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End US war alliance

Australia must withdraw from the AUKUS war-making alliance. In its utter subservience to its US master, the Albanese government has suggested Australia could send troops to prop up the fascist regime in Ukraine. Figures of 15,000-20,000 are being bandied around of a proposed force coming from some European countries and Australia.

British PM Keir Starmer convened a video meeting of "40 representatives" to bring together a "coalition of the willing" to keep Volodymyr Zelensky and the fascist groups he represents in power in Ukraine. ("Coalition of the willing" was the label of the US, Britain, and Australian invasion force of Iraq in 2003.)

Prior to that get-together there was a meeting of European defence heads in Paris plus Australia, at which the Albanese government was represented by Australia's military attaché to NATO, Di Turton.

Australia, through the AUKUS war alliance, is tied to the central US goal of control of the planet, power to install governments subservient to its demands, power to privatise and deregulate the economies of every nation in the world, the power to inflict 'free market' corporate capitalism on peoples everywhere. US supremacy will be only be assured by it preventing the emergence of any other potentially competing power or government independent of its control.

This doctrine places China at the centre of US "security" concerns and prioritises expansion of US war-making capacities in Asia and the Pacific and Indian Oceans. This means greater involvement of Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and now India, as the US 'pivots' from Iraq and Afghanistan to the heartland of the 21st Century global economy, Asia and the Pacific.

The US strategy is to first exaggerate the level of China's present military build-up; encircle China through the acquisition of military bases in the Asian-Pacific region; establish anti-Chinese alliances, and deploy missile systems. Australia is assisting with the supply of uranium, bases, and surveillance and intelligence facilities such as Pine Gap. US armaments companies are facilitating India's military expansion, especially space development, through an aggressive move into South Asian markets to supplement reductions in their Pentagon contracts.

China's military expansion is actually small compared to the US military. Australia's intelligence community has been clear that China's current limited military build-up is not a threat to Australia. Rather it is China's response to the huge US military expansion in the Asia-Pacific region.

China, Iran, and Russia are the primary targets of weapons systems being developed, of expanded US military alliances, bases, access agreements and an increased tempo of military exercises; as well as advanced cyber and space war capabilities.

Despite the fact that China's military budget is less than one tenth that of the US, China is providing the "enemy" the US military-industrial complex requires.

Preparing for war with China provides additional super profits for US armaments corporations. It will be the primary justification for the acquisition of these costly new weapons systems.

The expansion of "missile defence" systems in Australia, Japan, South Korea, and on US military platforms near China are part of these plans. It will actually create more regional tension and instability, increasing the possibility of war.

The US is engaged in an extensive build-up of military forces as part of a strategy to strengthen the ability of the US and allied forces to contain or even militarily defeat China. Victory from these efforts would give the US its major economic goal of securing the natural resources, cheap labour, and increasing productive strength of the region for the US transnationals.

Liberal and Labor governments have been obediently trotting after the US, with a bloated "defence" budget.

The US has sent a 2,500-strong Marine Air-Ground Task Force to be rotated through Darwin. Australian defence forces will be further integrated into the US military under US command, especially through increased joint military exercises.

There is an ongoing build-up of US warships, submarines, B-52 bombers, fighters, other aircraft and equipment, supplies and weapons (possibly nuclear) based in Australia. Joint exercises with Australia and US will be increased. Stirling in WA will play an increased role and drones will be based on the Cocos Islands.

Australia has already undertaken a relocation of its own military forces with two thirds of the Army's combat forces now in the NT and nearly half the fleet in WA, in line with US strategic plans to contain China and dominate the South China Sea.

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Syria: imperialist rape of a nation

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

Guardian

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Time to stand up

As we come closer to a May election, there's a lot of talk of military spending. Our mainstream news outlets assume this country needs to be protected from China. There's less discussion of exactly what needs to be protected from a major trading partner which poses no threat to Australia. What would we be protecting? Our independence?

Independence is like freedom. Both sound like good things, but people often don't say what they mean by them. Protecting our independence *sounds* like a good idea, but there's one hitch. We don't have independence now. What Australia has is super-dependance, on the USA and on international capital.

If you don't believe this, just try voting for a major party which will leave the US alliance and remove foreign troops from Australia. You can't. Commitment to the so-called 'alliance' is bipartisan between the Labor Party and the Coalition. Both 'parties of government' as they like to call themselves, are committed to the ANZUS treaty and to AUKUS.

AUKUS means we are paying billions right now in return for submarines which may never show up. It costs more than Australia has ever spent on anything from overseas. If the subs do show up, they will be part of a US cordon around China, a major trading partner which has never threatened this country.

ANZUS ties us to the USA and any military adventures it gets into, but does not guarantee that the US will help us if we're attacked. A lot of people are having the vapours about Donald Trump's non-loyalty to longstanding US 'allies,' but the truth is the USA has always been 'transactional' about these things. They'll help if it suits them.

Australia is even less independent than other US client states. New Zealand and France are both 'allies,' but both told the US president where to go when asked to help in a disastrous invasion of Iraq. Not so Australia, which leapt at the chance to be part of the 'coalition of the willing'.

Because genuine independence is off the menu of our major political parties and media outlets, it sounds utopian to suggest it. It is not utopian. This is a large country, with natural resources, an educated population, and no enemies near or far. We could be independent.

Being genuinely independent is not just a nice idea. It would mean we could spend our resources on Australian needs. This paper has often listed the things we could spend the AUKUS money on; dental as part of Medicare, fast trains, reducing power bills with massive investment in renewable power. ... really, it's hard to think of another way to spend $368 billion that *isn't* less wasteful than AUKUS. Even if we just made a big pile of money and set fire to it, it'd be something to look at.

Real independence would also mean this country coming to terms with Indigenous sovereignty – something the Communist Party of Australia has been actively supporting for almost 100 years.

It's high time Australia stood up to the USA. Support real independence for Australia by supporting the Communist Party of Australia. If you want to support an independent media, consider subscribing or donating to the *Guardian*'s Press Fund.

Australia urged to speak out over ceasefire 'obliteration'

The Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) has condemned Israel's obliteration of the ceasefire in Gaza, with Israeli warplanes now bombarding sites sheltering displaced Palestinians.

This follows weeks of Israeli violations since the ceasefire came into effect on 19 January 2025, including military strikes, the deliberate starvation of Palestinians, the complete obstruction of humanitarian aid, and the cutting of electricity.

Reports from Gaza confirm that Israeli warplanes started bombing sites sheltering displaced families before the pre-dawn meal.

At the time of writing, Israel's Occupation Forces had massacred more than 200 Palestinians – including dozens of children and the head of the nutrition centre at the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis.

Israel's Defence minister Israel Katz has openly threatened even greater violence, vowing to unleash destruction on Gaza like it has "never known before."

Israel's refusal to uphold even the most basic commitments under this ceasefire has led directly to this moment. Israel has demonstrated once again complete disregard for Palestinian lives and international law, knowing that history has shown it will face no consequences.

This is not just a breakdown of a ceasefire. It is part of Israel's ongoing campaign of ethnic cleansing and apartheid. Its relentless bombardment, combined with its calculated denial of food, water, medicine, and electricity, is a clear war crime that must be met with urgent international action.

APAN demands that the Australian government unequivocally condemn Israel's breaking of the ceasefire, and impose immediate sanctions on all Israeli figures and entities responsible for genocidal acts in Gaza, along with a two-way arms embargo, in line with its international legal obligations.

Words of "concern" are meaningless – Australia must end its complicity in Israel's war crimes, and take real action to stop this genocide.

APAN President Nasser Mashni said:

"Israel has obliterated the ceasefire by brutally bombing Palestinians as they slept in shelters and tents – after almost 1,000 violations of the ceasefire agreement in just two months. Israel has shattered any illusion that it ever intended to uphold this ceasefire.

"Today it has made very clear that it will continue its genocidal campaign against Palestinians in Gaza, in full view of the world, without consequence.

"The question is no longer whether Israel will commit further atrocities. The question is, will the Australian government finally act – or will it continue enabling these atrocities?

"Australia must cut all ties with this rogue state, impose sanctions and an arms embargo, and stop shielding it from accountability."

The Communist Party of Australia supports active protests in support of Palestine.

Quotes of the Week

"AUKUS – likely to become the greatest disaster in Australian military history if it's not stopped."

Bernard Keane

"It is striking that the loudest ostensible proponents of free speech on campus are the proudest cheerleaders for state repression of pro-Palestine activism on those same campuses."

Rayan Fakhoury, British barrister

Wanted: Sports writers

The *Guardian*, *the Workers Weekly* will have more on sport this year. We've already had one cricket column from Vijay Prashad (and we're nagging him for more). We've also had commentary on the rorts associated with large sporting events from Thomas Heenan. Coming up will be Melbourne writer 'Dropbear' on AFL.

If you've got a sport or code, and opinions on it (and what sports fan doesn't?) drop us a line and let's hear from you.

End US war alliance

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The US controls many important trade shipping lanes, and has military bases and troops stationed throughout the region to protect its present and future economic investments, control of resources and markets, and political power.

The new US imperialist military expansion and provocations in the Asia- Pacific are a threat to peace and the national sovereignty of countries and people in the region.

US imperialism is the main instigator of imperialist wars for control of resources, markets, and for its monopoly capital investments across the globe. Australia's military integration into the US imperialist war machine assists the US to wage predatory wars.

The Communist Party of Australia campaigns for peace and for Australia's sovereignty and independence and to build friendship and solidarity with the people of Asia and the Indo-Pacific.

The CPA advocates:

The removal of US military and intelligence bases from Australia.

The removal of US military and intelligence bases from the Asia-Pacific region.

Opposition to Australia's role as a US proxy in the Asia and Indo-Pacific region.

The promotion of an independent Australian foreign policy that builds peace, and respects the independence and sovereignty of countries and people in the Asia-Pacific.

Exposing and opposing foreign armaments corporations in Australia.

Opposing the development of an armaments industry in Australia.

Two Australias

Anna Pha

How many CEOs, senior executives, politicians or senior government officials have to choose between paying the rent, skipping meals, purchasing medication, cooling their home, or paying an electricity bill? No prize for the correct answer!

There are two Australias: one where people are getting wealthier and wealthier and another which is experiencing a steep decline in living standards. This is no accident. Real wages and living standards have deliberately been driven down by successive governments and, most recently, the Reserve Bank of Australia with 13 successive interest rate hikes.

Some families can afford to build or buy a seven-bedroom, seven-bathroom home with a swimming pool, cinema, and/or parking for six cars. At the same time others are sleeping in tents, cars or rough on the streets. Even those able to rent or purchase a more meagre property are missing meals, and are under rental or mortgage stress.

At the same time the big end of town is making record profits.

The Coalition had nine years to tackle rising prices, the housing crisis, restore bulkbilling, increase social security payments and take other measures to boost living standards of families. Instead it had a deliberate policy of undermining Medicare, making cuts to social security, driving down real wages, and cutting taxes for businesses and the rich.

Labor has had almost three years to restore universal bulkbilling, increase social security payments such as JobSeeker, and address the housing and cost-of-living crises. Instead it cut taxes for the wealthy. Labor has missed a great opportunity to improve living standards. It has failed to adequately fund health care, child care, aged care, and the NDIS – at the same time as refusing to tackle rorting by the private sector.

There is talk of increasing Australia's military budget to 5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product – not 5 per cent of the federal budget but the 5 per cent of the total GDP – total wealth produced in one year.

Australia's GDP is an estimated AU$2.73 trillion. Five per cent of that is $136.5 billion annually and rising in line with growth in the economy. (If the economy shrinks, don't hold your breath for military spending to shrink with it)

Liberals and Labor act as one in pursuing a deliberately slow 'transition' to renewables via gas. The only difference is that the Liberals use vague, nonsensical claims about nuclear power as a delaying tactic. Labor, in power, just delays.

Labor continued the punitive, well-below-poverty-line JobSeeker payments, Youth Allowance and other social security payments. Nobody can live in dignity on $56 a day.

