 4 years' time)
- Termination of employment of employees of the Construction and General Division or its branches
- Arbitrary alteration of the union's rules
- Delegation by the administrator of the administrator's functions or powers
- The engagement or employment of persons by the administrator to assist them.

The bill attempts to override all other legislation such as unfair dismissal laws, allowing the minister to sack democratically elected union officials and other employees.

The Administrator's new "complaints procedure" for example, about "improper, unlawful or criminal" behaviour can only be about an officer or employee of the CFMEU or any of its branches in the Construction and General Division. Thus, members cannot submit complaints about abusive behaviour by employers or their agents.

The real criminals are the construction industry bosses, who effectively murder people by the dozen on a yearly basis. No boss is threatened with administration.

The intent is to make a weak and bureaucratic union, all on the back of untested and untried allegations.

Every industry develops in the context of the class struggle, and that starts with each employer seeking enough profit in competitive processes with other employers. A key to capitalism's competitive advantage lies in driving down safety standards, pay and conditions, and greater exploitation of the workers.

To remove the effectiveness of the union in this context means the building employers and multi-nationals win, certain sections/factions of the ALP win, and overall the ruling class wins because of the ongoing threat to the effectiveness of *all* unions.

## THE ALP ATTACKS AGAIN

The Labor government deliberately chose to design their scheme with the Liberals. To their credit the Greens said, in effect, "we won't be tainted by such disgraceful laws," and opposed them.

The Labor government has taught the conservatives – above and beyond their normal historical legislative and law-based attacks, including Royal Commissions – how to take apart militant unionism.

Nothing will stop this happening if the legislation remains unchallenged. The Coalition is already eyeing this approach, where no union will be safe once big business gets their media mates to make assertions of impropriety in order to destroy any union they wish to target. The ALP is setting the stage for Coalition escalation of anti-union ALP policy.

Examples of this occurring previously are:

- Individual contacts
- Destruction of awards
- Reith's Workplace relations Bill
- The Fair Work Act
- Banning multi-employer bargaining
- Deregistration of the Builders Labourers Federation and Pilots unions
- Productivity trade-offs
- The erroneous economic theory that wages cause inflation
- Privatisation and introducing neo-liberal policies.

## WHO DO LABOR AND LIBERAL REPRESENT?

The early 1890s in Australia was a period of intense class struggle.

The ALP has existed since 1891. It was a political party set up by the trade union movement arising out of the many disastrous and unsuccessful strikes around that time.

The class struggle, the battle between the ruling class and the working class – between capital and labour – needs to be dealt with politically. The ALP's founders believed that the role of the state was to be an impartial body, and that political power, in the form of state control – forming government – would be enough to wrest power from big capital and the ruling class.

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# Guardian

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## Stimulus and opportunity

**The Russian Revolution in 1917 changed forever our understanding of what ordinary men and women can – and did – achieve in building a nationalised, planned economy, liberating women and oppressed minorities, providing employment, education, health, housing and cultural opportunities for all members of society.**

**An alternative to capitalism emerged, proving it was possible to run society without capitalists, inequalities, exploitation, or poverty.**

**The anniversary of this epochal event provides us with an opportunity and a stimulus to consider how we can use its example for the betterment of the Australian people.**

**Today capitalism has bought us to an existential crisis. Millions are faced with unemployment, poverty, cuts, and austerity. Millions more have become refugees. Indigenous communities are ravaged. The very survival of the planetary ecology is threatened by the uncontrolled capitalist market economy and its drive for profits.**

**If we are to effectively fight back against this onslaught, left and progressive forces in Australia must be united in action to change our world as the people did in 1917.**

**The aim must be to co-operation, coalitions and alliances between the left and progressive forces in the first place to strengthen people's struggles, numerically, politically and ideologically.**

**It is to build struggles and fight for policies for the people, against the interests of the transnational corporations, against the neoliberal, pro-big business policies being foisted on us by governments of all shades.**

**In building this mass movement, we must win support for the idea that more fundamental, more lasting change in the people's interest can be brought about by co-operation and being to a higher level.**

**The working class has the leading role to play in building an alternative political movement capable of challenging the economic and political power of capitalism in our country. The working class has this leading role because of its central social position, its strength, organisational capacity and experience in struggle. The struggles of the organised working class for its demands and the struggles of progressive and community organisations are not contradictory processes. They are complementary.**

**We need to connect the working class with other sections of society which are its potential allies. Working class struggles, especially organised trade union ones, should always reach out to the community for support.**

**There's always good reason for such support and many practical ways it can be expressed. Progressive community struggles should always seek the involvement and strength of the working class and trade union movement.**

**This movement exists now. Overall, it does not have a loud voice, it is not very united and it does not have mass support from working people. Nonetheless, it is with us in many areas where we work.**

**There will be many (there are already some) coalitions in the union area, in the peace field, and among community organisations. We have to get more people involved with the many struggles going on now.**

**Our job is to work with others to help build the movement, make it stronger in a good direction, and win more support for it.**

**This work will never be a straight road with everyone marching down it together, it is a messy, complicated process. Advances can be made in one area, around one issue. Then circumstances change and some gains may be lost.**

**We have to find the ways to make the gains last; to strengthen co-operation, coalitions and alliances between the various forces. We need alliances which are fruitful, and become longer-term.**

**We need a strong Communist Party of Australia presence in the mass movement because an advanced perspective of left and progressive unity combined with good policies will be a strong unifying force, enabling a change of direction of politics in Australia.**

**Our job is to make an alliance of left and progressive forces work. We have no other choice if we are to respond to the inspiration of the Russian Revolution and achieve social progress in our own country.**

# Whose side are you on?

Continued from page 1

It was easy to draw the conclusion that if workers, through a political party, could control the state and form government they could end the battle between capital and labour. The Shearers Union General Secretary reported in 1893: "With a Labour government in power, there would be an end to the stoppage of work which acts so inimically to our interests."

This idea that you need government power and state control to stop the need for strikes is erroneous. We need the state to help win strike struggles, but no capitalist state will or can do this.

No Labor government in power has ever stopped the class struggle in its tracks. No Labor government has ever had control of the state apparatus, the courts, the military, or even complete control of a legislative agenda.

Employers never cease to wage the class struggle, regardless of the capitalist government in power. If workers cease to wage the class struggle, they surrender the political field to the employers and strengthen the employer position. The very essence of capitalism is class rule and the exploitation of one person by another. There is no non-class capitalism or non-class state apparatus.

The Accord, a class-collaborationist social contract between Labor and the ACTU in the 1980s, demonstrated this.

The net result of deterring workers from engaging in class struggle in favour of having a seat at the table with government was to:

1. Destroy trade union density
2. Stop workers waging class struggle – while the employers continued their attacks
3. Shift the national income distribution away from the workers towards the employing class
4. Lower the standard of living of Australian workers.

The bottom line is the ALP and the Liberals represent the same class forces. They do it differently on a range of issues, but neither represents the interests of the working class.

The ALP relies on class collaboration. The conservatives prefer a blunt instrument.

The CFMEU administration legislation is being implemented through class collaboration, and in particular by the ACTU. This collaborative approach is a pattern in the ACTU, and the struggle against this approach most certainly remains an important and necessary arena of class struggle. Organising against the dominance of class collaborationism and ALP control over unions should be a key arena of struggle for militant unions who want to be independent from the clutches of social-democracy.

The CPA contends that the ACTU should not be split, but should become an unrelenting battle-ground for progressive, militant and class struggle-based unionism.

### THE VEIL OF CRIMINALITY

No one should support corrupt union officials. Members have the right to dump them and they should. But seriously, you can't shout corruption through the mouthpieces of the employers and ruling class media and then have governments jump in to smash a union without proper process, no proof, and on the basis of unfounded allegations.

All anyone has to do – and the Liberals will do it even more vigorously – is cry corruption and lawlessness.

Then we can expect to see an extension of how lawlessness is defined. How long before a picket line is described as thuggish and coercive behaviour? How about scabs? There is already serious case law to prosecute workers defending against scabbery and the undermining of strikes and struggles against bosses.

Currently, the grubby multinational Qube is suing 20 wharfies in Melbourne for taking "protected" industrial action. The lines of legality and lawlessness are already being redrawn and this process will escalate under a Liberal government. How long before a Right of Entry bureaucratic slip will be trespass? Employers will continue to exploit this approach and will keep having a legal shot at the stumps until they create precedents and continue to create an image of union lawlessness.

This will be done with the support of the ruling class media in all its forms to create a false condition that must be arrested through placing more unions into administration.

The bottom line is you and your union could easily be next.

This is not about the CFMEU. It is about unions that stand up to the employers and ruling class. The legislation must be defeated and never allowed to occur again.

### WHAT TO DO?

The CPA supports the "Your Union Your Choice" campaign.

https://your-union-your-choice.raiselysite.com/

https://www.facebook.com/p/Your-Union-Your-Choice-61564648662655/

We all need to work within our unions and across the broader movement to campaign for unions to oppose this treacherous legislation and ruling class attempt to completely destroy the trade union movement.

### TAKE ACTION!

- Win support of your workplace and urge your union to oppose the administration scheme
- Attend every CFMEU rally and action
- Hold public forums to put the truth about administration to the public
- Be active online in support of the CFMEU and against administration
- Support the Your Union Your Choice High Court case by donating.

ERRATUM: In *Guardian* #2120, 14 October, our article 'Cuba sanctions: background and update' says "The Cuban government estimates *el bloqueo* (the blockade) has cost the national economy over US$150 billion in lost revenue." In fact, a 2016 Cuban government source describes the losses at just under $900 billion

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**Hands off our Union!**

Labor and the Coalition have teamed up to pass the most **draconian, anti-union laws** in Australia's history.

**The laws:**

- deny rank-and-file CFMEU members the right to run and control their own union.
- violate international law.
- violate the rule of law and basic fundamental rights.

The CFMEU is a strong and effective union that belongs to its members - not politicians.

This is an attack on all unions and workers and we must fight back!

**Stand up for your union and help us take this fight to the High Court!**

Donate: https://your-union-your-choice.raiselysite.com/

# Inflation: the workers' burden

A Carruthers & Anna Pha

**The RBA (Reserve Bank of Australia), the last relic of economic planning in Australia, ostensibly Australia's central national bank, has a very limited range of things it actually does. The RBA is obsessed with reducing inflation to within a narrow band of 2-3 per cent per annum, regardless of the impact on the economy or workers.**

It choked household budgets and small businesses by increasing the official interest rate 4.25 percentage points in just 18 months. This sent mortgage repayments through the roof, with landlords hopping on the bandwagon and hiking rent. In short, the RBA does nothing but punish the working class to maintain the system of financial capitalism.

Yet the mainstream media reportage of inflation is a lie: they claim that increasing interest rates solves inflation. All increasing interest rates does is punish workers and increase profits for the finance sector and the ruling class.

The RBA hikes interest rates to punish workers and protect the real estate and insurance sectors, the pillars of the corporate dictatorship we live under. The rise in interest rates increases the cost of living for workers. It leads to unemployment while increasing the profits of banks and landlords.

## WHAT IS PRICE INFLATION?

Price inflation (Consumer Price Index) (CPI) in Australia is measured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The CPI is a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by households for a fixed basket of goods and services.

Put simply, price inflation happens when money loses its value, and as a consequence workers' wages have less purchasing power. This loss of value of money is seen when prices rise. The faster prices rise, the faster a currency loses its purchasing power.

From the perspective of workers and households, inflation is associated with rising cost of housing, food, utilities, healthcare, transport, and other essentials.

## CAUSES OF INFLATION

The most common reason for inflation is when companies decide to hike the price of goods or services on the domestic market – sheer profit-gouging. There are other factors such as an increase in the amount of money in circulation. We witnessed this when the RBA 'printed money' during the pandemic.

There are also external factors like the price of petrol increasing in times of war, but even then petrol companies hide behind these rises to top up profits by increasing prices by much more than necessary to compensate for those additional costs.

Capitalist economists, the Fair Work Commission, employers, some trade union leaders and the major political parties subscribe to the myth that wage rises are the cause of inflation.

They claim that the prices of commodities are determined by wages. This is then used as an excuse to suppress wages. They even talk about a 'wage-price spiral.' This is utter nonsense.

The myth achieves several purposes. It serves to hide the real causes of inflation as well as suppressing wage rises and class struggle.

Under the Prices and Incomes Accord between the ACTU and the Labor Party in 1983, trade unions agreed to restrain wages to help contain inflationary pressures and reduce unemployment. (The claim that wage rises cause unemployment is another capitalist myth that was adopted by the ACTU).