Labor's attack on the Construction Division of the CFMEU has opened the way to an almighty attack on the trade union movement.

Labor's three years have been a missed opportunity to govern in the interests of the people and improve living standards, end the drive to war, and take serious action on climate change.

At the May elections the Communist Party of Australia calls for:

Party members and the people in general to vote for the balance of power in the Senate; in this the first vote should go to the Greens.

A vote for the Greens carries the double value in that it sends a protest message to Labor but could also either help Greens candidates to get elected or to pass on their preference to Labor.

At all levels the CPA calls on the electorate to put the Coalition last.

See *Guardian* 3 March for CPA Central Committee statement on the elections.

Photo: Alex Proimos – wikimedia.org (CC BY 2.0)

wages and living standards have been deliberately driven down

IWD Luncheon Adelaide

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of IWD

First Nations artist and writer, Tabith Lean, an eloquent advocate for criminalised women, recounted not only her own devastating personal experiences on first being incarcerated, but also how Aunty Pat who works with Aboriginal women in prison, brought her hope out of total despair.

Poverty was clearly identified as the main driver of criminalisation as revealed by a woman being imprisoned for failing to pay for a pie at a service station in an effort to feed her child. Currently the South Australian premier, Peter Malinauskas, boasts about his government's additional spending on prisons and police, when those millions would be better directed towards programs for disadvantaged children at school or more affordable government housing.

Aunty Pat revealed how difficult it is for a person who has been in jail to secure a job. Prison is a fact that has to be concealed, a further crime, in order have any chance of success with employment. Police clearances are required in many areas of work, with even some cleaning jobs out of bounds.

Both Aunty Pat and Tabitha agreed that more love and compassion is needed in dealing with unacceptable behaviour at the community level, possibly from friendly, understanding neighbours. In family situations, for instance, when police are called one partner can usually end up criminalised and as a consequence, children may be unable to see their father and a vital income may be lost to the family.

Another highlight was the discussion with First Nations women, looking back over the 50 years since the UN Year for Women was declared and several International forums since, plus IWD celebrations each year. What have these done for Australian First Nations ? There are now higher incarceration rates of Aboriginal women, more of their children being taken away and domestic violence and police brutality has increased. The Aboriginal women felt that IWD has become a middle class development leaving them behind.

A clear message was that *all* women, including criminalised women, should be offered the opportunity to *march forward.*

B & R Hall

Greek Democritus Workers League honours International Working Women's Day

Democritus House in Northcote hosted a bilingual IWWD event on 15 March. A group of Democritus League members and associates over four generations joined the commemorations.

Speakers from Federation of Italian Migrant Workers and Families (FILEF) and Victorian Ambulance Union held forth in Greek and English about the radical roots of IWWD, the multi-faceted issues migrant working women face and growing up as the daughter of a Democritus Women's Committee member.

A historical example was raised of Australian manufacturing: General Motors-Holden operated factories where men assembled cars, and factories where women assembled fridges (Frigidaire). The work was largely the same but the women were paid at significant discount.

These speakers were bookended by Democritus League Secretary who emphasised that IWWD is not a celebration of CEOs and other exceptional individuals, but of the grassroots. "Working women do not face a glass ceiling. They face a concrete wall of capitalism." This wall can only be broken by struggle in concert with working men against a common oppressor – the bosses.

This year Democritus League celebrates its 90th year of Australian operations. A programme of events will be announced through the press. Watch this space.

Housing tax breaks fuel housing crisis and must be fixed

Photo: Hugh Llewelyn – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

ACOSS is calling on all parties and candidates to support reforms to negative gearing and the 50 per cent capital gains discount, and invest the revenue raised in social and affordable housing after releasing analysis showing how the measures have supercharged inequality and contributed to the housing affordability crisis.

The ACOSS report, *Homes for living, not wealth creation*, includes analysis showing that the wealthiest 10 per cent of households hold two thirds of the value of investment property.

The ACOSS report also finds that competition for homes from investors increased dramatically following the introduction of the 50 per cent capital gains tax discount in 1999. Investors led two surges in home prices – by 13 per cent a year above inflation from 2001 to 2003 and by 6 per cent a year from 2013 to 2017.

Since 1999, home prices have increased by 142 per cent, while wages have only risen by 44 per cent.

Contrary to the idea that encouraging investment is needed to generate new supply, 81 per cent of investment loans are for existing properties.

"Australia's absurdly generous tax breaks are supercharging the housing crisis and rising inequality in our society," said ACOSS CEO Dr Cassandra Goldie.

"As long as our tax system encourages speculative investment in housing, the housing affordability crisis won't be solved just by building more homes."

"Independent modelling indicates that halving the capital gains tax discount and curbing negative gearing would reduce home prices by up to 4 per cent, similar to the impact of the government's target to build an additional 1.2 million homes over five years.

"Politicians claim that "mum and dad" investors are the ones benefiting from these concessions – but our analysis shows that the wealthiest 10 per cent own two thirds of investment properties.

"These tax breaks disproportionately benefit the well-off in our society while millions struggle to pay the rent, let alone save a deposit to buy their first home.

"These unfair tax breaks fuel speculation by investors in housing stock and distort investment decisions, yet do little to increase the supply of rental properties, let alone affordable homes."

"These tax breaks for investment properties also come at a cost of at least $11 billion each year, which could be invested in social and affordable housing for people with low and modest incomes."

ACOSS is calling on the next government to:

Halve the Capital Gains Tax (CGT) discount from 50 per cent to 25 per cent over five years, reducing it by 5 per cent per year.

Restrict negative gearing for new investments so that investment losses can only be offset against investment income rather than wages, and phase out negative gearing for existing investments over five years.

Also halve the CGT discount for super funds, prohibit self-managed superannuation funds (SMSFs) from borrowing to invest in property, and close loopholes in the taxation of super that allow people to avoid paying CGT after they retire.

Invest revenue from CGT and negative gearing reforms into building 47,000 new homes per year to address the unmet need of 940,000 homes over 20 years

Key stats:

The top 10 per cent of households by income receives over four fifths (82 per cent) of the $16 billion CGT discount and nearly two fifths (39 per cent) of all tax deductions for rental properties.

Since the capital gains discount was introduced in 1999 the median home price has doubled from 4 to 8 times the median income.

The proportion of income needed to meet mortgage payments has risen from 27 per cent in 2001 to 49 per cent in 2024 and renters now spend an average of 33 per cent of their income on rent, up from 26 per cent in 2006.

The time required for a median income household to save a 20 per cent home deposit for a median value dwelling has increased from around 8 years in 2004 to nearly 11 years in 2024.

From 1991 to 2023, the annual number of social housing lettings for people with low incomes declined from 52,000 to 32,000, a reduction of more than 58 per cent when we take account of population growth.

Revenue raised from reform of the tax breaks could raise $19 billion over four years, and (subject to development and construction constraints) fund the delivery of up to 49,000 additional homes in future – soon approaching a doubling of the existing federal government commitment to build 55,000 such dwellings.

After several years, annual revenue raised could fund the federal government's contribution to addressing unmet social and affordable housing needs (around $9-14 billion per year on average, on top of existing funding), matched by States and Territories combined.

Australian Council of Social Services

Communist Party of Australia policy supports a massive investment in public housing

the wealthiest 10 per cent own two thirds of investment properties

Dingo bytes

A survey of 1,011 people across Australia has found half of respondents are going without food, medication and other essentials to try to pay their energy bills. Others are selling belongings or turning to buy now, pay later schemes.

The survey also revealed the devastating health impacts of hot homes. More than nine in ten (92 per cent) of people surveyed reported negative impacts of their home getting too hot, with 14 per cent seeking medical attention in the last year because of the heat.

People with a disability or chronic illness, and people receiving income support, were each five times more likely than others to require medical care for heat-related symptoms, including headaches, heat rash, breathing problems, nose bleeds, dehydration, nausea and vomiting, asthma flare-ups, heart conditions, emphysema, diabetes and poor mental health. Renters were three times more likely and First Nations people twice as likely as others to seek heat-related medical attention.

The Health Services Union has launched a push for disability workers to receive a desperately needed pay rise, with the sector facing a major workforce crisis.

A HSU discussion paper shows Australia is facing a 100,000 disability staff shortfall, while one in four workers are planning on leaving the sector.

With the NDIS growing at 8 per cent annually, this could have a catastrophic impact for the hundreds of thousands of Australians who rely on the scheme, as standards decline and people fall through the cracks.

The union is calling for a $5-an-hour pay increase through a new workforce compact that would also guarantee no additional cost to participants. The compact would also mean better conditions including staffing levels, supervision, training, debrief time, and classification structures.

The HSU's proposed workforce compact would be an investment of $900 million over three years and help shore up the future of the NDIS for hundreds of thousands of participants nationally.

"Disability workers are severely underpaid for the incredibly challenging work they do, which is motivated by a deep commitment to scheme participants," HSU National Secretary Lloyd Williams said.

"Unfortunately, that commitment is being stretched to breaking point – and the federal government must urgently act to avoid a catastrophic erosion of standards across the NDIS.

"These workers are the forgotten allrounders of social support systems that give people living with disabilities the dignified and independent lives they deserve."

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: is the Trump gang and its cuts to foreign aid. More than one million people in war-torn Myanmar will be cut off from food assistance due to critical funding shortfalls, the United Nations food agency said. The World Food Program (WFP) said the distribution of most food rations in Myanmar would end in April, even as the country faces a desperate humanitarian crisis caused by bitter fighting between the military government and powerful rebel militias.

The WFP said it would need $60 million to continue food assistance in Myanmar and called on its partners to identify additional funding.

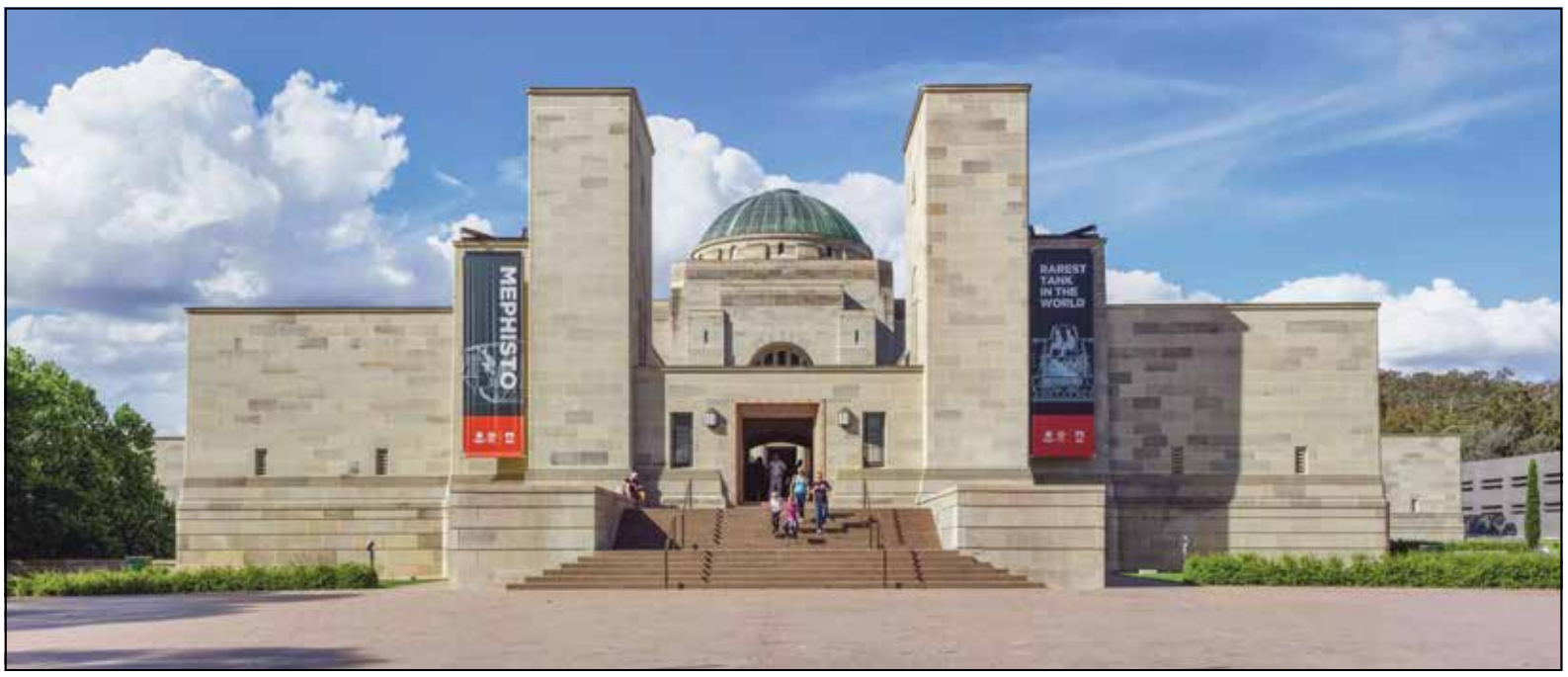
It was not immediately clear whether the WFP decision was directly related to the US administration's recent efforts to stop most foreign aid and dismantle the US Agency for International Development, which have had wide-ranging effects on humanitarian efforts around the globe.

The UN agency said 15.2 million people, nearly one-third of the total population, are unable to meet their minimum daily food needs and some 2.3 million face emergency levels of hunger.

Michael Dunford, its representative and country director in Myanmar, said: "WFP remains steadfast in its commitment to support the people of Myanmar, but more immediate funding is crucial to continue reaching those in need."

A Disneyland of war

William Briggs



Australian War Memorial, Canberra. Photo: Thennicke – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

A row has erupted about the Australian War Memorial and sponsorships from some of the world's biggest weapons producers. Is this 'dirty money?' Is it an acceptance that Australia is becoming more and more dependent on the Military-Industrial-Complex, foreign and home grown? Is the memorial a place to remember past wars, or to propagandise for future wars?

The War Memorial was launched in 1925. The scars of WW1 were fresh. It was finally opened in 1941. The Governor-General of the day, Lord Gowrie, uttered the famous words, "never again, never again," and urged all people who visited the memorial to repeat the phrase.

On Remembrance Day, 2025, it will be 84 years since that speech. It has been a case of 'again and again.' Even as Gowrie was speaking, Australian soldiers were already deployed to fight in WW2. Even so, the sentiment he expressed can be appreciated.

Since then, the Memorial has expanded as the history of Australian involvement in war has expanded. Those who made the decision, all those decades ago, to commemorate the dead, were by no means pure of heart. There was no serious argument that there would be no more wars. They were supporters of the Australian state and supported the role that the state played promoting its interests and those of its allies.

What they would have thought about turning over the already well-funded War Memorial to merchants of death and destruction to advertise their dreadful products is another matter. How would they react to the concept of turning this memorial into a virtual theme park of war?

In 2018 the government spent $500 billion on a major upgrade of the Memorial. There were valid criticisms at the time, especially as it so closely coincided with the burgeoning military budget and the commitment to US strategic interests in the region.

Since then, the arms budget has blown out. An armaments industry has emerged that Albanese praises as if it's an industry policy, and the economy is becoming increasingly reliant on the production and marketing of weaponry.

The brief controversy over the arms industry sponsorship of the War Memorial is inextricably linked to this war-infused direction of the economy.

War is not the easiest of ideas to sell to people. Glitz, glitter, and shiny, sleek displays all help to dull the senses and permit the state to do what it will.

We all know that capital makes money from war. We know that war profiteers do well when there is conflict. What has recently come to light is that those allegedly maintaining the integrity of this memorial to the fallen have been on the payroll of the armaments industry. They have been cheerfully taking payments from the companies that will provide the materiel, at a price, to kill the next generation; soldiers and civilians, in this country and across the world.

The chairman of the Memorial, Kim Beazley is currently being paid by two multinational arms companies. This has been a guarded secret. It has never been disclosed on the Memorial's website. The venality did not begin with 'bomber' Beazley. His predecessor, Brendan Nelson had happily snuffled at the trough in his time in the job.

Nelson took on a paid job with Thales, a major provider of weapons for the Australian army, including the production of the Bushmaster armoured vehicles. He 'failed' to disclose his position up until the time that the government introduced its foreign influence register in 2019. He had pocketed $200,000 in his time as Chairman of the War Memorial.

Funding from some of the worst entities on the globe has been going on for years. Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Thales, BAE Systems and Northrop Grumman have all made considerable donations. All of this has been defended by Beazley. The softening up of our population to the advantages of this war-based reality is on show, but not merely in the displays and gadgetry. Galleries, a theatre, various memorial projects, an art prize and exhibitions have all been bankrolled by this dirtiest of dirty money.

Boeing donated $474,000 to an indigenous art project called, 'defending country.'

Much of this degrading spectacle came to light in a recent *Four Corners* program. It was a brief scandal, but normal business will resume.

What is not discussed in these soul-searching documentaries is the deeper story. Yes, corruptible people will allow themselves to be corrupted. Yes, they will defend their actions. The actions of the arms manufacturers will be questioned, from a suitable distance.

What exposé like *Four Corners* won't cover is the drift to war that is happening every day. The acceptance of a growing home-grown arms trade will not be seriously debated by out media or our government. Our state and economic system are becoming reliant on the dollars that flow from this evil trade.

Australia is in the top 20 global arms exporters and the government has stated its ambition to move into the top ten!

The War Memorial was designed as just that; a memorial to soldiers who had died. Lord Gowrie, when saying 'never again, never again,' could not have imagined how this memorial, designed to be a special 'sacred' place would be turned into a tawdry, Disneyland of war.

One law for us, another for the US

Anyone who's ever had trouble getting an extension approved will know that there are consequences to building works without permission. Generally, the larger the project the stricter the building regulations. At least that's what most people would think.

That's not how it works for contractors building fuel tanks for the US military, operating out of this country. Eleven gigantic fuel tanks have been built on Darwin Harbour with no building permit. It's a tribute to what the former Northern Territory chief minister called the NT's "can-do attitude," although in this case it's more of a can-do-without-building-permits attitude.

The tanks only hold 300 million litres of jet fuel, though, so the contractors, a US outfit called Crowley, are probably wondering what all the red tape is about. Crowley won a tender, not from the Australian government (they just own the land, it's only our country), but from the US government to build and manage the facility. Good news is, they haven't put any jet fuel in the tanks yet.

In Darwin, you're supposed to have a building permit before you start construction, so it's quite an oversight to knock up 11 tanks that size without getting one. The NT employs a Director of Building Control to look after this sort of thing. That director, Mark Meldrum, has sent a letter to Crowley letting them know that they are in breach of the NT's Building Act, and has gone even further. He's handed them a massive fine and told them to demolish the tanks.

Just kidding. What Meldrum *has* done, according to the ABC, is tell Crowley that "Enforcement measures may need to be applied if this is not addressed in a timely manner." Meldrum won't say if he's applied any of these enforcement measures.

Still, it's probably totally safe to store that 300 million litres of jet fuel that the US military needs, right? Not just now. Crowley told the ABC that there is "water intrusion in the leak detection system," but that they're getting on to it and will solve the issue "in a timely manner."

If the building permit saga is anything to go by, doing things in a timely manner isn't Crowley's strong suit, but anyone in the NT wanting to put an extension on the back of the house and dreading the paperwork can take heart. Just tell the government you're practicing your can-do attitude, and pretend the US Air Force will be using it, see how you go.

Idwala Umlimi

www.cpa.org.au

Adelaide

CUBA NIGHT

AT THE SEMAPHORE WORKERS CLUB

7.00pm Saturday 29th March 2025

*Dance to Cuban & Latino Music

* Eat great food from Antojitos Latinos food truck

* Great raffle prizes

Organised by the Australia-Cuba Friendship Society SA

Western Australia: Regional update

WA is a vast state with a diverse landscape, encompassing bustling urban centres like Perth and expansive rural and regional areas. While the state's economy is heavily driven by mining, agriculture and tourism, the country and regional areas face unique challenges that differ significantly from those in metropolitan regions. This report outlines the current state of regional and rural towns in WA, focusing on the distinct problems they encounter, including infrastructure deficits, population decline, healthcare access, and economic dependency.

POPULATION DECLINE AND AGEING DEMOGRAPHICS

One of the most pressing issues in regional and rural WA is population decline. Many towns are experiencing an exodus of younger residents to urban centres in search of better employment, education, and lifestyle opportunities. This trend has led to an ageing population in many regional areas, which places additional strain on local services and reduces the workforce available for key industries such as agriculture and mining.

Declining populations result in reduced economic activity, school closures, and a shrinking tax base, making it difficult for local governments to maintain essential services.

For example, towns in the Wheatbelt and Great Southern regions have seen significant population declines over the past decade.

HEALTHCARE

Access to healthcare is a critical issue in regional and rural WA. Many towns lack adequate medical facilities, and residents often have to travel long distances to access specialised care. This is particularly challenging for elderly residents and those with chronic health conditions.

Limited healthcare access exacerbates health disparities between urban and rural populations and can lead to poorer health outcomes.

In the Pilbara and Kimberley regions, remote communities often rely on fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) medical staff, which can lead to inconsistent care.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEFICITS

Regional and rural areas in WA often struggle with inadequate infrastructure, including roads, telecommunications, and public transportation. Poor infrastructure hampers economic development, limits access to services, and reduces the quality of life for residents.

Poor road conditions and limited public transport options make it difficult for residents to commute for work or access essential services.

Many rural roads in the Mid West and Goldfields-Esperance regions are unpaved or poorly maintained, making travel hazardous.

ECONOMIC DEPENDENCY

A lot of regional towns in WA are heavily dependent on a single industry, such as mining or agriculture. This lack of economic diversification makes these communities vulnerable to fluctuations in commodity prices and global market conditions.

Economic downturns in key industries can lead to job losses, business closures, and reduced investment in local communities.

The decline in iron ore prices has had a serious affect on Pilbara mining towns leading to reduced economic activity and job losses.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Access to quality education and employment opportunities is limited in many regional areas. Schools in rural towns often have fewer resources and struggle to attract and retain qualified teachers. A limited range of job opportunities forces many young people to leave their hometowns.

All this contributes to the cycle of population decline and economic stagnation.

In the South West and Gascoyne regions, many young people relocate to Perth for tertiary education and do not return.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Regional and rural areas in WA face unique environmental challenges, including water scarcity, soil degradation, and the impacts of climate change. These issues threaten the sustainability of agriculture and other key industries.

Water shortages and extreme weather events can devastate crops, reduce livestock productivity, and increase the cost of farming.

The Wheatbelt region has experienced declining rainfall and increased salinity, affecting agricultural output.

SOCIAL ISOLATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

Social isolation is a significant issue in regional and rural areas, particularly for elderly residents and those living in remote communities. Limited social services and recreational opportunities can lead to feelings of loneliness and contribute to mental health challenges.

High rates of mental health issues, including depression and anxiety, are reported in rural areas, compounded by limited access to mental health services. In the Kimberley region have higher rates of mental health issues compared to urban areas.

WHAT TO DO?

The regional and rural areas of Western Australia face a unique set of challenges that require targeted solutions. Addressing these issues will require collaboration between state and federal governments, local councils, and community organisations. Key priorities include improving infrastructure, diversifying local economies, enhancing access to healthcare and education, and supporting mental health services. By investing in these areas, WA can ensure the sustainability and prosperity of its regional and rural communities.