In fact, the RBA is the cause of unemployment, because it intentionally keeps the 'reserve labour army' of the unemployed between 5 and 6 per cent. By setting out to shrink the economy it causes unemployment. It does not want to rein in monopoly or asset-price inflation.

Privatisation of infrastructure, which creates monopolised services, is the true cause of inflation. Privatisation and financialisation pushed the cost of housing, medical care, and infrastructure (think tollways, toll roads), way up. That's another cause, not workers' wages.

Since the Accord, it has been a downward slippery slope in real wages. The most recent increase in inflation was not caused by rising wages. They were stagnant or decreasing.

Image: dominiquechappard – openclipart.com (CC0)

Up until the Accord, the trade union movement had steadfastly rejected the notion that inflation was caused by wage rises.

That myth paints a picture of employers being on the receiving end of aggressive, coercive actions by workers and their unions. The truth is, workers are on the receiving end of price increases arbitrarily imposed by big business. Their actions in support of wage increases are attempts to overcome the lag between inadequate wages and ever rising prices.

## NO STATE REGULATION

What we don't see from the RBA or government are two things: real economic planning, and state-enforced regulation of monopoly. If as we have claimed, monopoly capitalism and privatisation are the true causes of inflation, then the role of the government should be to reign them in, stop the sell-off, and regulate or break up monopolies when they get too big.

On the other hand, instead of existing to just raise interest rates and punish workers, the RBA could participate in the whole financial planning process. It could play a positive role in allocating resources, growing domestic circulation, looking to new productive forces like green energy, and biodiversity. It could explore new avenues for the economy.

For that we will need a people's government uncorrupted by corporate interests, a government led by the people that has a handle on its economy, not a government under the thumb of the corporate board of the RBA and monopoly capital.

**The RBA hikes interest rates to punish workers and protect real estate and insurance**

# Media housing lies

A Carruthers

**Australian mainstream media has been sprouting the same nonsense on housing given by Master Builders' Australia – that the current housing crisis is simply due to "union blocking" and "government red tape." The line is that if only the unions got out of the way and the government cut red tape, things would get better. This is codswallop.**

## LABOR OR GREENS?

Labor's approach to housing is through the Housing Australia Future Fund, a corporatist approach. The "Future Fund" approach dates back to Peter Costello – it came into being through selling off Telstra in 2006, taking the temporary income from the sale and putting it into the Fund. One of the Funds is now for Housing.

The stupidity of the Fund idea is that when you sell off government assets, fixed capital, *you never get it back*. The financial model leads to decline in profit for the government because it no longer owns the core assets. This approach always leads to decline in the total assets, a lack of return from the assets, and therefore a decline in the ability to plan through the assets. The Future Funds are managed by the US Northern Trust Corporation in Chicago, who have zero interest in building our national economy, zero interest in people.

A lot of the challenges given by the Greens have been given negative treatment in corporate media. Is that fair?

Not really. Their campaigns on rent control are largely correct as a regulatory measure in the short term. The rent freeze is the type of reform that the working class need right now. Moreover we can agree with the Greens on two core issues; building public housing, and cracking down on private landlordism, seizing empty investment properties.

## SOCIALIST APPROACH

However the Greens' good policies are not enough. What workers' governments can do is expand state assets, and build directly using state assets and pioneering state-owned enterprises to boost home ownership. The highest levels of home ownership in the world are Laos, Cuba, China, Vietnam and the Eastern European countries. Laos is the second highest at 97 per cent. China at 93 per cent. Eastern Europe retains these levels of ownership due to the legacy of socialism.

How does it get this high? In part because of socialist rule-of-law on housing as a human right. In socialist countries investment properties are subject to heavy market regulation by the upper Ministries. Everybody is entitled to one home, for themselves or their family, not a property portfolio. As Xi Jinping put it, "houses are for living in, not for speculation."

Yet it isn't just about legal measures. There is also a material aspect – building. Socialist unions and builders themselves are conscious of their role in the larger planning mechanism. The government and the Communist Party encourages whole-working-class commitment to the right to housing. Building means something. It's not the government getting out of the way, *it's the government getting right in the middle of things, overseeing the entire planning process.*

By contrast, the Australian government attacks builders by trying to destroy the CFMEU, and uses racism to blame international students for the housing crisis.

Socialist planning, of course, is the subject of great scorn in the capitalist world. Even this long after the fall of the Eastern Bloc, it's very rare to hear discussions about it in the West. But this is precisely how we could get home ownership into the 90 per cent range. Arguably it's the only way to get there. Rational thinking tells us that, despite the perceived rigidity of the planning process, without it things just get worse.

But to get to the point of having 90 per cent home ownership rates, we first need to campaign for an overhaul of the housing system, fix the current mess, regulate the system, restore members' ownership of the CFMEU, and push the Liberals and the Labor Party out of power. That is our present task.

# When the King comes knocking

Denis Doherty

A place of peace for public housing tenants now gone.

**There was only one line in the major media about King Charles III vising an inner-city housing development in Sydney. The Minister for Housing Rose Jackson said this: "I was pleased to welcome His Majesty King Charles III to public housing that the government is building in Glebe. Quite genuinely, His Majesty had a real passion for not just the provision of affordable housing, which he spoke about fondly, but also the provision of sustainable building design and beautiful public homes that last. She went on to say some other things of breathtaking hypocrisy "All of us … could learn a thing or two from the commitment of His Majesty to public housing." We have failed to see the commitment to public housing in the new government. In fact there does not seem to be much difference between the LNP and Labor governments of NSW regarding public housing.**

The back story to this development and spot was that around 2018 the LNP government of Gladys Berejiklian was fully engaged in privatising public housing under the confusing title of 'communities plus.' Approximately 30 people, who had been living quietly and not causing any trouble, were suddenly evicted from buildings in Cowper St, Glebe, and an announcement was made that these buildings would be replaced by 8 storeys towers and the world would be a better place because the 'Princes Trust' would be involved. Some of the people evicted were people who had previously been evicted from Millers Pt (another piece of vandalism near Circular Quay). A large Aboriginal family was also evicted.

There were two other problems with this plan, first the Prince's Trust (PT) chaired by former Foreign Minister Julie Bishop could not be expected to know much of what was needed for inner City residents of Sydney. Questions about the PT such as what role would it have? Would it donate money to the project were met with firm silence. Eventually it emerged that the PT would manage the project after it was completed and that there would an extra room for recreation – very sustainable!

The other problem was that one of the buildings demolished was an architectural gem, nevertheless it was broken up and the bits taken away.

Come October 2024, the Prince, now King Charles III visits the site and is fed a story about sustainable public housing and how keen everyone is about public housing in the NSW government. The reality is quite different to the smarmy words of the minister. In the NSW State Labor and Federally there is real antagonism to public housing as both governments try to shift housing into the hands of 'Community Housing Providers' (CHP). NSW Labor has saved one complex from demolition and renovated 30 houses in Glebe, yet it is still demolishing and rebuilding public housing in the inner city.

The time is now for the NSW state government to build and run public housing in this state, and to forget the flummery of a Prince's or King's trust.

# Qantas workers win again

**Four years on from being outsourced, and a year after the High Court unanimously agreed the outsourcing was illegal, 1,700 former Qantas workers have had yet another win in the Federal Court with Qantas ordered to pay compensation for economic and non-economic losses, in the largest case of illegal sackings in Australian history.**

In 2020 the Transport Workers Union (TWU) used its powers under the *Fair Work Act* to successfully challenge the illegal sackings, despite Qantas fighting its own workers all the way to the High Court. Illegally sacked workers were hit hard by the outsourcing, many suffering from mental illness, experiencing family breakdowns and having difficulty finding new work.

Justice Lee rejected Qantas' bizarre legal argument that he should "surgically remove" the illegal conduct and not award any compensation for economic loss at all. This type of legal delaying tactic has seen Qantas drag its own workforce through the courts for nearly 4 years to try and deny them justice.

Three unanimous rulings from the Federal Court and High Court found Qantas breached the *Fair Work Act* by outsourcing the workers to prevent them accessing industrial rights to collectively bargain and take protected industrial action.

Three test cases were brought to compensation hearings. Justice Lee has determined that all three are entitled to compensation for economic loss as well as compensation for hurt and suffering.

The Court found that economic compensation should be limited to twelve months following the outsourcing decision, and that non-economic compensation amounts would be paid within a range based on each of the test cases of $30,000, $40,000 and $100,000.

The parties will now be ordered to come to an agreement on monetary compensation amounts for individuals, within the parameters set out by the Federal Court decision.

TWU National Secretary Michael Kaine congratulated workers on another victory after a long process.

"These workers have stood by each other for four years as Qantas dragged them through the courts, and now they've been vindicated once again: they deserve to be compensated for the hell Qantas put them through.

"Qantas says it's turned over a new leaf. Well, it's time to prove it. After relentlessly prolonging this case and denying workers justice, Qantas must do everything in its power to ensure appropriate compensation to workers. They should not have to suffer a day longer after the last four years of anguish.

"The TWU took on Australia's biggest corporate bully at a time workers were told they were just a casualty of the pandemic. In reality they were victims of a systematic attempt by Qantas to decimate the pay and conditions of its workforce.

"It's astounding that Qantas attempted to argue it should not pay a dollar of compensation to workers it illegally sacked to prevent them accessing workplace rights. It was an added kick in the guts after the pain and suffering the airline has caused to these workers and their families. The Federal Court has rejected this argument, and delivered justice to the workers by ordering Qantas compensate them.

"This unprecedented mass illegal sacking event was the swansong of Alan Joyce's 15 year plan to systematically destroy good, secure aviation jobs. It brought the industry to rock bottom. To rebuild our essential aviation industry, workers, passengers and the community need a voice through an independent regulator. The TWU is using new laws passed by the Albanese government to start the process of rebuilding decent, secure aviation jobs, and will continue to campaign for a Safe and Secure Skies Commission to rebalance aviation and ensure it meets the needs of the nation."

Transport Workers Union

PM Anthony Albanese has rejected accusations from Beijing that his country is "plagued by systemic racism and hate crimes." Beijing spoke out after an Australian diplomat led a group of Western nations in making unsubstantiated claims about human rights violations in China.

"When it comes to China, we've said we'll co-operate where we can, we'll disagree where we must and we'll engage in our national interest, and we've raised issues of human rights with China," Albanese said as he arrived in the Pacific Island nation of Samoa for a Commonwealth leaders' summit.

The day before, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian had denounced a statement made by 15 nations to the UN general assembly this week – presented by Australia's ambassador to the UN – that recycled "ongoing concerns" about alleged "serious human rights violations" in Xinjiang and Tibet.

The countries were all US allies, mostly European. No Muslim-majority country has accused China of repressing its Uighur Muslim minority.

The statement delivered by ambassador James Larsen amounted to "political manipulation under the pretext of human rights," Jian said.

Singling out Australia for a rebuke, he said the country was "long plagued by systemic racism and hate crimes," and should resolve its own problems instead of criticising China.

Jian condemned what he said was Australia's hypocrisy, citing its treatment of refugees, immigrants, and Indigenous people.

"Australian soldiers have committed abhorrent crimes in Afghanistan and other countries during their military operations overseas," he said, referring to findings that elite Australian troops unlawfully killed 39 Afghan prisoners, farmers, and civilians between 2005 and 2016.

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PARASITE OF THE WEEK: is the NT government. Territorians have condemned a CLP Finocchiaro government plan to give unprecedented sweeping powers to a new bureaucrat known as the "Territory Coordinator" that would allow the Chief Minister to override existing environmental regulations and wave through major projects like fracking in the Beetaloo Basin.

It followed accusations from Territory Labor that the CLP was attempting to keep the reforms "secret" from the wider public, after they were quietly released to select stakeholders. Under the proposed changes, the Coordinator would be given escalatory powers allowing them to override watchdog agencies and "exempt" projects from certain Acts before referring major projects like fracking to the Chief Minister for a final, subjective decision.

Frack Free NT spokesperson Pete Callender said the CLP was attempting to make it easier for fracking projects to lay waste to the Territory by overriding what little environment legislation existed.

"Fracking is really dangerous, risky business. As we've already witnessed in the Territory, fracking has the potential to cause serious contamination incidents. Yet this CLP proposal would totally override the Territory's already substandard environmental protections.

"Fracking has the potential to poison the Territory's precious water resources. Giving fracking companies the ability to bypass environmental regulations only increases this risk.