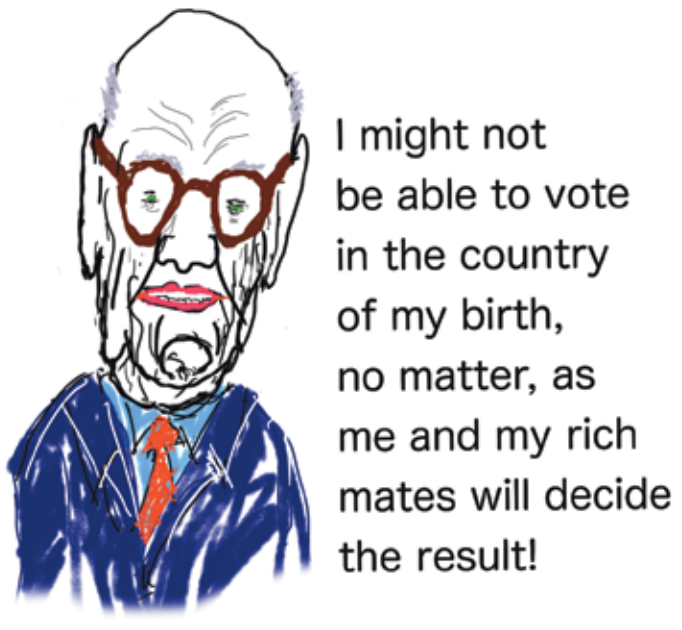
WE RECOMMEND:

1. Increase funding for infrastructure projects in regional areas, including roads, telecommunications, and public transport.
2. Develop programs to attract and retain healthcare professionals in rural communities.
3. Promote economic diversification through incentives for small businesses and new industries.
4. Expand mental health services and social programs to address isolation and improve well-being.
5. Implement initiatives to support young people, such as scholarships and employment programs, to encourage them to stay in regional areas.

By addressing these challenges, Western Australia can create a more equitable and sustainable future for all its residents, regardless of where they live.

Northam Comrades

A word from a former Australian



Something to say?

Write to the Editor!

editor@cpa.org.au

Budget call for 'people-centred policy'

The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) is calling on all political parties and candidates to commit to a bold, people-centred policy agenda ahead of the upcoming federal budget, with urgent investment in social security, housing, employment, climate action and disaster resilience.

With an election on the horizon, the agency says the next government must use all the tools at its disposal to deliver meaningful reforms following years of declining living standards and rising inequality.

"Australia prides itself on being the nation of the 'fair go,' but this ideal is slipping further from reality for many people," ACOSS CEO Dr Cassandra Goldie AO said.

"People are experiencing historic falls in living standards and growing inequality, with too many struggling to pay bills and facing unprecedented anxiety about their future. We are at a critical juncture. The cost-of-living crisis, inadequate social security system, housing unaffordability and the growing impacts of climate change are pushing millions of people to the brink.

"This budget and the upcoming election must be about lifting people out of poverty, ensuring secure housing, and making our communities more resilient to economic and environmental shocks."

ACOSS's 2025 Federal Election policy platform outlines critical reforms needed across seven key areas to ensure no one is left behind.

Key priorities:

- First Nations justice and self-determination: Deliver funding and resourcing needed to implement reform priorities under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, including through shared decision-making models
- A social security system that meets needs: Increase all income support payments to at least the pension rate of $82 a day to ensure everyone can afford basics like housing, food, and medicine
- Make housing affordable for people with low incomes
- Employment opportunities: Invest $1 billion annually in labour market programs that make a real difference for people experiencing long-term unemployment, and an immediate end to the Targeted Compliance Framework and automated payment suspensions
- Investing in quality community services: End chronic underfunding of community service organisations by developing better funding models to ensure long-term viability and ability to meet growing community needs
- Action on climate change: Provide substantial funding to accelerate home energy upgrades for all low-income and First Nations housing to reduce energy poverty and improve resilience
- A fairer tax system: Implement measures to ensure everyone pays their fair share, including broadening the Medicare Levy income definition to prevent avoidance by high-income earners, and the adoption of tax reforms to raise public revenue

ACOSS is urging all parties to show leadership and commit to policies that prioritise fairness, security and resilience.

"The choices made by the next government will determine whether Australia becomes a more equal society where everyone can live with dignity, or whether we continue down a path of growing inequality," Dr Goldie said.

"We cannot allow inequality to deepen any further. This election is a moment to choose a fairer, more inclusive future where no one is left behind. We are calling on all political parties to step up and take action."

Australian Council of Social Services

Deliberate, orchestrated incidents

An innocent caravan. Designed by Wannapik

Marcus Browning

Anti-Zionist members of the Jewish community who oppose Israel's crimes against the Palestinians are being targeted by the Israel lobby's head-kickers. An organiser of the dissenting Jewish voices, Keren Rubinstein, said those opposing the war in Gaza have been ostracised from the Jewish community.

"We're shut down, we're demonised, we're even criminalised, we're sacked from our jobs, we're silenced at every turn, both professionally and socially." Another activist, David Glanz, said the incidents portrayed as antisemitism were "tragic but isolated" and were used to create a narrative that Jews were living in fear.

"We stand against the genocide in Gaza and we reject [claims] that the Palestinian movement is fomenting antisemitism. We think there is a highly political agenda here, where people claiming to be motivated by antisemitism are actually motivated to shut down Palestinian voices."

Glanz rejected the Israel lobby's claim that they speak for all Jews. "There isn't one form of being a Jew. Antisemitism is real but the politicians and media who put such emphasis on it have nothing to say about the rising tide of hatred faced by our Muslim brothers and sisters."

The Jewish Council of Australia's Sarah Schwartz said NSW Premier Chris Minns' description of the discovery of explosions in a van in the Sydney suburb of Dural as "terrorism" was "unhelpful" because there was lack of evidence to justify the claim.

"That sort of language has increased fear and panic, referring to it as a potential mass casualty event," said Schwartz. "This not to say resources shouldn't be dedicated to investigating, but this sort of heightened and hyperbolic language doesn't assist."

She said politicians should have waited to determine the cause "before introducing law and order legislation" as a "kneejerk response."

Chief executive of the Australian Jewish Association, Robert Gregory, noted, "The latest arrests demonstrate that the rushed hate crime legislation passed at state and federal level are not the answer. If police are correct that none of the perpetrators were motivated by antisemitism, then those laws would not have been of any use. Questions remain about who was behind the campaign."

The antisemitism narrative is also the excuse used to justify the widespread restriction of democratic rights to shut down protest that has taken place in Australia, the US, Britain, and a number of other countries.

To keep the atmosphere of fear and concern going, it is necessary to have a constant stream of shadowy threats and the occasional actual act of terrorism.

There has been a constant stream of alleged dangers from incidents trumpeted as "antisemitism."

What shadowy figures behind the scenes financed, armed and commanded those who carried out these activities?

It is important to ask the question: Who benefits?

If terrorism is to be looked at objectively, it is clear that the objectives pursued by the US gangsters in power in the White House are being served by the terrorist acts that have taken place.

The powers-that-be are well aware that people will quickly tire of the narrative charade, so it has to be beefed up continuously by a steady stream of alleged threats and the occasional incident to make it all look real.

With elections in Australia coming soon, it would not come as a surprise if there were some significant incident to stampede the people into voting the Albanese government back into office. This would enable the Labor-Liberal duopoly to proceed with the real wars that they have in mind towards their shared objective of US imperialist domination.

"We think there is a highly political agenda here, where people claiming to be motivated by antisemitism are actually motivated to shut down Palestinian voices."

GREEN NOTES

Melting poles

The Arctic and Antarctic polar ice caps are usually covered in white snow and ice that reflect heat back into space. The ice has melted to record lows since records began 47 years ago. NASA satellite imaging shows that the polar ice caps are shrinking nine per cent every ten years!

According to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's monitoring of polar temperatures, the Arctic had its second warmest year in 2024 based on data going back to 1900. Although cool conditions prevailed in Scandinavia, Iceland, and along coastal regions of eastern Eurasia and southeastern Greenland, warm conditions predominated across most of the Arctic. Warmth was especially pronounced across eastern North America and stretches of Siberia. Glacial melt of the Greenland ice sheet is a major predictor of future sea level rise; if it melts entirely, global sea levels could rise six metres.

In 2020, the Arctic reached its highest temperature of 38°C in Verkhoyansk, Republic of Sakha, Russia. The climate in the Nordic region is warming significantly faster than the rest of the world, according to data reviewed by the Finnish Meteorological Institute (FMI). Temperatures in Finland were last year 3.4 degrees warmer on average than in the pre-industrial era, and 2024 was the fourth warmest year on record. As the *Harvard Gazette* says, "If emissions continue to rise unchecked, the Arctic could be ice-free in the summer by 2040. But what happens in the Arctic does not stay in the Arctic. Sea ice loss has far-reaching effects around the world."

Ice is also melting in Antarctica, where the highest temperature ever recorded was at Seymour Island, located on the northeast Antarctic Peninsula. In 2020, the mercury hit a record high of 20.75°C which represents a warming of 3.25°C in five years.

As temperatures rise, the polar ice caps start to melt and break apart. Less ice means less reflected heat, leading to more intense heatwaves worldwide. But it also means more extreme winters as the polar jet stream – a high-pressure wind that circles the Arctic region – is destabilised by warmer air. It can dip south, bringing bitter cold with it. Ice loss is already causing significant damage to crops on which global food systems depend. This instability will continue to mean higher prices and growing crises for the world's most vulnerable.

The changing environment at the poles affects Indigenous peoples, animals, and plants. It also accelerates climate change. Animals such as seals, polar bears, and whales may be forced to change their natural migration patterns. People who live in coastal villages are already being forced to abandon their homes as sea levels rise and climate change brings more extreme and frequent weather events.

"We've had not just one or two record-breaking years, but a full ten-year series. This has been accompanied by devastating and extreme weather, rising sea levels and melting ice, all powered by record-breaking greenhouse gas levels due to human activities," said World Meteorological Organisation Secretary-General Celeste Saulo.

One event leads to another: Arctic ice and permafrost – ground that is permanently frozen – store large amounts of methane, a more potent greenhouse gas than CO2. When it thaws, the methane is released, increasing the rate of warming. This, in turn, causes more ice and permafrost to thaw or melt, releasing more methane, causing more melting. As we lose more ice more quickly and see more rapid permafrost melt, we will start seeing the worst climate change predictions come true. There is still time to limit climate change. In the meantime, helping communities and wildlife adapt to changes already underway is essential.

The extreme weather events that are on the rise around the world are not 'one in a hundred year' events, nor are they 'natural disasters.'

Commonwealth of *Australia v Yunupingu*: A new paradigm for native title?

C Bartholomew

On the 12 March 2025, the High Court of Australia delivered its judgement regarding the case of *Commonwealth of Australia v Yunupingu*. This decision has made some headlines in the media, but discussion of the broader context behind the decision and its implications has been lacking. The *Yunupingu* decision will likely come to be regarded as one of the most significant native title judgements in recent history, however the reasons why can only be properly understood within the history of native title law in Australia.

THE CASE

The late land rights leader Dr Galarrwuy Yunupingu, on behalf of the Gumatj clan, applied for native title for land in the Gove Peninsula. The Northern Territory was governed by South Australia until 1911, during which time it granted pastoral leases over great swathes of land. Between 1911 and 1978, the Commonwealth government held exclusive power over lawmaking in the Northern Territory, a power it used to make ordinances regarding mineral rights and to grant mining leases over land, including that of the Gumatj. Yunupingu and the Gumatj lodged a claim for compensation, arguing that the granting of interests in land over which they held native title constituted an acquisition of property by the Commonwealth.

While the native title claim itself is ongoing, the Commonwealth challenged the existence of any right to compensation. This crucial point of law that was decided upon by the full bench of the Federal Court in 2023, who ruled in favour of Yunupingu and the Gumatj. However, the High Court granted the Commonwealth special leave to appeal later that year. The Commonwealth was terrified of the prospect of having to pay compensation to traditional owners. Solicitor-general Stephen Donaghue raised these fears of "a vast amount of compensation" in the opening of the appeal.

In its landmark judgement from this year, the High Court upheld the Federal Court decision in favour of Yunupingu. It held that the Commonwealth cannot acquire property otherwise than on just terms, as required under s51(xxxi) of the *Constitution*. In other words, the Commonwealth, even when governing a territory, must pay compensation for any property it acquires. The High Court also held that the extinguishment of native title recognised under common law, even prior to the commencement of the *Native Title Act* 1993, constitutes an acquisition of property under s51(xxxi). The last major point held by the High Court was that the granting of a pastoral lease in 1903 by the Governor of South Australia under state legislation did not extinguish any non-exclusive native title rights over minerals on or under the land.