"The powers the Finocchiaro government wants to hand to this unelected bureaucrat are extremely alarming. They're profoundly undemocratic and bordering on authoritarian.

"These new laws would provide the government of the day with unprecedented and unwarranted ability to override community and environmental concerns.

"Ordinary Territorians need to follow the rules. We can't drive a car without a licence, or build a new home without getting the necessary approvals. However, this Finocchiaro government plan gives powers to an unelected bureaucrat to exempt some of the biggest and most polluting developments like fracking from any environmental regulatory oversight. The CLP government must not be allowed to get away with it."

# Queensland elections

David Matters

**An election contested based on who could be tougher on children, with an underlying appeal to racism. A strategic flip towards making abortion an issue, and flipping votes from young women back to the Labor Party.**

A preference deal between the two major parties as a means of unseating non-two-party candidates. A resurgence of the tacit alliance between the One Nation and LNP who form the cover for regional reaction.

The issues that sit at the heart of the political slide are still unresolved. Housing and homelessness remain in record numbers. Racism towards first nation people will be ramped up. Developers will have a paradise while paradise will continue to be lost.

The attack on construction workers will be deepened by this government. Unclear are what attacks are in the making by this newly elected conservative-led parliament. The struggle within the Labor Party is intended to deepen conservative hold over that party with the destruction of left-leaning forces.

Public transport as an issue was neutralised with the introduction of 50 cent fares, and rolling out new transport infrastructure in time for the 2032 Olympics. What is not clear is the level of attack being prepared against workers to fund this infrastructure push.

What is most amazing is just how slow these construction companies are in building this new public transport. The Victoria bridge has been resurfaced now at least five times, rerouting of bus stops has been going for years.

Instead of attacking construction unions a real inquiry is needed into the tenders issued for these infrastructure projects to answer why it takes years to do seemingly minor construction work.

The population centres in North Queensland have been under pressure since COVID and closures of major industry throughout, with the increased shedding of labour in the mines. Mt Isa faces a major shift as the mines are earmarked for closure.

The political shift is towards Brisbane as the central political force with the massive population increases in Southeast Queensland. The population centres represented by

Comrades at the Sunshine Coast.

the continuous housing stretching from west to east and south to north. Housing estates now continue along all these corridors. This population and political shift was apparent in the short term of the Newman government.

During the Bjelke-Petersen years, the state government relied on a gerrymander that favoured rural constituencies. We now have a large population concentration in Southeast Queensland. Brisbane City Council was originally a Labor Party stronghold but, is now held by the LNP.

So, we have a situation where the Greens controlled three major seats federally in Brisbane while Labor held the state seats. Now, we have a LNP Council and an LNP government. In the next federal elections, the Labor Party and the LNP will no doubt cooperate to remove Greens from federal seats.

The slide to the right of the political parties will continue while the needs of the people will remain unsatisfied. The fight on crime will lead to even higher incarceration rates on top of already high rates of incarceration. The already privatised government assets will face new forms of privatisation. This is what happened under the short lived Borbidge LNP government. The electorate didn't have the stomach to absorb more of these attacks under the Newman government.

This election may be a bellwether for the next federal election. Reactionaries in the Labor Party are going to support the LNP government and its reaction to any small l liberal reforms proposed by the Greens.

This means that the future governments in Queensland will deepen the existing crisis.

# Queensland's right turn to Alabama

Graham Holton

**Years ago, I met US visitor to Queensland who said it was like being in Alabama. The 28 October LNP win has turned the Sunshine State back into Alabama again.**

The pundits had predicted a landslide to LNP. The early counting looked like a Labor win, but the 2 million prepoll votes pushed the LNP to a win of 50 seats, a clear majority over Labor's predicted 36 seats. Labor suffered a 10 per cent shift in the rural regions. Cities such as Mackay and Rockhampton, which had been under Labor for over 100 years, have now turned to the LNP. Although Premier Steven Miles (Labor) had not conceded a loss, David Crisafulli (LNP) declared himself the new premier of Queensland. The Greens and One Nation won no seats.

The Sunshine Coast Communist Party branch had designed "Any Party but LNP" posters and fliers to hand out at the Nicklin electorate, Nambour, which was won by Labor by only 84 votes in the previous election. Despite our fliers, the Nicklin, Redcliffe and Pumicestone electorates in the Sunshine Coast Branch area turned to the LNP. Despite this, the day created solidarity for the important work the branch is doing.

LNP promises include Adult Crime Adult Time for youth offenders, lower hospital ramping times, and public service attrition. Like Victorian premier Jeff Kennett before him, Crisafulli will use consultants to slash spending. The 2018 Abortion Law is now threatened. Crisafulli wants to turn Queensland into a powerhouse by attracting mining investments, which means the end of the Coal supertax. Whether Crisafulli will be another one-term premier, like Campbell Newman before him, will depend on the damage his right-wing policies do to our society and the economy.

# Broken Hill storms report

John Hart

**Severe storms hit Broken Hill at midnight 16 October. Winds were over 130km/hour, and there were over 130,000 lightning strikes per hour for 24 hours.**

Seven transmission towers were destroyed in the storm, severing the connection of the region with the national power grid.

Our grid link is 220 MW, but the backup generator is 14 MW, 15 times smaller than the usual feed. We are told that there is enough rooftop solar to assist the generator to supply the town during daylight hours but more is needed to supply evening power when locals prepare meals and use air conditioning. The increased demand for energy exceeds the backup generator's ability to provide, resulting in 'load sharing,' whereby parts of the town are disconnected from power for two to six hours. Residents were informed that power would be shut down for six hours every three days to allow maintenance on the only functioning generator.

The continued and random power outages have caused widespread losses in the hospitality, tourism, retail and food service sectors. Two popular restaurants have reported losses of $20,000 each in wasted food, forced closures, and loss of customers. Supermarkets have disposed of perishable items such as dairy and meat in excess of $10,000 a day until backup generators were installed.

Meals on Wheels lost all food in storage and could not deliver meals in the first few days of the outage. The elderly living at home struggled to find the toilet at night. Electronics such as fall sensors, security alarms, and cordless telephones stopped working. Several hundred residents suffer from sleep apnea, requiring power for CPAP units to maintain breathing during the night.

The mining industry halted operations on 16 October when the transmission lines collapsed. Local generation cannot supply the power needed for these operations. Miners and staff have been put on 'standby,' meaning no work or pay unless you have holidays owing. Smaller engineering and remote mining companies are on their own.

People are talking about a freak tornado causing the damage, but the elephant in the room is privatisation. Twenty years of government neglect and the selling of the transmission assets to private enterprises are the root causes of this mess. The transmission towers are raw steel, now rusted and corroded after over 20 years in the harsh outback climate. It was only ten or so years ago when high winds took down towers near Wentworth. This has happened before and nothing was learned.

Both emergency generators in Broken Hill are gas turbines, which are expensive to buy, maintain, and run. There was no urgency to repair the faulty unit last year; what could go wrong? As usual the service provider created a false economy. The 'saving' on delayed generator repairs has resulted in 57 more generators being connected at a huge cost, plus a daily fuel bill far exceeding the consumption of the failed gas turbine.

The sale of NSW transmission assets by the previous state government has resulted in the usual results of rent-seeking service providers. Their business model is: acquire the assets below actual value, extract maximum price for the service, avoid repairs and maintenance that would divert funds from profit, and evade responsibility when the savings come back to bite them.

# Housing crisis?

TT

**Engels wrote a pamphlet in 1872 titled *The Housing Question*. It was a polemic criticising ideas advanced by Pierre Joseph Proudhon, a French anarchist and utopian socialist, that the Housing Problem could be solved by a simplistic plan where workers paid rent that could be redeemed over a long period of time and eventually transfer ownership of the rented house or apartment to the worker.**

Engels argues that Proudhon wants to transform the workers into capitalists, that he doesn't understand the real economic and social conditions of the workers and their exploitation and that the housing problem for workers is integral to the system of exploitation under capitalism where housing has become a commodity for profit.

Engels is saying that to solve the housing question we must abolish the system of capitalism and housing for profit.

Engels' *Housing Question* written in 1872 and the housing crisis faced by workers in 2024 have common threads but the problems have become intensified with the monopolisation and internationalisation of capital.

In Australia like other developed capitalist countries, we had a system of public housing that started here in 1912 but got a big boost in the 1930s, mainly as a response to the deprivations of the Great Depression.

Lidcombe in Sydney, like many Australian suburbs, had two tent cities of unemployed who had been evicted from their homes because they were unable to pay the rent.

It's worthwhile noting that the Communist Party led a successful campaign to fight evictions; they would mobilise people to form pickets outside homes where evictions were occurring and hold off the police.

In response to the forced evictions of workers, and record unemployment levels in the Depression, Labor Premier Jack Lang, a ferocious anti-communist, property developer, and real estate agent was forced to champion reforms to stop evictions and restrict rent rises. It's arguable this was the impetus for the development of the public housing model in Australia.

In Lang's eyes this was a necessary reform to protect the interests of capitalists including himself, but not all capitalists were united around this and it was one of the reasons why Lang was deposed as Premier of NSW and expelled from the Labor Party.

It's ironic that one of Jack Lang's admirers, none other than Bankstown lad young Paul Keating set about dismantling the system of public housing when he was Treasurer and later PM during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The Hawke/Keating government moved away from funding built public housing to providing rent subsidies for low-income earners. This was arguably the beginning of the end for public housing as we knew it.

Prior to this, state governments funded by federal government grants built up to 35 per cent of all new housing as public housing. This was a very effective control on rents and house prices in the private market.

The decline in funding for public housing was closely followed by state governments, particularly Labor state governments, selling off public housing more often than not to investors. In the case of NSW, that meant investors with links to the Labor Finance Minister Joe Tripodi.

Some terms worth understanding:

Public Housing – owned and managed by the government (rapidly becoming extinct).

Social Housing – contracted out by government to both private and 'not-for-profit' Community Housing Providers (CHPs). CHPs can be deceptive, have a look at the directors. Many have links to large developers. Their clients are people who are mostly on benefits (unemployment, aged pension, disabled and sickness).

Affordable housing – owned and managed by CHPs and rented out at a rate lower than the market. The recipients can be people defined as necessary, essential or emergency workers (police, fire fighters, nurses or teachers particularly in communities with a big shortage of rental accommodation).

## SOCIAL & AFFORDABLE HOUSING QUOTAS

Councils are encouraged to set quotas on new high density housing projects for a percentage of apartments to be available for social and affordable housing tenants. In return the developer gets concessions on the local environment plans and development control plan requirements, and can build, for example, 3 storeys higher than usually permitted – a big advantage to the developer in terms of profits. Often there are time limitations where the 'Social and Affordable Housing' lasts for an agreed period of time and then reverts to the developer/owner.

In Lidcombe NSW we have a new high rise development aptly named Lidcombe Rise, it was originally a row of public housing on Church St, Lidcombe. As the public tenants moved on, the houses were demolished one by one until none were left standing. Property NSW owns the land (NSW government) now but a private developer (Billbergia) has built a row of towers on the site, mostly private apartments with a smaller number of 'Affordable and Social Housing' apartments. So now there are privately owned apartments on public land.

Interestingly, the CHP which manages the Social and Affordable Housing component of the Billbergia development "Lidcombe Rise" is Evolve. Evolve has transformed itself over the last decade from a small community friendly not for profit CHP to a big corporatised organisation. When you look at the who's who of directors on their board it becomes apparent that some have direct links to the developer/construction industry. A standout is David Borger a full time lobbyist for Western Sydney business interests.

David Borger has history as an urban planner on Auburn Council at a time when the council was enveloped in corruption scandals. Borger moved on to become Mayor of Parramatta and one-time State Member for Granville, quickly promoted to Housing Minister in the NSW Labor government. The good people of Granville appreciated his efforts so much they dumped him as a one-term member in a traditionally safe Labor seat. Borger quickly moved to become the spokesperson lobbyist for Western Sydney business and the go-to person for the Murdoch media to support high density development being dumped on the people of Western Sydney.

In the 2022 Census there were 125,000 public housing properties in NSW. That number is rapidly declining.

## PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS

We have seen a big shift in the consciousness of the public. Housing has become about investment and not primarily about shelter. Among people lucky enough to own their own homes, property values are a big talking point. Also, community and not-for-profit organisations no longer speak about public housing, they refer to Social, Community or Affordable Housing. Of course there is often a conflict of interest where they rely on government funding, so they change their language appropriately.

The propaganda through mainstream media never stops. Turn on the news today and you are treated to coverage of bonny King Charlie visiting a NSW Housing Project, supposedly meeting workers and the public but all coats and ties with the cover of fluorescent safety vest and helmet.

So, the deregulation, privatisation, economic rationalism, and neoliberal policies of the Hawke/Keating government were important in eroding public housing, but also important in igniting speculation on housing. They helped create the conditions for capitalism to run amuck.

The Special Rapporteur to the UN Human Rights Council calls it "the financialisation of housing," and describes how structural changes have occurred internationally that have led to massive amounts of global capital being invested in housing as a commodity. This has led to an imbalance in the accumulation of wealth. The impact, of course, is on those with little or no wealth and their right to adequate housing.

Should we be surprised?

As Engels highlights in *The Housing Question*, this is how capitalists maximise their profits, and reforms within the system that are not enough to resolve the housing problem.

## CHALLENGES

Our challenges are the need to develop an alternative narrative, to refute the terminology of 'social and affordable housing,' and to expose that these reforms only fuel speculation by feeding the very capitalists responsible for unaffordable housing.

35 per cent of all new housing should be public housing. Public housing needs to be put back on the agenda as a government social responsibility.

We need to expose how public wealth is used (stolen) and transferred into the pockets of private investors through negative gearing, subsidies whereby private investors have their mortgages paid by subletting private properties to public housing tenants.

Regulation needs to limit rent increases, to stop unfair evictions, and aim for rents to be no higher than 25 per cent of a workers' income.

There should be a stop to foreign investment and control of domestic housing. Put a stop to housing investment being used to clean dirty money.

We need to point out the NIMBY – YIMBY debate is a diversion from the main issues and helps to camouflage the real problems.

We should campaign against property developers being elected and making decisions on government bodies especially councils where they influence decisions they profit from.

It's important to highlight that the attacks on workers' rights (CFMEU) in the construction industry are part of the attack on regulation and building controls.

**Housing has become about investment, and not primarily about shelter**

# Is Hamas in these cookies?

Alex McKinnon

**Antisemitism is sweeping across university campuses, or at least it is if you have the bad judgement to still be reading *The Saturday Paper* in this year of our Lord 2024.**

In last weekend's edition, *Saturday Paper* associate editor Martin McKenzie-Murray largely rehashed an article published in *The Australian* in May, only five months later and in twice as many words. At the centre of both articles is University of Sydney director of European studies Professor Peter Morgan, who was confronted by pro-Palestinian student activists during a lecture and has been sooking about it ever since.

Besides the fact that the students chanted "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" – described by Morgan as "sinister" and by McKenzie-Murray as "sufficiently ambiguous that its justification is elastic" – Morgan claims the intrusion into his lecture was antisemitic "at the deepest level" because "it identified Jews, per se, as the executors of military operations which you as a pro-Palestinian object to." It's at this point, some 1,600 words into the article, that McKenzie-Murray remembers to mention Morgan himself is not Jewish.

McKenzie-Murray's thinking is more fully on display in 'Hard Choices, Parlous World', a recent interview published on his Substack. (I apologise for making you aware of the title.) In a 5,000-word exchange with conservative commentator Gray Connolly, McKenzie-Murray writes that "Hamas must wear responsibility" for "Israel's response to October 7" and engages in some misty-eyed and baffling historical revisionism in which Israel and Bill Clinton's tireless efforts to broker peace were scuttled by intransigent Palestinians.

Recently pro-Palestine groups on uni campuses around the country organised a National Week of Action for Palestine. Students and staff held film screenings, staged strikes and hosted tree-planting events and educational webinars.

One of these hotbeds of antisemitism was courageously shut down by University of Sydney security. The campus Autonomous Collective Against Racism organised a bake sale on Eastern Avenue to (antisemitically, one assumes) raise money for a family of one of their member's friends, who are in Gaza and are trying to evacuate to Egypt.

"We had a really fun time the night before – cupcakes, Mars Bar slices, different cookies," says Hazel, who helped organise the event. "It was a very cute vibe."

(Reports that Hamas were physically inside these baked goods remain unconfirmed, although the fact that the cookies have not yet been carpetbombed by the IDF suggests any Hamas militants once within them have since vacated.)

About half an hour after the bake sale set up shop, students noticed a security guard "lingering," taking photos and talking on his radio. After a University of Sydney representative arrived, they were informed that the bake sale was "not in line with the campus access policy."

"They said we needed to shut down in the next ten minutes, otherwise 'we would see what would happen,'" Hazel says. "When we tried to ask what they meant, they didn't respond. They were quite hostile and intimidating – they were very rude to us and acting like we had ulterior motives."

"Since we knew they would escalate, either by calling the police or by taking our ID cards and initiating disciplinary action like suspensions – which they have been doing to people campaigning about Palestine – we decided to move the bake sale down to City Road at the bottom of Eastern Avenue, which is technically off University property."

Last week the University branch of the NTEU sent a staff-wide email criticising security's actions, and also revealed that University management is considering "a draft email policy which would ban communicating 'political' issues by bulk email from university accounts."

"It's hard to know where to begin in saying what is wrong with this proposal, which belongs in a totalitarian state, not an institution whose core business depends on the free flow of ideas," said NTEU branch vice-president (academic) Nick Riemer.

"Not only does the NTEU rely on its members' ability to use school and area-level lists to communicate about important union matters; bulk email lists have been used since they first existed to share information and engage in discussion on matters of interest to staff. Recent examples include the equal marriage bill, the Voice referendum, campaigns against transphobia and other discriminations, antiracist campaigns and events, including, now, the genocide in Palestine. Under the proposed policy, communication on these topics would be outlawed.

"Staff are never obliged to read 'political' emails and can simply delete them. It is reprehensible – and symptomatic of a fundamental hostility to the basic function of a university – that university management could even contemplate an infantilising and paternalistic censorship regime of this, or any other, kind."

*everythingisfine.beehiv.com*

# World Food Day

**On World Food Day, 16 October, the People's Health Movement (PHM) South Africa organised a picket in front of the National Parliament to protest the high cost of healthy and nutritious food in the country.**

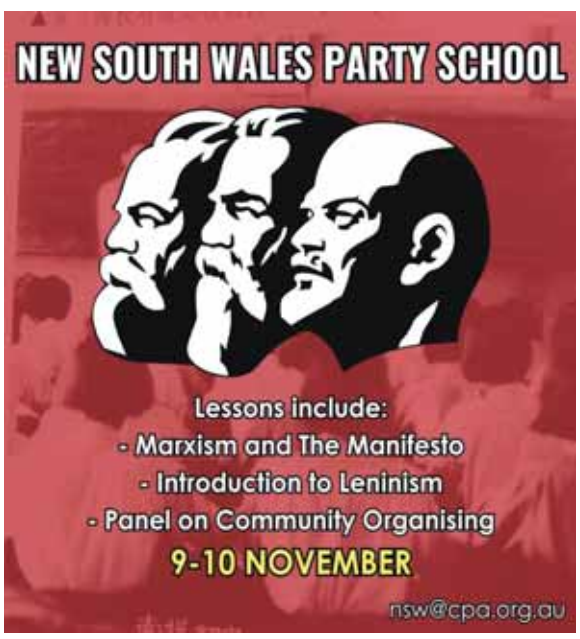
While the South African Constitution guarantees the right to food, PHM South Africa argued that only the wealthy can afford healthy meals today. "The soaring prices of nutritious food have placed it beyond the reach of millions, forcing many to resort to cheaper, ultra-processed foods," they said. Ultra-processed foods have been linked to a long list of non-communicable diseases, including cancer and diabetes, making this a pressing social justice issue, the picket organisers noted.

Currently, 20 million South Africans go hungry every day, with an additional 10 million unable to consistently provide enough food for themselves and their families. At the same time, approximately one-third of the country's food production goes to waste annually. "This disparity between abundance and deprivation is a grave injustice," PHM South Africa stated.

To address the crisis, health activists are calling on the government to take action, including regulating food prices, taxing unhealthy food products, and supporting small-scale farmers.

"Hunger, malnutrition, and [noncommunicable] diseases are preventable, but only with the necessary political will and decisive action," they concluded. "We call on Parliament to lead in this effort and ensure that the fundamental right to food is fully realised for all South Africans."

*Globetrotter*




# PEACE NOTES

## Not so far away

**Peter Farmer**

"on the other side of the planet"

That's how a 'political and international editor' for Nine Entertainment described Israel's genocidal assault on Palestinians recently. He meant to imply that there's no need for Australian protestors to bother about opposing the genocide. It's so far away, and nothing to do with us.

The writer went on to imply that the only reason thousands of Australians hit the streets every weekend to protest about an ongoing genocide is anti-semitism – what other explanation could there be, what with the Middle East being so far away? To make this flawed but popular argument, he had to ignore the active role Australia plays in the Israeli assault on Palestinians and Lebanese people: this country manufactures parts used in the F-35 jets Israel has attacked Gaza with. Australia has also awarded a $900 million plus contract to Elbit systems. Elbit made the drone that killed Australian aid worker, Zomi Frankcom. Remember Zomi Frankcom? If you do, that's good, because Peter Hartcher, the 'political and international' editor quoted above, seems to have forgotten her.

More generally, does it matter that the Middle East is a long way from Australia when it comes to peace? Is "on the other side of the planet" a reason for us to ignore a conflict?

It isn't. We're always being told that this is a connected world. Capital has no borders. The objects in your house right now come from all over the planet. We're all in this together.

There's an analogy with Climate Change to be made here. Ignoring global warming because it seems to be happening somewhere else would be just crazy, because we live in the same atmosphere (not that this stops some people from trying to do it). Ignoring the struggle for peace because there isn't a war going on in this continent would be similarly short-sighted.

Even if you put the humanitarian cost to one side – which just now means ignoring more than 43 thousand deaths – we are connected to what Israel does and to the resistance to it. We are connected directly by this country's role as a US military asset, via the Pine Gap radar installation, which provides information the US feeds to Israel. We are connected by economics; Australia is a trading nation, and the price of our oil is directly affected by what happens in the Middle East.

We are also connected by politics. The Israeli attacks on Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon would not be possible if it weren't for the backing given by the USA. Australia supports the US.

It has been over a year since the Israeli assault on Gaza began, and it has been 75 years since the first Nakba kicked off the occupation of Palestinian lands that led up to it. It's understandable that peace activists can feel tired and despairing looking at what's being done there, and the prospect of more war.

However, none of us get to write peace off because war is on the other side of the planet. The truth is that it's right here with us.

*Have your say!*

*Write a letter to the Editor*

email: **editor@cpa.org.au**

2161

COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

# Commemorating 107 Years

# Ideas that resonate

***The Wretched of the Earth* has been translated into South Africa's Zulu language. Translator Makhosazana Xaba explains why Frantz Fanon's revolutionary book still matters and why is it important that books like this be available in isiZulu.**

Although newspapers in isiZulu, a Southern Bantu language, have existed since the mid-1800s, only Ilanga lase Natal, founded in 1903, has survived. But the readership for isiZulu literature is massive.

IsiZulu is a majority language in South Africa; 23 per cent of the population speaks it as their first language.

Yet English and Afrikaans are the majority languages for the country's publishing industry because of the politics of settler-colonialism and the persistent legacy of the apartheid regime that ended formally with democracy in 1994.

One scholar called *The Wretched of the Earth* "a handbook for liberation." The genesis and focus of this book of five chapters is the Algerian revolution (1954-62).

Fanon uses examples and lessons from the African continent, the Caribbean and beyond to show the similarities in how colonialism works and how revolutions unfold in response.

His ideas on independence are pertinent to countries that have been under colonial rule, the African continent included. His writing straddles disciplines – politics, philosophy and psychiatry – as he shares his ideas and draws from his observations, experiences and the writings of others in Martinique, France, Algeria, and Tunisia, countries he lived in.

The first chapter discusses the commonsensical armed struggle response to the violence of colonisation and how this necessity changes after independence when everything must be reconsidered.

In chapter two Fanon discusses the gap between the rural or peasant masses and traditional leaders and the people in towns, mostly political party cadres. It analyses the differences and calls for a "more flexible, more agile response" when addressing these differences.

The third chapter is an analysis of what happens after the revolution against domination and oppression ends and independence is won. Fanon demonstrates how some of the formerly colonised people – party politicians, the national bourgeoisie, intellectuals, cultural practitioners, former activists, and more – take positions that are opposed to the revolutionary ones. They engage in actions that betray the revolution, like ultranationalism, corruption, patronage, chauvinism and more.