IMPLICATIONS

This decision could be an important shift in native title law. The 2019 case *Northern Territory v Griffiths* established compensation for extinguishment of native title with three calculations for economic loss, cultural loss, and interest (controversially determined to be simple, not compound interest). However, the general consensus was that compensation could only be claimed for native title extinguished after 1975.

Why 1975? That was the year of the federal *Racial Discrimination Act*, the cornerstone of native title claims since the High Court ruled that Queensland's attempt to retroactively abolish native title to stop the claim of the Meriam people violated the Act. This decision was, of course, *Mabo (No 1)*, the precursor to the more famous *Mabo (No 2)*.

Yunupingu takes a huge step forward for native title by establishing a basis for compensation claims for pre-1975 extinguishment. As National Native Title Council chair Kado Muir said, "The Gumatj decision shows that when our sacred lands are taken away, we are entitled to receive compensation on just terms in accordance with s51(xxxi) of the *Constitution*, in the same way as any other citizen of Australia."

Given that this case concerned compensation over land mined for bauxite in the Northern Territory, there are several questions which will be answered in years to come. How will this decision impact native title in the states, where state laws around property acquisition and interests in land will come into play, and where land may not have been acquired directly from the Commonwealth? Given the context of ongoing cases such as the Yindjibarndi case against Fortescue, how will *Yunupingu* and these ongoing cases impact corporate exploitation of Indigenous lands for mining and other purposes? So far, it has been the responsibility of federal and state governments to pay compensation for the extinguishment of native title, but is this merely another example of our governments bankrolling the exploitation of Australian lands and resources? The scope of native title in Australia will no doubt continue to be reshaped and redefined beyond *Yunupingu* as other cases.

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

PROGRESS AND STAGNATION

In moments of change such as this one, it is important to recognise that native title is complicated, conflicted, and slow to develop. Australia's history of engaging with native title is incredibly short compared to our colonial counterparts the United States, Canda, and New Zealand, all of whom have been addressing native title, for better or worse, for hundreds of years. Australian capitalists have had comparatively little interest in trade with First Nations peoples, while Australian institutions have clung onto old-fashioned notions of *terra nullius* and absolute Crown ownership far longer than other jurisdictions.

The judicial history of native title has been one of conflict between progressive and conservative judges. For instance, the question of content (the specific rights native title holders have) was given a "list of traditional activities" approach by the 2002 case of *WA v Ward*. This meant traditional owners found to have native title only had a specific list of 'traditional' rights and interests protected, with no regard for duties, obligations, or even modern rights and interests such as use of minerals. The case of *Yorta Yorta v Victoria* of that same year considered the question of what proof is needed to establish native title. It upheld the continuity approach, meaning there needs to be proof of continued practice of traditional laws and activities to establish native title. This approach essentially makes native title impossible for traditional owners in urban centres or any other region heavily impacted by colonisation, forced relocations, or other practices, as the *Yorta Yorta* case specifically denied the validity of contemporary Indigenous practices. This approach is also blatantly hypocritical, as Western societies are allowed to change without being disregarded the same way. It is also worth noting that *Yorta Yorta* and other cases have favoured the accounts of random white squatters over the evidence provided by Indigenous communities themselves regarding the nature of their own laws and cultures.

The 2013 case of *Akiba*, on behalf of the Torres Strait Regional Seas Claim Groupbegan a move away from the *Ward* approach to the content of native title, instead recognising broad rights to land and resources for any purpose. *Akiba* also challenged the idea that Commonwealth legislation and leases, even temporary ones, extinguish native title forever. These changes have, in a sense, loosened the restraints on the self-determination and economic activity of native title holders. After *Akiba* courts have gradually made native title rights more holistic and more resilient. The question of proof, however, remains firmly under the *Yorta Yorta* continuity approach, bringing significant struggle to Indigenous communities in regions such as Victoria and South East Queensland. Even the compensation approach developed by *Griffiths* could be considered a continuation of *Yorta Yorta*, as contemporary Indigenous culture is devalued.

The decision of *Yunupingu* is a reminder of both how far native title has come and how far it has yet to go. It is important to recognise the efforts of Elders and Indigenous communities in pushing forward these developments through their efforts in the courts. First Nations Laws and Indigenous cultures are not relics of the past or hypotheticals for the future, but are instead an everyday experience for peoples and communities all around Australia. This is the reality that the colonial law is hopefully slowly waking up to.

First Nations Laws and Indigenous cultures are not relics of the past or hypotheticals for the future, but are instead an everyday experience for peoples

US attacks Cuba's medical missions

The United States recently expanded visa restrictions aimed at undermining Cuba's medical missions worldwide by threatening government officials from recipient countries. According to the State Department, individuals involved with Cuba's medical missions, including Cuban and foreign government officials and their family members, could be targeted by the measure.

The US has long tried to stop the missions, which provide free healthcare to hundreds of thousands – if not millions – of people in dozens of countries and generate billions of dollars in foreign currency for Cuba.

"By threatening to withhold visas from foreign officials, the US government means to sabotage these Cuban medical missions overseas," Helen Yaffe, a senior lecturer at the University of Glasgow, wrote recently in an article for *Jacobin*. "The beneficiary nations have been the poorest and least influential globally. If Rubio and Trump are successful, it is not just Cubans who will suffer. It will also be the global beneficiaries whose lives are being saved and improved by Cuban medical internationalism right now."

Caribbean leaders are pushing back against US pressure.

"I will prefer to lose my US visa than to have 60 poor and working people die," said St Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves, referring to the dialysis treatments that Cuban doctors provide to patients in his nation.

Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Keith Rowley was equally defiant.

"I just came back from California, and if I never go back there again in my life, I will ensure that the sovereignty of Trinidad and Tobago is known to its people and respected by all," Rowley said to applause at a recent public event.

The USA has labelled the medical missions "forced labor" and "modern-day slavery." The reality is tens of thousands of Cuban healthcare professionals willingly go on these missions every year, and they are paid wages several times higher than what they receive in Cuba.

Cuba also sends medical missions during humanitarian crises through the Henry Reeve Brigade. Cuban doctors have fought Ebola in Africa, treated earthquake victims in Haiti and Pakistan, and helped save lives in Italy at the height of COVID.

Belly of the Beast

Cuban Health Specialists arriving in South Africa to curb the spread of COVID-19.
Photo: GCIS – flickr.com (CC BY-ND 2.0)

Greenlanders demonstrate to reject annexation

Hundreds of Greenland citizens demonstrated in Nuuk, the capital of the polar island, protesting against the intention expressed by US President Donald Trump to annex this territory dependent on Denmark.

The protest was called under the slogan "Enough is enough!" and the Facebook appeal reads that the people of Greenland must send a clear message to Trump that his threats are "unacceptable." Among the demonstrators were the leader of the liberal party that won parliamentary elections, Jens-Frederik Nielsen, and the acting prime minister, Múte B Egede.

"We want to be ourselves, and our autonomy and our freedom will never be up for debate," Nielsen told DR during the demonstration, after criticizing the "inappropriate discourse" coming from the US and highlighting the importance of unity beyond political affiliation.

"In no way will I talk to Trump about Greenland becoming part of the US. Greenland will be Greenland," she stated, emphasising that the island "is not for sale."

Nielsen also thanked the European countries and the Danish Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, for their support on this issue, although she criticised NATO chief Mark Rutte for not intervening to demand respect for international law in the press conference where Trump reiterated his aspirations to take Greenland.

A protester interviewed by the same outlet said that in the 40 years she had lived in Nuuk – where despite the sunny weather, the thermometer did not rise above -9°C today – she had never seen so many people in one place.

The protesters, led by Egede and Nielsen, headed towards the US Consulate in Nuuk, where they chanted "Kalaalilit Nunaat," the name of Greenland in Greenlandic, and sang the national anthem together.

Another demonstration for the same reason was held in Sisimiut, the second largest city in the Arctic territory, which has just 57,000 inhabitants, a third of whom are concentrated in Nuuk.

The leaders of the five Greenlandic parties with parliamentary representation described Trump's latest statements about his desire to annex the autonomous Danish territory as "unacceptable."

Telesur

China hits back at 'arrogant' G7

China has labelled comments by top diplomats of the Group of 7 industrialised nations "filled with arrogance, prejudice and malicious intentions."

The comments by the Chinese were in response to a G7 statement a day earlier that accused China of "illicit, provocative, coercive, and dangerous actions that seek unilaterally to alter the status quo in such a way as to risk undermining the stability of regions, including through land reclamations, and building of outposts, as well as their use for military purposes."

In the response, issued through its embassy in Canada, where the two-day G7 meeting was held in La Malbaie, Quebec, China said that the statement "repeated the same old rhetoric, ignored facts and China's solemn position, grossly interfered in China's internal affairs and blatantly smeared China."

"The statements are filled with arrogance, prejudice, and malicious intentions to suppress and attack China. China strongly deplores and opposes this and has lodged solemn representations with the Canadian side," the statement said.

The G7 statement also dropped past reassurances, recently stated in November, that there is "no change in the basic position of the G7 members on Taiwan, including stated one-China policies," as well as that the G7 is "not decoupling or turning inwards" and recognising the importance of China in global trade.

The one-China policy, which recognises Beijing as the official government of China and ensures that ties with Taipei remain unofficial, has been the bedrock of Western dealings with China and its Taiwan province for decades.

The statement said the ministers "encouraged the peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues and reiterated their opposition to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion."

The Chinese response said they "resolutely oppose the G7's misdeeds of harming China's sovereignty," saying that "the key to upholding peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait lies in abiding by the one-China principle."

Morning Star

Three cheers for Karl Marx

Crowds at Karl Marx's Highgate Cemetery tomb have given three hearty cheers for communism following the 2025 Marx Oration.

The event, which traces its history back to Friedrich Engels's address by the graveside of his friend, takes place each year on the Sunday closest to the anniversary of Marx's death on 14 March.

Cuban ambassador Ismara Vargas Walter told those gathered that "Marxism is not a dogma, it is a tool for critical thinking ... and for liberation.

"How do we reconcile globalised technology with socialist values? How do we combat climate change within a US-dominated capitalist world order? The answers lie in Marx's emphasis on collective action and scientific planning."

All-India Farmers Union president Dr Ashok Dhawale denounced a world in which "since 2020, the richest 1 per cent have grabbed nearly 67 per cent of all new wealth ... [and] billionaire fortunes rise by $2.7 billion a day [while] 46 per cent of the world's population live under the global poverty line."

After the speeches representatives of the Communist Party, Marx Memorial Library, *Morning Star*, Young Communist League and several foreign embassies and communist parties laid wreaths.

Morning Star

Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
74 Buckingham Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010
email: editor@cpa.org.au

Unity in action

Dear Editor,
I was encouraged to read the lead piece in the 10 March issue of the *Guardian*, "Unite for Rights and Against War." I thought that the 10-point guide for unity in action made for great reading and agreed with them wholeheartedly.

In the UK, *Prometheus Journal* recently held their first day school on Marxist Unity in Salford, Greater Manchester and has been publishing pieces such as Andreas Chari's "Towards a Mass Communist Party." The event appears to have been a success, well-attended by Marxists from various organisations.

While the geography of Australia is obviously more prohibitive than the UK's in terms of organising discussions such as this, it is encouraging to read similar calls for co-operation and openness between different organisations. I hope that progress can be made along the lines of the 10 point guide for unity proposed by CPA.

In solidarity,

Will

Panda Mart vs Administration of Things

Comrade Editor,
With regard to Panda Mart, in *Guardian* #2137, 10 March. Yes overproduction can and does lead to misery, as Marx and Engels pointed out, but it is not just trinket monopoly stores that do harm, it is also the big exclusive monopoly stores like Gucci and Prada that we cannot overlook. They too are harming workers and the environment (for example massacring seals for mink coats).

Liberals routinely critique consumption rather than production. We should go the other way. The problem is on the side of production, not consumer culture. The market now puts a price on ethical consumption; for instance who can afford ethical "organic" food and pay the premium for health? Only a few, not the majority.

On a personal level I have found some trinket stores to have been incredibly useful in saving money. Say I want a wok. If I went to one of the main stores it would really cost me. Get it from a trinket store and it's no more than a few dollars.

I used to love the Reject Shop because I could make a home for myself using the best stuff I could find in it. No other shops could let me do that because I couldn't afford anything in them.

In Sydney I had a choice between Coles, Woolworths or a Vietnamese joint called Savemore. I couldn't help but go to Savemore: everything was cheaper, and even fresher. Aldi fell into this category, at least when it first arrived. I too have used Temu, because I could get things I couldn't afford in Australian shops.

It's true that, trinket capitalism is not good and needs state regulation. We don't have an administration of things here, which was the answer to the misery given by Engels and Marx. But life before Panda Mart wasn't much good either. Many of us grew up window shopping, rather than actually shopping.

Capitalism is duping me of course. But we need to look at the whole picture of capitalism and the dynamics within it. For me the exclusive monopoly stores are doing more harm to the people than the monopoly trinket stores.

Overproduction and underproduction both produce misery. What we need is an administration of things that can provide for all. For that we need a worker's democratic dictatorship.

A Carruthers

Ibarruri: Theory and Practice

Thanks to William Briggs for his comments on my article (*Guardian* 2137). Ibarruri made many references to Marxist theory in her book. She was high up in the Communist Party of Spain, and had influential connections in Moscow. She could only have achieved this by possessing a great understanding of Marxist theory. I agree theory is necessary. What I was referring to was that Ibarruri did not rely on Marxist theory in everyday encounters, and when she met people she behaved in a certain way, reflecting her Communist beliefs.

Graham Holton

Book Review

Minority Rule: Adventures in the Culture War
by Ash Sarkar

Marjorie Mayo

***Minority Rule* sets out to explore the ways in which class politics are being fragmented: the way the right has been weakening working-class power through processes of "divide and rule."**

Marx and Engels identified the ways in which capitalism produces extreme wealth for the very few and impoverishment for everyone else – accompanied by environmental degradation on a global scale. But resistance to capitalism has been diminished as a result of divisions within and between different sections of the working class.

Sarkar focuses on the ways in which identity politics have been weaponised to exacerbate these divisions, steering resentment away from the underlying causes of poverty and inequality. Right-wing pundits have been peddling the notion that majority interests are being threatened by minorities (however defined) effectively reinforcing the real threat – of minority rule by financial elites.

Much of the book's attention focuses on the divisive strategies of the right. But there is also welcome recognition of the fact that sections of the left have unwittingly opened themselves up to attack through their engagement with the politics of identity and culture. The focus on "victimhood" (however defined) and "grievance" have been particularly problematic, being open to very different interpretations and usages.

Sarkar takes these criticisms seriously, as she explains in the introduction: "Without meaning to, the left opened the door for powerful people to tactically present themselves as victims – and tie us up in the knots of our own obsession with grievance."

These themes – the right's strategies to divide and rule, and left obsessions with identity politics, victimhood and grievances – run through the chapters that follow.

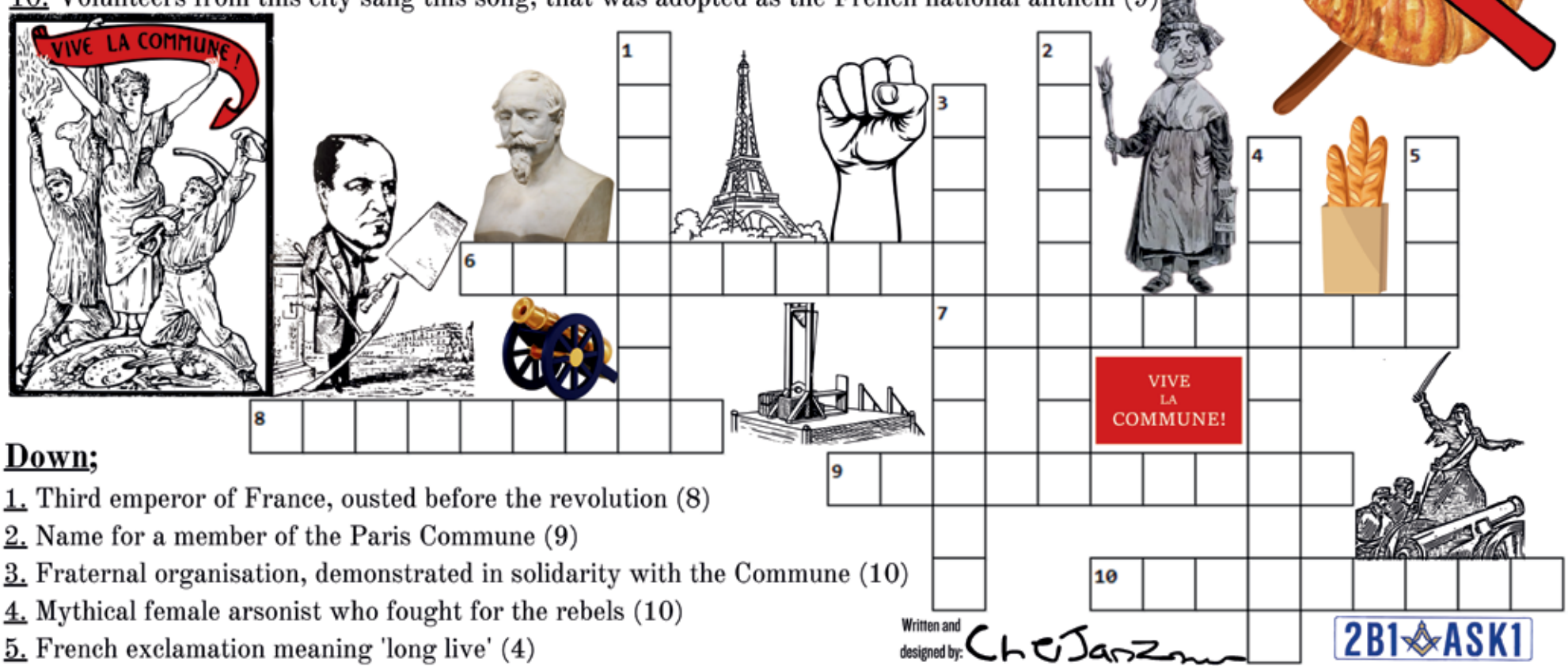
Sarkar writes in a very punchy style. This is definitely "not an academic examination of the forces that shape our society," as she herself explains, although she does provide extensive notes and references to her sources. Rather it's about raising people's consciousness about the right's political tactics, preserving an economic system that is destroying people's well-being, their community and the very planet that we live on, by diffusing and redirecting class conflict into culture wars.

The result is an extremely readable book, amply illustrated by the author's own experiences. I particularly enjoyed the chapter on 'The Lobby' for instance. This explores the links between lobby journalists and politicians, the revolving door and the conflicts of interest involved, a chapter that includes highly entertaining accounts of her encounters with Piers Morgan.

Morning Star (edited for space) ✪

Across;

6. Infamous French execution method, used on many Commune members (10)
7. Hill in neighborhood where the Commune began and had a stronghold (10)
8. Architect whose urban planning for Paris was crtiticised by the Commune (9)
9. Extended battle between the Commune and the French army, The final stand [English Spelling] (6-4)
10. Volunteers from this city sang this song, that was adopted as the French national anthem (9)



Down;

1. Third emperor of France, ousted before the revolution (8)
2. Name for a member of the Paris Commune (9)
3. Fraternal organisation, demonstrated in solidarity with the Commune (10)
4. Mythical female arsonist who fought for the rebels (10)
5. French exclamation meaning 'long live' (4)

Written and designed by: Che Jarzon

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‘Genocidal war and forced displacement’

Statement from Palestinian Foreign Ministry

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates
State of Palestine

The Israeli government is deliberately prolonging the genocidal war and forced displacement against the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

Israel is deepening its acts of genocide and forced displacement in full view and knowledge of the international community, including through its escalation of the crime of weaponising starvation and thirst in its destructive war on Gaza, depriving more than 2 million Palestinian people of their most basic human and civil rights. In addition, Israel persists in its relentless, rolling bombardments, which frequently leave behind more civilian casualties, including children, women, and the elderly.

The Ministry views with extreme gravity and concern Israel’s prolongation of genocide, forced displacement, and the cycle of violence and war. It considers this blatant defiance of international efforts to secure a lasting ceasefire and begin humanitarian relief and reconstruction operations in Gaza, as well as a deliberate manoeuvre to circumvent the outcomes of the recent Arab Summit, relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, and the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The Ministry stresses that any political framework that does not prioritise the protection of Palestinian civilians constitutes a flagrant violation of international law, including international humanitarian law.

The Ministry also calls for serious international intervention and warns against being dragged into the vortex of Israel’s political agenda, its demands, and its manipulations at the expense of human lives and the existence of the Palestinian people in their own homeland.

The Ministry urges all parties to take immediate actions to stop the genocidal war and forced displacement against the Palestinian people.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the State of Palestine

Israel is deepening acts of genocide and forced displacement in full view of the international community

Gaza. Photo: Rawanmurad2025 – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Memorial to German Communist heroes desecrated

The headstones of Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, Ernst Thälmann, and other revolutionary martyrs have been vandalised in a shocking desecration at the Friedrichsfelde Cemetery in Berlin.

The metal plaques carrying the names and dates of birth and death of the leading Communists buried around the Memorial to the Socialists have been taken in an attack reported to German police .

The tombs surround a giant gravestone bearing the inscription “The Dead Remind Us,” and form part of an enclosed park within the cemetery whose walls bear the names of hundreds of other revolutionaries killed in the struggle, from those slain fighting fascism in the Spanish Civil War to victims of Nazi terror in Germany itself.

Each year, on the second Sunday in January, crowds march to the monument to lay red carnations on the tombs. Police say they have no clues as to the perpetrators but recognise a political motive is “clearly identifiable.”

The original monument on the site was erected in 1926 on the site where the coffins of Luxemburg and Liebknecht, murdered by far-right paramilitaries on the orders of Germany’s then Social Democrat government in 1919, were interred.

Rosa Luxemburg before being vandalised.
Photo: Phaeton1 – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 3.0)

It was destroyed by the Nazis in 1935 but replaced by German Democratic Republic (GDR) socialist authorities in 1951. Ernst Thälmann, leader of the Communist Party of Germany from 1925 to 1933, was murdered in one of Hitler’s concentration camps in 1944. His name was added to the memorial during the GDR years.

It has periodically been a target of far-right vandalism.

Morning Star

Argentina: soccer fans, retirees, unions rally against Miliei

Security forces used tear gas and rubber bullets to suppress retirees, press workers, unions, and dozens of football club supporters near the National Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina’s capital city.

The gendarmerie advanced on the demonstrators, and an elderly woman was injured in the head while others attempted to assist her, according to the Argentine press.

There are also reports of infiltrators in the otherwise peaceful protest. Protesters alleged that a group of masked individuals tried to join the protest with stones.

“They need to leave, these people are out of their minds,” one protester told television crews amid a massive police presence, including dozens of security officers around the Parliament building.

Retirees, alongside fans of various football teams, gathered outside the National Congress to demand an increase in their incomes and improvements in their living conditions.

With the massive support of the football community for the retirees’ cause, an iconic phrase from Diego Armando Maradona regained relevance this week: “You have to be a real coward not to defend retirees. I stand with the retirees to the death. What they’re doing to them is a disgrace.”

This statement from the Argentine football legend has become the rallying cry for the protest.

Transport unions decided to accompany and support the retirees’ demands in response to the austerity policies implemented by the national government.

For weeks, retirees have been leading a march every Wednesday around the National Congress to demand medication, adequate pensions, and respect for other basic rights necessary to live with dignity.