The fourth chapter addresses issues of national culture. Fanon makes the argument that this needs to change after independence and focus on building everything anew.

In the final chapter he uses case studies of his Algerian and French patients at the psychiatric hospital in Blida, Algeria. Fanon clarifies the connections between the impact of colonial struggle on mental health.

In the epilogue he calls for a humanity that is different from that of colonisers.

Fanon remains relevant today for many reasons. For instance, in the third chapter, he analyses "the trials and tribulations" of national consciousness in a manner that resonates with South Africa.

The poor showing of the African National Congress (ANC), the former liberation movement, in the country's 2024 elections is proof that South Africans have had enough of the spectacular failures of the ANC-led government.

Fanon challenges us to rethink all human relations. For me as a woman living in South Africa, known as the "rape capital of the world," and as a black person who still experiences racism, this call to rethink humanity feels urgent.

The Bill of Rights asserts our dignity, freedom and equality, yet abusers, racists, and rapists do the opposite; they dehumanise us.

It is easier today to point out what is wrong and challenge government, politicians, and employers (and we should!) but how do we learn to challenge ourselves so that as perpetrators and victims we are on new journeys of rethinking human relations?

Fanon begins the book's conclusion of four-and-a-half pages with these words: "Now, comrades, now is the time to decide to change sides. We must shake off the great mantle of night which has enveloped us, and reach for the light. A new day which is dawning must find us determined, enlightened and resolute."

It takes self-reflection to arrive at determination, enlightenment, and being resolute.

Fanon was a writer like many others that I read and liked because they made a lot of sense. I was aware that he is revered within the activist circles where I moved. As I read the ever-growing scholarly studies of Fanon, I realised that his ideas had even more currency in the world than they did in my head.

One book on the translations of *The Wretched of the Earth* contextualises each of the translations. Unsurprisingly most of these translations appeared in moments of heightened political activism in the various countries.

Fanon has become somebody of much relevance to me now that I have translated *The Wretched of the Earth*, that it has also initiated me into translation of such works into isiZulu.

Makhosazana Xaba is associate professor of practice at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg.

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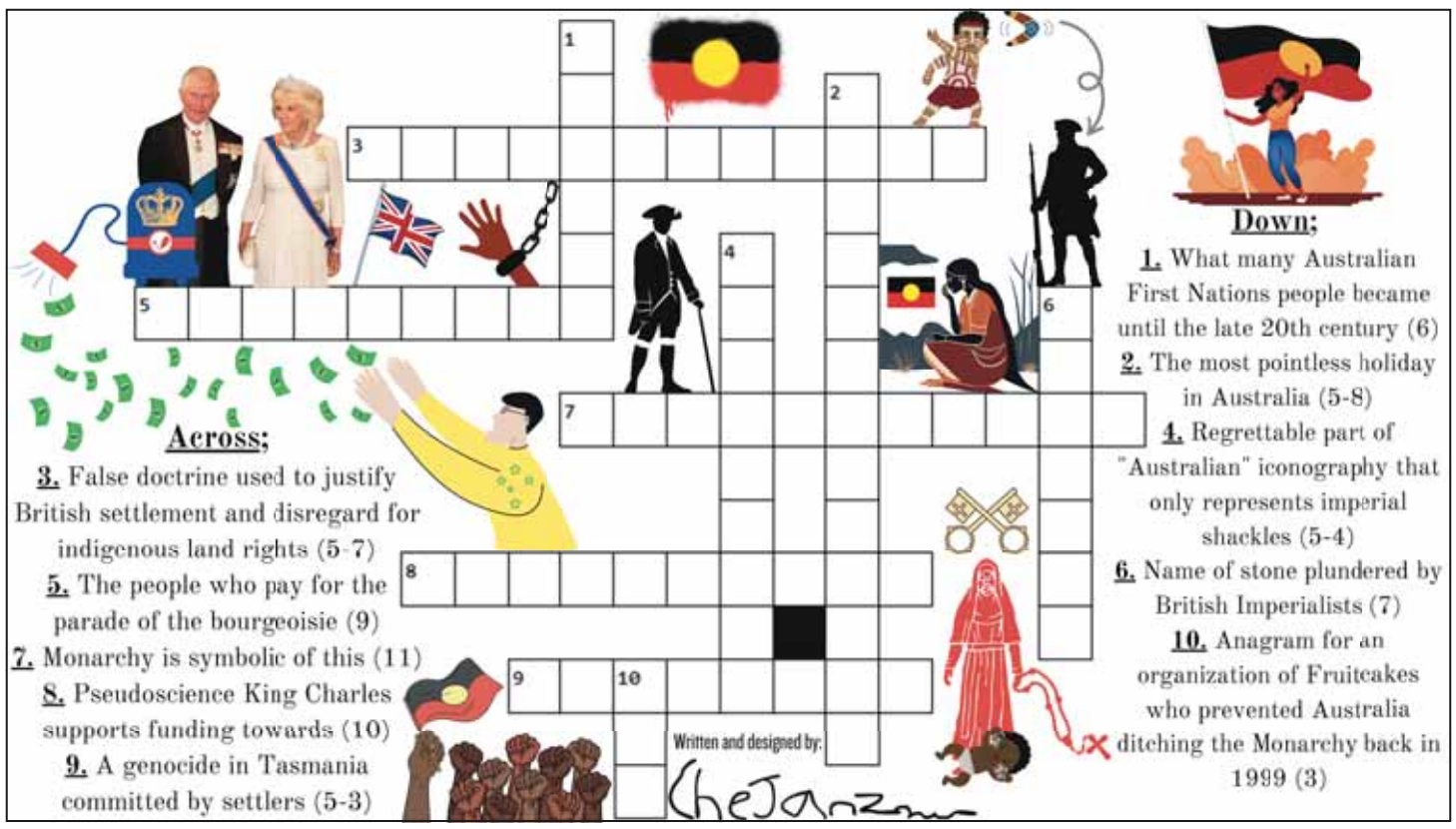


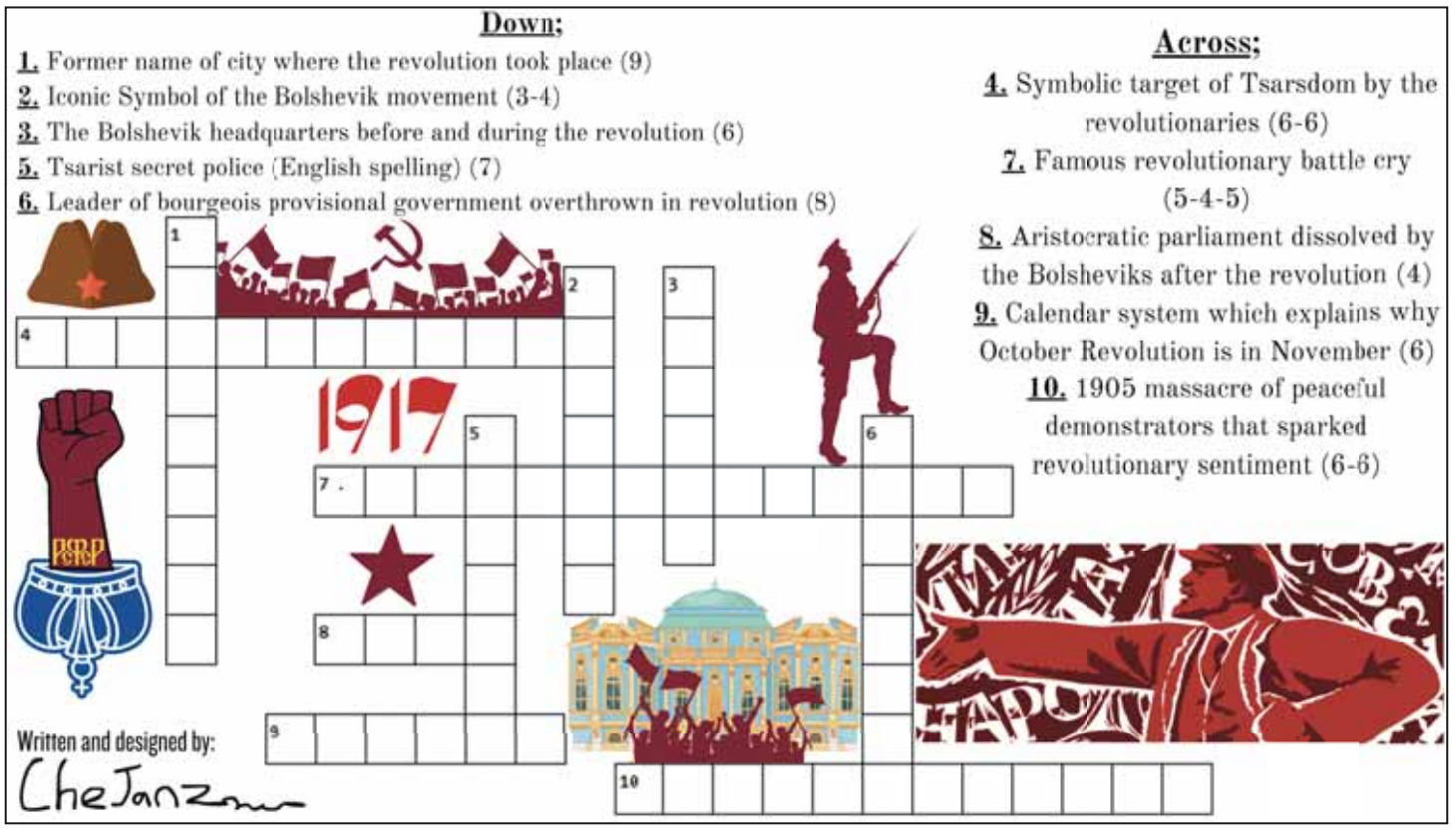

# Cuba's energy crisis is a direct and intentional result of the US blockade

> The majority of Cubans support Castro ... every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba ... to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government." – Lester D Mallory, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, 1960.

**The Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC) expresses its full solidarity with the people of Cuba as they confront the challenges posed by the recent island-wide electrical blackout. This outage, as well as the shortages that Cuba experiences of other essential services and supplies, are a direct and intentional result of the US blockade against Cuba, as is explicitly stated in the United States' Mallory Memorandum when it began its brutal economic warfare against Cuba over 60 years ago.**

We extend our deepest respect and admiration to Cuba's engineers and energy workers, whose tireless efforts to restore power have once again demonstrated extraordinary dedication and commitment to ensuring the well-being of their fellow citizens. Their heroic work, in the face of immense difficulties, stands as a testament to the strength and resilience of Cuba's human and technical resources.

We also take this moment to hail the remarkable resilience of the Cuban people, who continue to face adversity with unity, determination and dignity. Despite the hardships of an ongoing energy crisis, compounded by economic difficulties, the Cuban people remain an inspiring example of solidarity and resolve. Their ability to endure and persevere in such challenging times serves as a powerful reminder of their collective spirit and commitment to safeguarding their nation's sovereignty and independence.

At the same time, we condemn in the strongest terms the US economic war against Cuba, which remains the principal obstacle to resolving the island's energy crisis and advancing its economic development. The current US administration is continuing a policy of collective punishment and slow extermination of the Cuban people through its illegal blockade, and the designation of Cuba as a "State Sponsor of Terrorism." Recent additional 243 sanctions added by Presidents Trump and Biden have exacerbated Cuba's energy difficulties and impediments to upgrading its infrastructure, limiting access to vital resources, technology and financial aid that could alleviate these issues.

Australia Cuba Friendship Society campaign against the US blockade on Cuba, Perth Bridges of Love.

We call on the international community to continue denouncing this unjust policy, and we reaffirm our unwavering support for the Cuban people and government in their struggle for justice, self-determination and a brighter future.

Samantha Hislop and Isaac Saney
Executive Committee,
Canadian Network on Cuba
*People's Voice*

# China's only female space flight engineer set to debut in Shenzhou-19 mission

**Chinese taikonauts Cai Xuzhe, Song Lingdong and Wang Haoze will carry out the Shenzhou-19 crewed spaceflight mission, scheduled for launch at 4:27 am Wednesday (Beijing Time) from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China, the China Manned Space Agency announced at a press conference on Tuesday.**

Of the three taikonauts, Wang, the only female space flight engineer in China currently, has inspired many Chinese netizens with her experiences and dedication. Wang said she couldn't wait to enjoy the joy of weightlessness on the space station and added that she will strive to fulfill her mission so as to meet the expectations of the country and people.