Telesur

www.cpa.org.au

Arthur Miller: giant of American theatre

Twenty years ago, Arthur Miller, the man who wrote *Death of a Salesman*, died, on 10 February 2005. And as Linda Loman told the sons of Willy Loman, that sad and epic American dreamer: "Attention must be paid."

Miller, 89, died in his home in Roxbury, Connecticut. The cause was heart failure. For nearly nine decades, that same heart served America's pre-eminent playwright valiantly, in an active, prolific career as playwright, essayist and activist.

In dramas as formidable and stylistically diverse as *All My Sons*, *Death of a Salesman*, and *The Crucible*, Miller transformed post-World War II Broadway into a public arena for moral combat, engaging audiences with questions of personal responsibility and political life.

In Miller's first Broadway success, *All My Sons* (1947), the son of a middle-American industrialist and war profiteer reminds his mother "there's a universe of people outside, and you're responsible to it." This became Miller's refrain throughout his career.

"No one occupied a role in American culture comparable to his," said *Angels in America* author Tony Kushner, his own generation's pre-eminent left-wing playwright.

Broadway marquees dimmed their lights on 11 February.

Arthur Asher Miller was one of three children born to Polish-Jewish immigrants in New York City. His father, Isadore, owned a prosperous women's clothing company. His mother, Gittel ("Gussie") Miller, taught school.

In 1929, the stock market crash wiped out the company. A shaken Miller clan moved to Brooklyn. The impact of the Depression informed all of Miller's writing.

To earn money for college, Miller worked as a warehouse loader and shipping clerk. In 1934, he travelled to Ann Arbor to attend the University of Michigan, where he worked on the school paper and began writing plays.

Success didn't come easily or quickly to Miller. His first Broadway venture, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, was a six-performance flop.

"I was lucky," Miller once said. "I didn't get too famous too quick."

The Broadway success of *All My Sons*, a drama about a grimly compromised middle-American aeroplane parts manufacturer and his family, established Miller as a strong theatrical voice working in the well-made-play mode of Ibsen, one of his idols.

With that first flush of success, however, Miller drew a literary lion's share of criticism. Anti-communist groups successfully pressured the US Army not to allow productions of *All My Sons*, a harsh indictment of war-profiteering Americans, to be toured in post-war Europe.

His Pulitzer winning *Death of a Salesman*, and its unforgettable Willy Loman (based on Miller's salesman uncle, Manny), became the emblem of an economic system based on what Miller memorably called "a smile and a shoeshine."

The play ran for hundreds of performances and was translated into dozens of languages. It made Miller an instant millionaire, although the growing voices of political persecution called it anti-American.

It was Miller's stance against McCarthyism that made him larger than life. With *The Crucible* (1953), Miller drew an implicit parallel between the 17th century Salem witch trials and the anti-communist witch hunts of his own time.

In 1956, Miller was asked to name names of Communist Party members or sympathisers by the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Unlike his colleague Elia Kazan, who gave the committee names, Miller refused to bow to the political torrents of the times and told the committee: "My conscience will not permit me to use the name of another person." He was cited with contempt of Congress. The charges were dismissed two years later, but it took a toll.

Miller involved himself in many progressive and democratic causes. Elected president of International PEN* in 1965, he presided over the 1966 PEN Congress in New York, which according to a PEN statement "brought literary figures long barred from visiting the United States, including Pablo Neruda."

Miller was part of a delegation to Cuba in 2000. While critical of Cuban President Fidel Castro, Miller maintained that the US should end its embargo against the island nation.

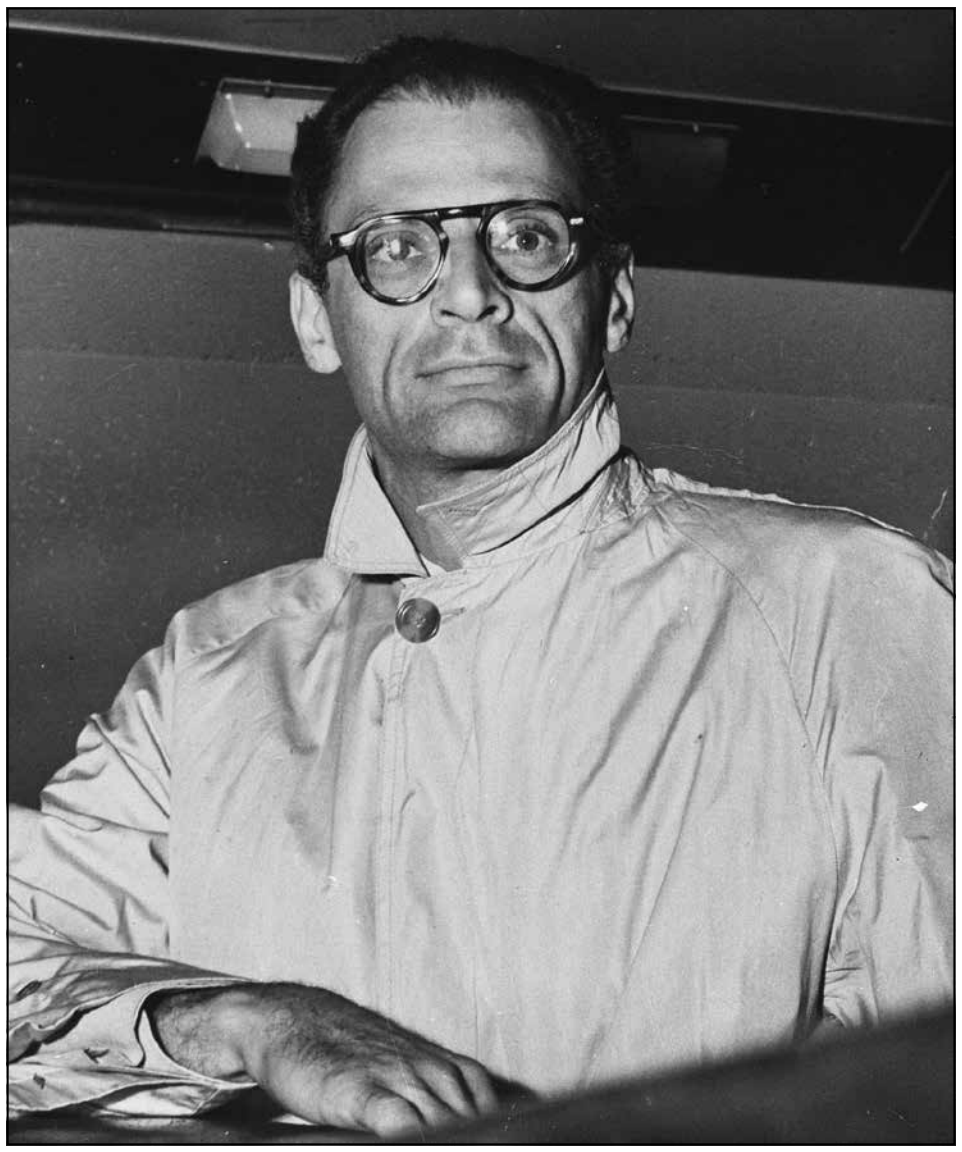
In his final years, decrying the Bush administration and what he perceived as its bullying foreign policy, Miller remained a citizen and a playwright of the world.

Miller married three times, the last to the photographer Inge Morath, who died in 2002. But his most famous marriage was to actor Marilyn Monroe from 1958-61. Miller had two children, Jane Ellen and Robert, by his first wife. He and Morath had a son, Daniel, and one daughter, Rebecca.

An old friend and fellow progressive, Studs Terkel, said on 11 February, "He was a gifted man of the theatre, but something else. He always spoke out. He spoke out for what he believed in, not only when it was unfashionable to speak out, but unsafe. Giftedness, and guts: Those are the words for this man."

*PEN: a fellowship of writers formed to advance literature, to promote a culture of reading, and to defend free expression.

People's Weekly World



Arthur Miller, 1961. Photo: public domain

"there's a universe of people ... and you're responsible to it"

Racism as a tool of imperialism

Sajeev Kumar

In an attempt to "Make America Great Again"(MAGA), Trump deported 104 "illegal" migrants to India on 5 February 2025, handcuffed and with ankles chained in a military aircraft. Colombia condemned similar action towards their citizens but the right-wing government in India, in its subservience to US imperialism, has not uttered a word to condemn the disgusting spectacle enacted by Trump to project himself as a tough leader to satisfy his right-wing voter base, to make up for the fact that he is merely a puppet in the hands of monopoly capitalists. The attempt to 'MAGA' has exposed the failure of globalisation. The left had always maintained that globalisation is the infinite freedom of movement of capital alongside restrictions on the mobility of labour.

To begin with, America became "great" only because of migration (millions by slavery in the case of Africa or otherwise): between 1800 and 1860, 66 per cent of migrants were from Britain and 22 per cent from Germany; between 1860 and 1920 most of the 30 million migrants were from Scandinavian countries, Ireland, Italy, Spain, and Eastern Europe. It is a great irony to restrict migration in an attempt to MAGA.

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels say that "the history of all hitherto to existing society is the history of class struggle." But what could be the history of homo sapiens before class society? It could be the history of human migration, of a small group from Africa to go on to populate the whole planet, for survival and to escape extinction.

A banner in a protest in the UK against discrimination towards migrants read: "I am here because you were there." It is not possible to stop migration without eliminating the cause (colonialism, imperialism, neoliberalism, and the climate crisis). The neoliberal policies designed by developed nations to exploit under-developed nations have caused poverty, joblessness and income inequality in the latter. The victims of neoliberalism use legal and illegal means to migrate to other countries to make a better living. Imperial intervention in other countries' affairs creates waves of migration to escape civil wars and political instability.

To humiliate the victims of neoliberal policies by binding them with handcuffs and chains is a disgusting exhibition of imperial heavy-handedness. The biggest reason for migration in the future will likely be climate change, to which the developed nations are the largest contributors. It is projected that billions of people will lose their habitats due to rising sea levels and natural calamities. The World Bank estimates that the number of climate refugees will be between 44 million to 216 million by the year 2050.

It is an irony that, at a time when we dream about interstellar migration to prevent extinction, we are restricting migration from one part of the world to the other.

The handling of migrants and exhibition of power is an indication of the capitalist crisis at its core and the dwindling of US hegemony. The depression in the 1870s in the US caused the scape-goating of vulnerable migrants for job losses and shortages. The Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) was the first instance of racial profiling, which discriminated against the Chinese migrants who were forcibly moved into the US to build roads and railways; this method was later used by the Nazis for racial profiling of Jews.

Human survival has always depended on migration: as in the past so will it be in the future. To humiliate migrants is to be oblivious to the past. The World Bank has data that shows the correlation between migration and global income: increasing international migration by one third will increase global income by $1.4 trillion.

So migration is a solution, not the problem.

Socialist Voice

Lao People's Revolutionary Party celebrates 70th anniversary

Vientiane: A seminar has been held in northern Laos to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP), reflecting on its 70 years of leadership and highlighting its significant contributions to the nation's revolutionary achievements and development, local media reported.

The seminar, held in Laos' Xieng Khuang province, was attended by key leaders and guests from the northern provinces of Xaysomboun, Xieng Khuang, and Huaphan, the *Pasaxon* newspaper reported.

In his speech at the seminar, Chansamone Chanyalath, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the LPRP and Lao deputy prime minister, emphasised the significance of the seminar in marking the party's leadership in the nation's revolutionary successes, national defence, and socio-economic development.

He also reflected on the party's role in shaping Laos' diplomatic relations, noting that Laos now maintains ties with 149 countries and has established strong international partnerships.

The seminar covered several important topics, including the party's leadership in national liberation, national economic development, and fostering social and cultural progress. It underscored the party's commitment to peace, security, and the strengthening of diplomatic relations globally.

The LPRP was established on 22 March 1955.

Xinhua

The Communist Party of Australia sends hearty congratulations to the Lao People's Revolutionary Party on their 70th anniversary, and wishes them many more years of revolutionary achievements.