Wang is currently China's only female space flight engineer and will become the third Chinese woman to embark on a crewed spaceflight mission, the agency noted.

The *Global Times* has learned that Wang majored in thermal and power engineering at college, and focused on plasma detonation during her graduate studies. After graduation she was engaged in the pre-research work of rocket engines.

"As an aerospace professional, I never thought that I would become a taikonaut someday, this is so valuable and also so cool," Wang said, "I enjoy challenging uncharted fields and acquiring new knowledge."

Wang believes success relies on two principles: diligent and thoughtful training.

As an engineer, Wang previously had no flight experience, making the aerospace physiology tests in the selection process particularly challenging, CCTV news said.

When Wang first tested on the centrifuge, the enormous load for just tens of seconds made breathing difficult, with her lungs feeling like tearing apart, as reported by CCTV news, "but I am determined never to be the first one to ring the emergency bell," Wang said.

The ten-minute rendezvous and docking operation was once a daunting task for Wang.

She learned from her fellow members and keeps a notebook to memorize the key points about rendezvous and docking mission. After nearly a thousand practices, Wang is now well equipped to finish each training exercise with excellent performance.

Wang's perseverance and unyielding spirit have inspired many netizens, some of whom commented on Weibo that Wang is surely working hard and paying a lot of effort, with others saying that this is the embodiment that women do not lose to men.

Song and Wang, among the third batch of Chinese astronauts, are newcomers to space. Both of them were born in the 1990s, as reported by the Xinhua News Agency.

"We've trained countless times in simulators on the ground. Like everyone else, I have dreamed of visiting China's Space Station and experiencing the joy of weightlessness," said Wang, adding that "I want to carefully complete every task and protect our space home."

For this mission, Wang will be responsible for the space experiment program, material management, and station management.

"From a rocket engine designer to a space flight engineer, my role has changed, but the initial spirit and mission of serving the country in space stays the same," Wang said on Wednesday.

Wang said the journey they're treading now is challenging, but she's willing to dedicate herself to it.

*Global Times*

# South Sudan: Cholera outbreak in refugee camp

On Monday, South Sudan's Ministry of Health declared a cholera outbreak in the congested Renk transit camp in the northern Upper Nile State, which is currently hosting people fleeing conflict from neighbouring Sudan.

Yolanda Awel Deng, the minister of health, said that they have since Sunday confirmed 49 cholera cases among refugees, returnees and the host community.

"The Ministry of Health is aware of the difficult conditions refugees and returnees face, such as overcrowding and poor water and sanitation, which can lead to outbreaks. However the ministry is working with health and water sanitation and hygiene cluster partners on the ground to ensure that the risk of the outbreak spreading is minimised," Awel said in a joint statement with the World Health Organization (WHO) issued in Juba, the capital of South Sudan.

The minister disclosed that the Ministry of Health and WHO have taken steps to manage cases reported, adding that they are ensuring that every contact on the ground is followed. She urged the communities to practice good and safe behaviours, such as consistent handwashing, use of latrines, and proper food handling throughout the outbreak season.

The declaration of the cholera outbreak comes after reports of 44 suspected cholera cases and six laboratory-confirmed cases on 23 October in Renk. It follows a meeting with President Salva Kiir aimed at securing government support for better access to affected areas.

The ministry said that the first suspected case was reported on 28 September after the Renk County Health Department got a report of a suspected cholera patient at Renk's point of entry.

Humphrey Karamagi, the WHO representative for South Sudan, believed the announcement by the Ministry of Health about the outbreak enables the public to take prevention measures and helps health partners take the necessary steps to contain it and unlocks the required resources for fighting the outbreak.

Karamagi said that the UN health agency remains committed to supporting the Ministry of Health in enhancing disease surveillance, improving response coordination and ensuring the availability of medical supplies. "This includes assistance with case management, laboratory testing, sample collection, transportation, and follow-up."

South Sudan is currently hosting more than 810,000 individuals, including returnees and refugees who fled fighting in mid-April 2023 in neighbouring Sudan, according to the UN Refugee Agency or UNHCR.

*Telesur*

# Israeli settlers, Lebanon and weaponising children's literature

William Briggs

**The Israeli settler movement has been looking to establish itself in southern Lebanon, after Israel clears the population. The Israeli military is planning to occupy a strip of territory from the border to the Litani River, some 30 kilometres north of the Israel-Lebanon border. For the settler zealots this is being seen as part of 'Greater Israel.'**

The planners and plotters that seek to build settlements where people have lived for so long love their children, but set about poisoning their minds. The children, on both sides of the border, deserve so much more.

Children are affected by war. They shouldn't be. They shouldn't have to be. They live with a simple view of the world. It takes effort to traumatise a child, but that has happened to countless thousands in Gaza and now in Lebanon. Hatred, racism, and prejudice are not a part of a child's world. Children learn these things from adults. Adults learn from other adults, the state, and from the behaviours of those they admire. Stealing innocence from a child is unpardonable.

A children's book has just been published by the Uri Tzafon, or 'Wake up North' settler group. *Alon and Lebanon* was written by an Israeli academic, Amos Azariah who lives in an illegal settlement. According to the author, it seeks to plant the "seeds of longing for Lebanon" in Israeli children.

It tells the story of a young Jewish Israeli boy, Alon, who knows of the beauty of Lebanon and of the land. He says that he "would love to go to Lebanon and stroll there." He is told that "it is dangerous. You cannot go there; it is not ours yet." Then we read "Alon thought and said, Lebanon is ours." A simple book to be read to children, becomes a weapon. Children's literature becomes a propaganda tool.

The book was published as the Israeli invasion of Lebanon began. It becomes a part of a 'patriotic' call to expand 'Greater Israel,' and to sell the idea that land theft is legitimate because Lebanon is "ours."

Words have meaning. Literature is a weapon. Parents will read to their children. They teach their children. What they teach will frame the future and will assume an historical quality. What is happening in Lebanon is a crime against all that can be seen as human. Old hatreds will be reaffirmed and new ones will grow in the fertile soil of war and deprivation.

The children who are being taught to "long for Lebanon" are being taught that Lebanese people are worthless. The lessons that they are learning will guarantee war and resistance for generations to come.

The children deserve better than this.

Photo: pexels.com (CC0)

# Argentina: Marxist Milei

Atilio A Boron

**There are many reasons why the Argentine president will enter history through the service door, if he is lucky. Contrary to his delusions of grandeur, to his self-proclaimed mission of being the "redeemer" of a decaying West won by the seven-headed hydra of collectivism, Javier Milei will be remembered instead as the ruler whose administration brought a new, more resounding and definitive ratification of the truths contained in Karl Marx's theory of capitalist economy. As a "proven and self-confessed" Marxist I can only thank him, because from now on I will fight the battle of ideas better equipped than ever before.**

The author of *Capital* proved that the capitalist mode of production rests on an irresolvable contradiction between owners and non-owners of the means of production. In other words, it rests on a society in which there is a brutal distributive struggle between rich and poor; a zero-sum game in which what some gain, others lose. In capitalism, by means of surplus value to which is added a host of other mechanisms of mass plunder, the proprietors "legally" rob the workers of their income and even their modest possessions, thanks to which the capitalists grow richer every day.

At the end of 2021 according to the US Federal Reserve, "the richest 1 per cent of households in the United States (the ideal society, together with Israel, according to Milei!) owned 30.9 per cent of the country's wealth, while the poorest 50 per cent owned 2.6 per cent." And on a worldwide scale Oxfam reported, according to a note published in *Página/12* on 2 October 2024, that "1 per cent of billionaires accumulate more wealth than 95 per cent of the world's population." This is the "good society" that the prophet of the Casa Rosada* promises us to achieve in 30 or 40 years of enormous sacrifices. Data which, on the other hand, irrefutably confirm that Marx is right and that Milei's mentors – the so called theorists of the Austrian School, the "anarcho-capitalists" – are just a group of cunning liars at the service of big capital.

It follows that your government, President, is not only bad, irrational, inefficient because it promotes neither economic growth nor income distribution. It is also immoral. Nothing else can be said of someone who, despite his libertarian litanies to the contrary, in fact only governs for the rich. Your governing arts are reduced, as you yourself have said, to "enlarging the pockets of the rich" and organising the large-scale plunder of the poor, sustaining this nefarious project with the help of the media scoundrels, the local oligarchy and its foreign allies and "the embassy" in Buenos Aires.

Also collaborating are parliamentarians who shamelessly sell their vote, and a judicial power that has not the slightest curiosity to know where the three shipments of gold bullion taken abroad ended up, and the reasons for such a radical initiative. That is why your government offers all kinds of concessions, allowances and privileges to big capital while it denies a paltry – an incredibly miserable! – increase in the pension assets of retirees and pensioners, reduces workers' real wages, and causes unemployment. It leads to the bankruptcy of small and medium-sized companies, concentrates wealth, financially stifles public universities, scientific research, state organisations, and the national cinema. It advances, like a crazed mole, in the destruction of the national state and all the social protection agencies and policies that characterise a civilised society.

Your ideological prejudices, Mr President, have surely led you to ignore that public spending as a proportion of GDP in advanced capitalist countries is very large and has nothing to do with your rubbish comments in this regard. It reaches 57.0 per cent in France, 48.40 per cent in Germany, 44.17 per cent in the United Kingdom, and 37.84 per cent in Argentina, almost equal to that of the United States.

Of course, blinded by your fanaticism, you will say that these are countries secretly and mischievously governed by communists, but such nonsense only provokes laughter or smirks among the tycoons of developed capitalism who pretend to be your friends. Your project to radically reduce public spending, if successful, will turn our country into the South American replica of some of the poorest nations in the world, such as Afghanistan, with a public spending of 16.89 per cent, or Cameroon, with 17.08 per cent, both with 80 to 90 per cent of their populations living in poverty.

Javier Milei. Photo: World Economic Forum/Ciaran McCrickard – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

But Milei's friends and the beneficiaries of his policies, the dominant class, "the power behind the throne" of our flawed democracy, will be more than happy because they will enter the *Forbes* list of the largest fortunes. And extreme poverty will be installed in Argentina perhaps reaching apocalyptic proportions. A grim prospect, yes, but this would be until the moment in which the people of Argentina decides to put an end to this malignant economic experiment that is causing so much pain and suffering to our people. Already there are faint but real signs that the people have begun to realise that Milei's project is a swindle for the people and will only worsen their economic situation. This is why sooner rather than later his government could run into some unpleasant political surprises.

*Telesur*

*Casa Rosada, or 'the pink house' is the official workplace of the President of Argentina.

# Operation BASH! US navy vs the birds of Diego Garcia

Cattle Egret. Photo: Nathan Rupert – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Graham Holton

**Since the 1970s the US-UK military base on Diego Garcia, under the responsibility of the US 7th Fleet, has been an important military asset in the Indian Ocean for regional operations. The base's primary missions are supported by USN maritime patrol and USAF contingency support missions, electronic warfare, with logistic and search and rescue operations in a secondary role. Australia uses the joint base for naval and air operations, making what happens at Diego Garcia important to Australia's defence interests.**

Diego Garcia is the largest island of the Chagos Archipelago, lying 2,112 km from Mauritius, 1,796 km from the Maldives, and are 4,723 km northwest of Australia. Because of this isolation, Diego Garcia is regarded as immune to terrorist attacks. In 1965 the UK purchased the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius for £3 million to create part of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). Between 1968 and 1973 all the inhabitants were forcibly expelled by the UK government. On 3 October 2024, the UK announced it would transfer sovereignty of the Chagos islands to Mauritius, while allowing the US military base to remain under its 99-year lease.

The UK may have removed the people from these islands but the large bird populations remained, wherein lies the problem. Diego Garcia is home to a variety of bird species, including the Cattle Egret. Bird strikes have long plagued naval aviation, with the first loss of life due to a bird strike in 1914. Worldwide, since 1980 Navy and Marine Corps pilots have reported over 20,000 bird strikes, resulting in 87 deaths, 13 destroyed aircraft, 13 pilot ejections, and 247 shut down engines. Of these 65 per cent of all bird strikes occurred near the airfield. The greatest loss of life due to a bird strike was in 1960, when a Lockheed Electra ingested starlings into three of its four engines on take-off. It crashed killing 62 of the 73 people on board. In 1995, a Boeing AWACS radar plane in Alaska AFB ingested geese into two engines, and crashed, killing all 24 people on board.

From the beginning, daily and seasonal bird movements near Diego Garcia airfield have created hazards to take-off or landing aircraft. There have been sixteen bird strikes since Operation Enduring Freedom began in 2001, as part of the US's Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).

The Chagos Islands are an important breeding ground for migrating bird populations. Of the 91 bird species found on the islands, 16 species have permanent breeding populations. Some seabirds thrive here while rapidly declining in population in other parts of the Indian Ocean. The problem with such a large bird population is that every time a jet took off from the runway a flock birds flew up hitting the plane and, if ingested, damaging the engines.

The shutdown of the engine can cause a crash and death. Research figures show that under optimal visual conditions the farthest a pilot can detect a very large bird is 2 kilometres, a flock of large gulls is 1.4 km, and flocks of swallows at 300 metres. Most low-level jets travel around 200 metres per second, so the reaction time for a pilot is seconds before impact.

The 32-page *Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) Plan* report looked at possible solutions to this expensive and dangerous problem. Its aim was "to reduce the potential for collisions between aircraft and birds or other animals." The report considered bird identification, bird avoidance, and bird control. Possible solutions included grounds maintenance of grass areas, habitat modification, harassment, and depredation. Bird proofing buildings and hangars was important to exclude problem-nesting sites.

The base set up a Bird Hazard Condition (BHC) warning system to warn aircrew of bird activity. "BHC Red" is severe; indicating heavy concentrations of birds on or immediately adjacent to the runway. Roving airport patrols dispersed birds from the airfield and hangars by chase, pyrotechnic, bioacoustics, depredation, and other methods.

The military tried harassment techniques to disperse birds, (chasing them away). They also tried pyrotechnics (explosives), bioacoustics, and depredation. When scare tactics were ineffective, pyrotechnics and noise producing devices fired from a pistol were tried. Bioacoustics are recorded tapes of bird distress, also predator calls were tried to disperse birds. Propane cannons, stationary non-projectile sound producing devices, were used to disperse birds. The cannons' locations were changed every few days to stop the birds becoming blasé. Scarecrows, decoys, and even trained falcons were also used numbers. It was found the most effective strategy for bird deterrence was shooting one or two from a flock, then follow with a volley of pyrotechnics.

If an aircraft crashes, no other aircraft can use the runway for a week to ensure crew safety. This is an unsuitable situation during operations. The birds continue to win the war against the US Navy.

## Global Briefs

**GEORGIA**: In Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, fireworks marked the ruling party's victory in the parliamentary elections on 26 October 2024. Voter turnout was 56 per cent. Initial data shows the 'Georgian Dream' party leading with 53 per cent, which will give it 90 out of 150 seats. This result, in the face of US-backed opposition, signals a setback for US policy in Georgia. The elections were attended by over 1,700 foreign observers from 76 international agencies and more than 23,000 local observers from 111 national organisations. The Georgian Dream party was established by billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili in 2012, and had initially been perceived as a pro-European party, but in recent years the party has shown signs that it is moving closer to Moscow.

**MEXICO**: The Mexican government has begun hiring more than 20,000 nurses and doctors as part of preparations for the program "*Salud Casa por Casa*" (Health from House to House). The program is aimed at providing public health services to senior citizens and people with disabilities in their homes. This social project, one of many promoted by newly elected president Claudia Sheinbaum, aims to improve the quality of life for these citizens through visits by medical personnel so that mobility-disadvantaged people do not have to travel. It will also reduce the overcrowding of hospital services. The Health and Welfare Census will also be carried out from October to December with the support of public servants who will visit 13.6 million people to collect health data. According to the program's head, the census will determine the personalised attention scheme, in order to deliver a health diary in which the medical visits will be recorded every two months, as well as the procedures carried out by the personnel that will be hired.

**HAITI**: Haiti continues to be rocked by extreme gang violence. The spike in gang violence comes just months after the launch of a US-backed, but Kenyan-led mission aimed at crushing the gangs. Thousands of people have died violently and more than 700,000 have been left homeless. Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world, and some activists are questioning how and where the gangs manage to get their funding and military hardware. Professor Jemima Pierre of the university of British Columbia has suggested a wider motive for US involvement in Haiti. The Haitian-American activist said: "Washington is now basically just manufacturing consent among the public that Haitans cannot govern their own country, since it's profitable for the US to have a base in Haiti and control its resources with endless cheap labour." Recent findings suggest Haiti might have some of the largest oil reserves in the world, potentially larger than those of Venezuela.

**FRANCE**: Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said that the Paris international conference for Lebanon raised the equivalent of AU$1,500 million in pledges for humanitarian and military support. More than 70 nations and numerous international organisations attended the conference.

**AFGHANISTAN**: Helmand province has banned all media from showing images of living things to ensure compliance with the Taliban morality law. The decision was announced by the Information Ministry offices. Helmand is the latest province to crack down on broadcasting and photography of humans and animals.

**UKRAINE**: Germany's largest arms maker, Rheinmetall, which produces a vast array of weapons including Leopard tanks, stated that it would build four factories on Ukrainian soil. Moscow responded with a warning that such facilities are considered "legitimate targets" for Russian strikes. Or, as Dmitry Medvedev, former Russian president wrote, "The German company Rheinmetall has launched the first of four military factories in Ukraine. As previously promised, we eagerly await a celebratory Russian 'fireworks' display right at the production site," he wrote on social media and his Telegram channel, accompanying the message with a short video of an explosion.

# Palestinian land for sale in USA and Canada

Graham Holton

**Palestinian properties, seized in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, are being sold across the USA and Canada, in contravention of international laws. The New Jersey office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) condemned the sales, as did the New York chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-NY), the nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organisation.**

CAIR-NY Supervising Attorney Lamya Agarwala said: "It is reprehensible that real estate companies are looking to profit from land in occupied Palestine as people are getting murdered and displaced from their homes in Gaza. The United States government and the international community have deemed Israeli settlements illegal, and New York State has a responsibility to ensure it is not complicit in further developing illegal settlements."

According to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), Chelsey Lichtman, a member of Jews Say No to Genocide, said it is "sacrilegious" that "synagogues are holding events that [are] trying to get Canadians to invest in stolen Palestinian land."

Hundreds of Palestine supporters in New York City protested against the sale of land confiscated in the settlement of Ariel, near the West Bank city of Nablus. The US recently restored its position that these settlements are "inconsistent" with international law.

Rich Siegel said: "There's a genocide going on ... What this real estate event is going to do is it's going to fan the flames." The New Jersey chapters of the Council on American-Islamic Relations and American Muslims for Palestine called for a federal investigation.

There are over 700,000 Israeli settlers living in 300 illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. In April 2024 Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich called for Gaza to be "resettled" and the Palestinian population expelled. This contravenes the Geneva Conventions, the anti-discrimination provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of Race Discrimination applicable to the United States, and may constitute a war crime.

Protest against the illegal sale of stolen Palestinian land, New York, July 2024.
Photo: workers.org / Brenda Ryan

In July Israel's Knesset voted overwhelmingly to reject the establishment of a Palestinian state. The next day the United Nations' International Court of Justice (ICJ), in a landmark opinion said that the policies and practices used by Israel in its occupation of Palestinian territories are in breach of international law.

Judge Nawaf Salam said that Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem were established and maintained as "de facto annexation" in violation of international law. This is "in breach of the Israeli government's obligation to respect the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination." Benny Gantz, a former member of the Israeli war Cabinet, said the opinion "harms security and stability in the region."

The Australian government allows the sale of weapons parts to Israel which are used in the genocide in Gaza, and remains silent when Israel breaks international law by selling seized Palestinian properties. We must stand up for Palestinians and ensure our government objects to Israel selling seized Palestinian properties in Israel and overseas.

# Israeli airstrike on a school in Gaza kills 17

**Another Israeli strike on a school where displaced people were sheltering has killed at least 17 people, Palestinian medical officials said.**

The latest massacre of mainly women and children, at time of writing, took place 24 October in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, and left another 42 people wounded, according to the Awda Hospital, which received the casualties.

Among the dead were seven children as young as 11 months, as well as three women.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

Israel has carried out several strikes on schools-turned-shelters in recent months, saying it precisely targets Hamas militants hiding out among civilians. As in the latest attack, the strikes often kill women and children.

The United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced that the White House would provide US$135 million (AU$206m) in aid to the Palestinians, saying it is critical that aid enters Gaza.

This comes as the US continues to provide the arms used by the Israelis to attack the Palestinians.

Since 7 October 2023 Israeli retaliation has killed well over 42,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, although the death toll is likely to be far higher with many thousands thought to be trapped under the rubble of bombed out buildings in Gaza.

The war has displaced around 90 per cent of Gaza's population of 2.3 million, often multiple times. Hundreds of thousands of people are crammed into tent camps after entire neighbourhoods were demolished.

The Israelis have also continued to attack Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said that the Israeli military had killed 36 children in air strikes and 129 with live ammunition, "most in the head or upper body."

Israeli soldiers shot 11-year-old Abdullah Jamal Hawash in the chest on Tuesday for throwing stones at an armoured vehicle in Nablus, the Palestinian Ministry of Health said.

In social media posts, the boy was seen throwing a stone at an armoured Israeli vehicle before he was shot dead.

The UN agency said the young boy posed "no realistic threat" to Israeli forces.

His death came after Israeli forces shot and killed a teenager in the head in Hebron, leaving him in a critical condition.

Three days earlier, an 11-year-old was also shot in the head by the Israelis and critically injured at the Arroub refugee camp near Hebron.

*Morning Star*

# Israel's war on aid: 'Collective punishment'

Peter Farmer

**The Israeli parliament has passed legislation designating UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East a terrorist organisation. UNRWA is the main aid agency in Palestine and surrounding areas, including into Syria and Jordan. The Israeli parliament has passed two bills which strip UNRWA staff of any legal immunities and also ban Israeli government officials from having any contact with the agency.**

Bill Deere, UNRWA's Washington director has called the vote "a dark day for humanitarians all over the world." He pointed out that the legislation will halt education for 50,000 children on the West Bank, and deprive 150,000 people of humanitarian aid.

If implemented, Deere said, there would be no 'deconfliction.' UNRWA staff would not be able to move in Gaza without being subject to possible attack. There would be no visas or work permits for international staff.

Deere reiterated that "we need a ceasefire. We need the ability to get humanitarian aid into Gaza in a safe and sustainable manner."

UNRWA's commissioner-general Philippe Lazzarini called the bills "nothing less than collective punishment."

Both Deere and Lazzarini called the bills a bad precedent enabling other governments to punish populations receiving aid by attacking the agencies supplying it.

The ban has been criticised by Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, and condemned by Ireland, Norway, Slovenia, and Spain, who called it "a very serious precedent."

World Health Organisation chief Adhanom Ghebreyesus called UNRWA an "irreplaceable lifeline," and called the ban "intolerable. It contravenes Israel's obligations and responsibilities, and threatens the lives and health of all those who depend on UNRWA."

www.cpa.org.au

# Athens dockworkers block Israel ammunition shipment

**Workers at the Piraeus Port in Athens successfully blocked a shipment of ammunition bound for Israel in a late-night action on 17 October. Following a call to action by the dockworkers' union ENEDEP, port workers, and activists mobilised to prevent a container of bullets, designated for the port of Haifa, from being loaded onto the ship *Marla Bull*, owned by Israeli company ZIM Integrated Shipping Services.**

In addition to ENEDEP, the action was supported by several workers' organisations, including the Labor Center of Piraeus and unions of metalworkers and the shipbuilding industry. The workers declared they would not be complicit in Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza by allowing the container to sail, as its cargo would be used to kill more Palestinians.

As a result of the action, the *Marla Bull* was forced to leave the port without the shipment. According to local Palestine solidarity groups, the container remains near the port, guarded by workers and awaiting further investigation by port authorities.

During the action, workers demanded "disengagement from the imperialist plans and their consequences that turn our country and Piraeus Port into a target for retaliation." They added that Piraeus should not serve as a "base of war."

A delegate from the General Union of Palestinian Workers, Mohammed Iqnaibi, commended the workers for their solidarity, stating that Palestinian workers continue to draw strength and courage from their struggles. The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) praised the action.

*Globetrotter*

# Fascism: capitalism's weapon against the working class

**Since the general election Britain has seen an increase in racist incidents and anti migrant protests. Such happenings aren't new of course as over recent years we have regularly witnessed violent protests outside and inside hotels across all our nations.**

The flames for this violence have been fanned by the media and politicians who have sought to blame people escaping poverty, war, and environmental damage rather than their own failings.

Capitalism and imperialism are the root cause of these failings. Likewise the collapse of social democracy as a system that attempts to ameliorate the worst aspects of mass exploitation continues.

In France Emmanuel Macron and his government – which, let's not forget, consists of ex-members of the once massive Socialist Party – has now reached a pact with National Rally, the heirs of the National Front.

UK PM, Kier Starmer was content to be seen with Giorgia Meloni, in Italy the leader of the Brothers of Italy and the heir of Mussolini's Fascist Party. The once hard "cordon sanitaire" which restricted fascist parties from government, at least in Europe, has cracked wide open.

In Britain both Labour and Tories have used right-wing populist rhetoric in seeing mass migration as a law and order issue rather than one that must be dealt with politically and economically.

Labour appear to have walked into a trap – seeing immigration as a problem while at the same time cutting benefits of those who are not well off.

The UK's runoff between two right-wing Tory leadership candidates is no laughing matter. It exemplifies the move to the right in Britain's larger parties.

It also makes an accommodation with Reform UK more likely.

Particularly since the COVID pandemic and the failure by most states to put the needs of people first we have seen a massive growth of all things online.

Recently the BBC identified a Finnish far-right social media activist using a false name spreading conspiracies about the murders of children in Southport. These online tropes fed into the attack on a local mosque.

But we would be wrong to see online activism as something that comes to Britain from elsewhere. British far-right activities are at the centre of the anti-migrant narrative.

The far right feed off people's grievances making them see things through the prism of race, not – as we would want – through the prism of class. They state that they are discriminated against.

That pro-Palestinian marches pass by unheeded when they are kettled. They say there is a two-tier Britain. There are tiers of course but these are based on class not race.

A recent report into Windrush eventually published by the Home Office shows that racism has been at the centre of Britain's nationality laws since 1947.

This is why the Communist Party of Britain has joined forces with allies to argue for anti-racist immigration and nationality laws. We know that the current system sets worker against worker.

Dimitrov's 1935 definition of fascism in 1935 as the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital remains true in 2024.

But over the last period a new far right has developed internationally as described this year by VJ Prashad.

The new far right seeks to exert dominance in the arenas of culture, sociology, and the economy.

Neoliberal austerity policies in countries with liberal electoral institutions vanquished the social welfare schemes that had allowed liberal sensibilities to exist. The state's failure to take care of the poor turned into a harshness toward them.

Without a serious commitment to social welfare and redistributionist schemes, liberalism itself drifted into the world of far-right policies.

These include increased spending on the internal repressive apparatus that polices working-class neighbourhoods and international borders alongside the increasingly stingy distribution of social goods, disbursed only if the recipients allow themselves to be stripped of basic human rights.

Communists argue that Britain's problems are caused by capitalism, not from where people come from.

We demand cuts to arms spending, investment in green jobs and manufacturing, the NHS and education. Wages, benefits and pensions should be raised.

We call for an end to the oppression of women and black people and attacks on LGBT+ communities, and the restoration of all trade union rights and the right to protest.

Above all we call for a united working-class fight back.

Tony Conway convenes the Communist Party of Britain's anti-racist anti-fascist commission.

*Morning Star* (edited for space)

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## *Half the Sky*

### Reproductive rights need protecting

Abortion has been decriminalised in every state and territory of Australia after decades of intense struggle. Western Australia was the last states to do so in 2024. As Renee Carr, Executive Director of Fair Agenda said:

"... unfortunately, we can never take our reproductive rights for granted. This milestone has only been possible as the result of decades of advocacy by women, healthcare professionals, community members, and advocates around the country, who have bravely and relentlessly spoken out on this issue." The Christian Right and other conservatives are on the front foot, campaigning to roll back laws granting women reproductive rights.

They seem to have been emboldened since the overturning of Roe vs Wade in the US. In the US medical practitioners now report far-reaching implications for women and girls seeking abortion and other reproductive healthcare, dramatically affecting their health, and resulting in serious – sometimes fatal – risks.

In South Australia right-wing Liberal MP Ben Hood introduced a private member's bill to force women who seek to terminate their pregnancy from 28 weeks' gestation onwards to deliver their baby alive. The mother would then have a choice of keeping the baby or forced adoption. (See *Guardian* #2121, 21/10/2024) The bill was defeated in the Upper House by ONE vote! It looks set to be defeated in the Lower House. Less than 1 per cent of all pregnancy terminations are beyond 28 weeks. These terminations are performed almost exclusively for medical reasons. They usually require two doctors to formally agree to their necessity.

In Queensland, with the victory of the Liberal National Party, abortion is back on the agenda. During the election campaign LNP leader David Crisafulli refused to indicate whether he would give LNP members a conscience vote on legislation winding back women's reproductive rights. State MP Robbie Katter is reportedly planning to introduce a bill to roll back abortion law. It should not be forgotten that Crisafulli voted against Labor's bill decriminalising abortion in Queensland in 2018.

At the federal level, right-wing Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price joined the anti-abortion chorus saying pregnancies that are ended after the first trimester are immoral, adding late-stage abortions are "akin to infanticide." Opposition frontbencher Barnaby Joyce rushed to her defence, while Coalition backbenchers were divided.

Needless to say, more reforms are needed so that women truly have access to abortion. There is no consistency in the laws governing abortion law across Australia, although in most states and territories abortions are accessible until at least 20 weeks, after which pregnant women require approval from at least two doctors. "Too many patients can't rely on their public hospital for care, can't easily find a healthcare service they can turn to in their area, or have to find $500 on short notice in order to cover the out-of-pocket costs," Bonney Corbin, Chair of the Australian Women's Health Alliance said.

"I've worked around gender equality since the 1990s. If we can't allow women to have autonomy over their own bodies, if we can't trust them to make reproduction choices with their healthcare professionals, and we put those choices back in the hands of politicians, then we are in a dangerous place," Jill McKay from Children by Choice said.

As Corbin says, "[…] any rights we have won as women, we must be vigilant about because we can't assume they're there forever. We have to keep our eye on the game all the time."

# Israel's attack on Lebanon: method in the madness

William Briggs

**The clinical barbarism of the Israeli military campaign in Gaza and Lebanon demands to be understood. If it can't, then we are simply witness to madness. The logic of the genocide is that 'terrorists' must be eliminated if Israel is to live a free and secure life. It is an argument that the supporters of Israel trot out but leave us no closer to understanding why.**

The assault on Lebanon was a long time in the preparation. It is not a response to any perceived or actual threat. The decision to attack Lebanon is a grotesque act of political opportunism aimed at the destruction of the Lebanese state; an all but failed state before the bombs began to fall.

The immediate past history of Lebanon has been one of chaos. It reflected and magnified the crisis of global capitalism. Its economy lay in tatters. Political frictions were tearing the country apart. The disastrous explosion at the port warehouse in Beirut in 2020 had enormous ramifications. It served as a terrible metaphor for the problems facing the country. There was anger on the streets. The government was seen to be corrupt. There was a banking crisis. People were unable to access their savings. There was an economic crisis. GDP dropped from $55 billion in 2018 to just $22 billion in 2022. Eighty per cent of the population were forced into poverty. The economy briefly showed signs of recovery but slid back into recession in 2023. Unemployment remains high.

The people on the streets blamed the government. The Lebanese political system is a 'confessional' system, with seats reserved for members of specific religions. The parliament represents all religious communities. There are 64 seats for Muslim and Druze members; 27 Sunni, 27 Shi'ite, 8 Druze and 2 Alawite. There are 64 seats for a range of Christin denominations. Hezbollah, a Shia Party, holds 13 seats and is one of the biggest parties in the legislature.

With the depth of the crisis that was unfolding, what had previously appeared to be workable was no more.

Israel made a calculated decision to launch its massive assault on Lebanon. This was, ostensibly, in response to Hezbollah and its support for the resistance movement in Palestine and especially Gaza. The Israelis targeted individual Hezbollah leaders. Then the terror attack of the page and radio-bombs was presented as a further proof that Hezbollah, rather than the Lebanese state, was the target. This 'proof' was quickly shown to be a hollow one when the Israeli military set about its lethal work.

The Israelis issued 'evacuation' orders, forcing more than a million people from their homes. This was accompanied by repeated claims that Israel would be almost a 'friend' to Lebanon if they would just get rid of Hezbollah. It was an attempt at psychological warfare, to divide an already divided community. If Shia communities are the targets, then why welcome them into Christian, Druze or Sunni-dominated areas? The massacre in a predominantly Christian village only served to make that message even more clear.

Any residual idea that Israel is not waging war against the state of Lebanon was quickly dispelled when the centre of Beirut was bombed. High-rise buildings were razed. If this was meant to turn other Lebanese against Hezbollah, it hasn't worked.

Attacks near hospitals followed. This has an awful echo of the repeated bombing of schools and hospitals in Gaza. There were claims that Hezbollah was storing gold beneath hospitals. The media were invited to search for these 'hidden treasures' by hospital staff.

Then came the destruction of financial institutions. Banks were decreed to be Hezbollah controlled and therefore 'legitimate' targets. Before the assault on Gaza Israeli Defence Minister, Yoav Gallant said that Israel was ready to "return Lebanon to the stone age." Gallant's threats are becoming reality.

The resistance to Israel's invasion is both military and civil. Israel has so far killed 2,500 Lebanese and injured 10,000. In the past few weeks it has damaged or destroyed 3,600 buildings. It has targeted individual homes, killing men, woman and children alike. The armed resistance continues and there are the stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

The story of social media content creator Jad Assi is symbolic. He has a following of 200,000 people. Before the war he presented clips on 'hidden' tourist spots in and around Beirut. He is now using that social media platform to organise his followers from around the world in relief efforts.

While this is encouraging, the psychological warfare efforts of Israel have not been without a degree of success. The attacks beyond the immediate south of the country have had no military or strategic importance. The purpose has been to foment civil strife. There are signs of misgivings on the part of some Lebanese about receiving refugee populations from other 'confessional' populations. It is regrettable but understandable, given the fear that the invasion has brought to the land and the people.

The plan is clear enough. Israel is deliberately seeking to deepen existing cracks in civil society, in the hope that internal conflict could erupt, further disintegrating Lebanese society and weakening an already weak state.

The position of the Lebanese Communist Party in relation to the developments before the Israeli aggression and beyond is worth noting. The Party maintains a principled position and calls for national resistance in the face of crisis. Crisis has never been so obvious as today.

Israel may speak of fighting an existential battle for its survival. It may enlist the support of the US and its allies in this, but it is a fiction – a dangerous one. Israel is consciously seeking to destroy Lebanese society and to return the country to a state of civil war. It seeks to seize territory from the Litani River to the Lebanon-Israel border.

In pursuit of these ambitions, the Israeli military is wreaking havoc upon the people. It is madness but a madness marked by calculation and intent. ✪

Statement from the Lebanese Communist Party, delivered at the 2024 Melbourne commemoration of the October Revolution.

**We come here tonight to acknowledge and celebrate the October revolution.**

A revolution for equality, workers rights and fundamental human rights.

And this revolution is needed again, now more than ever.

Because this October is also the anniversary of one of the worst violations of human rights that we have ever seen.

- One year of genocide
- One year of displacement
- One year of targeting civilians

Words are not enough!

We DEMAND our leaders take ACTION to meet their obligations under International Law.

We are bearing witness to horrific attacks, we are *witnessing* crimes against humanity ... and thousands upon thousands upon thousands of innocents have lost their lives.

These extreme attacks across the region, as confemned by the United Nations, as well as so many human rights organisations, have led to one of the worst humanitarian crises that we have ever seen.

Our parliament MUST take the strongest possible stance in not only condemning the violence, but taking *firm action* against the Israeli government.

We demand that our leaders:

1. Declare public support for both the ICC and the ICJ rulines
2. End all military trade and contracts with Israel
3. Implement sanctions against Israel
4. Take active steps to cut diplomatic ties with Israel
5. Expel the Israeli Ambassador and recall the Australian Ambassador to Israel-Lebanon

Australia speaks about justice, peace, and the protection of human rights. Well, we look to our parliamentary representatives to reflect these values in their actions, especially NOW!

The weekend of 26-27 October is also the 100th anniversary of the Lebanese Communist Party, but this celebration and proposed gathering in Beirut was cancelled due to the brutal Israeli invasion – yet again, another invasion, another genocide.

Words are not enough.

Melbourne CPA comrades celebrated the October Revolution with comradeship, a screening of *Battleship Potemkin*, and speeches, including from the Lebanese Communist Party.

# a grotesque act of political opportunism


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