Chappell Roan stands up for workers

Petra Farmer

The US Grammy Awards are well in the rear-view mirror now, but one thing that stood out was a call for livable wages and healthcare for her fellow workers from Chappell Roan. The singer-songwriter, born Kayleigh Rose Amstutz, said she was fulfilling a promise she had made to herself when she took the stage to accept her award as Best New Artist.

Roan said "I told myself, if I ever won a Grammy and I got to stand up here in front of the most powerful people in music, I would demand that labels in the industry, profiting millions of dollars off of artists, would offer a livable wage and healthcare, especially to developing artists."

Roan said that it was "devastating" to have felt betrayed by the system that she gave so much to when she was starting out, and called for record labels to "treat their artists as valuable employees with a livable wage, and health insurance and protection."

This is not Roan's first political moment. She has previously rejected an invitation from the White House to perform for a Pride celebration, citing Palestinian and trans rights, and saying "we want liberty, justice and freedom for all. When you do that, that's when I'll come."

Chappell Roan. Photo: Justin Higuchi – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

Sydney Vigil

STOP USA BLOCKADE ON CUBA

4:15pm till 5:00pm Thursday 17 April

USA Consulate, 50 Miller Street North Sydney

Global Briefs

SYRIA: Russia's air base at Hmeimim in Syria is sheltering about 9,000 people seeking refuge from a wave of sectarian violence. Most of the civilians taking shelter are women and children. The new Islamist-led government's security forces have already massacred hundreds of Alawite civilians in revenge attacks. The Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Russia was doing everything to secure the safety of its citizens and facilities in Syria and was in active contact with Arab states, Turkey and Iran to try to ensure the long-term stabilisation of the country. Hmeimim is one of the two military bases in Syria Russia is hoping to retain despite the toppling of former president Bashar al-Assad by Islamist rebels in December.

ROMANIA: Romania's Constitutional Court rejected Calin Georgescu's presidential candidacy. Georgescu won the first round of last year's election but the results were annulled. The US vice-president JD Vance criticised the annulment, calling it "undemocratic." In the latest developments of the Romanian election saga, two far-right parties have chosen two new names for the May presidential race. George Simeon, leader of the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR), and Anamaria Gaivrils, leader of the Party of Young People (POT), both declared their intention to run. They emphasised that their candidacy was a temporary strategy; once their candidacies are officially validated, one of them will withdraw. "After consulting with Calin Georgescu, we have decided to both submit our candidacies ... We must give the sovereignty movement every chance. Stand with us!" they said in a joint statement.

RUSSIA: The US president admitted that thousands of Ukrainian soldiers were completely surrounded by the Russian army in the Kursk region and were in a vulnerable position. "I have firmly asked President Putin to spare those lives. This would be a horrible massacre, one that hasn't been seen since World War II," he said. "We have read today's appeal from President Donald Trump to spare the lives of servicemen of the Ukrainian Army in the Kursk region. In this regard, please note that Ukrainian militants have committed numerous crimes against civilians," Putin said. "These acts, as I have already stated, are classified by us as terrorism. At the same time, we are sympathetic to President Trump's call to be guided by humanitarian considerations regarding these servicemen ... I emphasise that, if they lay down their arms and surrender, they will be guaranteed life and dignified treatment," Putin added. "To effectively implement President Trump's call, there must be an appropriate order from the military and political leadership of Ukraine to its troops to lay down their arms and surrender," he stressed.

GERMANY is due to vote on a gigantic increase in military spending. Having already increased spending by more than 23 per cent in 2024, Chancellor Friedrich Merz needs a two-thirds majority in the lower house of the Bundestag in order for the bill to go through to Germany's upper house. The bill is opposed by Die Linke ('the left'), and other parties. Merz's plan calls for spending over 1 per cent of GDP to be exempt from restrictions that apply to other budget items, known as 'the debt-brake.'

Trump attacks Canada over the 1908 Treaty

Graham Holton

President Donald Trump meeting with former Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, threatened to use the 1908 treaty on the Canada-US border to make Canada the United States's 51st state. Trump wanted to "revise the boundary" between both countries, claiming the Great Lakes as US territory, and dismissing the border as "an artificially drawn line." Trudeau robustly rejected the offer. Trump's threats continued.

Canadian historian, Craig Baird, said the US and Britain settled on the 49th parallel in the Treaty of 1818, because it was easy to draw: "A straight line, essentially from Lake Superior more or less all the way to the Pacific Ocean." Today nearly 70 per cent of Canadians live south of that line, including Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Windsor, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia.

Few Canadians had heard of the 1908 treaty before Trump's threats. The treaty was signed by Republican president, Theodore Roosevelt, and the UK's King Edward VII. Under the Canadian constitution Canada replaces the Dominion of Canada as the same legal entity. Trump cannot use this change of name as a valid legal argument. The treaty is legally binding on both nations.

The 1908 treaty established the International Boundary Commission, to survey and demarcate the international boundary. A year later, the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 was adopted to prevent disputes over boundary waters, defined as the "main shore to main shore of the lakes and rivers and connecting waterways." In 1925, the International Boundary Commission mission was made permanent, maintaining the 8,891-kilometre-long border to this day. Numerous communities and towns remain divided by the border. These include Derby Line, Vermont (USA), Stanstead, Quebec (Canada), Buffalo, New York (USA), and Toronto, Ontario (Canada). Since Trump's threat, crossing the border within these towns has become difficult.

Trump advisor Peter Navarro has pushed negotiators to discuss redrawing the border with their Canadian counterparts.

Trump has no legal standing to annex Canada, and Canadians are not giving in to his bullying. Trump cannot force a renegotiation of the border. Misha Ketchell, editor of *The Conversation*, warned that "Every Canadian needs to pay attention" to America's long history of using treaties to "acquire territory through cession or subjugation." Trump is not to be trusted.

Graphic: Opus Penguin – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Human Rights groups welcome Duterte arrest

Human rights organisations across the AsiaPacific region have welcomed the arrest of former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The arrest warrant stemmed from allegations of crimes against humanity, the thousands of deaths from Duterte's brutal so-called "war on drugs." This has long been a demand of the Filipino people, even while Duterte was still in power. The arrest represents a significant and justified step toward justice and accountability. Ordinary citizens, the families of victims of his brutal drug war and extrajudicial killings, as well as political prisoners who were wrongfully accused with fabricated charges, are celebrating the arrest now.

Duterte's so-called "drug war" claimed the lives of over 30,000 ordinary Filipinos, disproportionately targeting the poor and exposing children to its brutal consequences. In 2022, when Duterte's bloody reign as president ended, he left behind a nation traumatised by his fascist policies and draconian response to drug addiction and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Neoliberal policies he introduced all exacerbated poverty and hunger in the country. Under his administration, the Philippines accumulated massive foreign debt, reaching PHP 13.42 trillion by 2021. The country also experienced a severe unemployment crisis under his term, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Duterte's response during the COVID-19 pandemic was one marked with heavy militarisation – choosing to scare residents from going outside and keeping businesses closed, rather than a health-based approach. His regime's poorly-planned measures resulted in more than 66,000 COVID-related deaths, and the suffering of millions more from hunger and abject poverty due to the lack of material aid from the state.

However, Duterte's biggest sins related to his betrayal of the Filipino people through human rights abuses, International Humanitarian Law (IHL) violations and repression of political rivals. Perhaps his most significant legacy against human rights is the AntiTerrorism Act, which has given state authorities unprecedented powers to harass and detain individuals suspected of "terrorism" without due process. This legislation has since been weaponised against non-violent dissidents such as activists, indigenous peoples' advocates and trade unionists.

According to data from human rights group KARAPATAN, the Duterte regime was responsible for the forced displacement of 481,918 civilians; enforced disappearance of 21 individuals; and 233 cases of torture. Additionally, there were 442 cases of politically motivated arrests and 574 instances of extrajudicial killings. 2,957 individuals were arrested without detention, while 1,341 were both unlawfully arrested and imprisoned. Further exacerbating the climate of fear and repression, the military also repurposed 47,587 schools, medical facilities, religious institutions, and other public spaces for military use.

Not only was Duterte's arrest deserved, it was long overdue. It is an important first step towards achieving justice for the victims of extrajudicial killings and human rights violations under his regime, and for those victims' surviving families.

Global human rights advocates are now calling for a thorough investigation of Duterte's crimes, particularly one that gives victims and survivors of his abuses a voice to tell their harrowing stories. They are also urging the Marcos Jr administration to collaborate with the ICC to ensure that Duterte faces continuous trial proceedings until he is held accountable and imprisoned for his crimes. They also call on the current government to reinstate the Philippines' membership in the International Criminal Court (ICC), to ensure any future leaders who trample on the human rights of Filipinos can be brought to justice, and to abolish the anti-human policies Duterte introduced, such as the Anti-Terror Law, as well as dismantling the National Task Force to End the Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) which has been used to legalise attacks and repression of activists, trade unionists and other peaceful dissidents. While Duterte's long-awaited arrest is a welcome development, the work does not stop.

Statement from Asia Pacific Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines Aotearoa Philippines Solidarity, Philippines-Australia Union Link, Philippines-Australia Solidarity Association (PASA) Australia Coalition for Human rights in the Philippines, Hong Kong Campaign For Human Rights and Peace in the Philippines, and International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines – KOREA. (edited for space)

Communists in Mexico push to participate in upcoming elections

Despite electoral rules designed to keep opposition parties off the ballot, the Communist Party of Mexico (Partido Comunista de México, PCM) announced it will be pressing authorities to allow them to participate in the upcoming 2027 and 2030 elections.

At a recent Central Committee meeting, the Party leadership announced that it will be sending an application to the National Electoral Institute (INE) asking to be registered as a political party for the 2027 and 2030 elections, even though it cannot meet the current requirements to get on the ballot. The INE is currently registering political parties for the next round of elections.

Since its refounding in 1994, the PCM has been unable to regain its former electoral registration that it achieved in 1978 after many years of struggle. Mexico has the most restrictive electoral laws in the world, designed to maintain the political monopoly of the existing political parties and keep out competitors.

To register as a political party and run candidates in elections, INE demands a list of 3,000 members in each of the 300 electoral districts throughout the country, and the signatures of one per cent of the voters list, impossible demands for small parties like the PCM to meet. The requirement to submit a membership list is an unacceptable one for the Mexican Communists – over the years, five Party leaders have been assassinated and one disappeared for their activism.

The electoral law also allows INE to intervene and remove elected leaders during internal disputes and impose new ones.

To achieve the PCM's electoral registration in 1978, the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) government only asked that the Party submit its publications for the last five years and a Central Committee membership list, according to PCM leader Pavel Blanco Cabrera.

The Party ran candidates in 1979, winning 5.4 per cent of the vote and electing nine deputies to the National Congress, becoming the third-largest party in the country.

Denied ballot access for the 2024 elections, the PCM ran Marco Vinicio Davila for President as well as candidates for various states governors as write-in candidates. According to the Party publication *El Machete*, Communist Party candidates officially received at least 85,000 write-in votes and probably more, since "we have evidence that many of the votes our candidates received were marked as null."

The Party also announced that it will deliver its electoral reform proposals to newly elected Mexican President Claudia Sheinbuam who has promised electoral and political reform. The former MORENA government of Lopez Obrador made no effort to democratise the country's electoral system.

The PCM believes that the social democratic government of MORENA is not interested in implementing real change in Mexico. "The first months of Claudia Sheinbaum's mandate confirms her continuity with Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, with clear anti-worker and anti-people content based on militarisation, state corporatism, the utilisation of [state] assistance as a mechanism of social control" according to a Party statement. "Her priority is the maximisation of monopoly profits based on NAFTA and nearshoring, and therefore the communists maintain a policy of opposition to the second stage of the fourth transformation, and we work for a popular anti-capitalist and anti-monopolist working-class regroupment."

People's Voice

Trump ensures white farmers get compensation in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe culture. Photo: TJ Maposhere – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Graham Holton

In January 2025 US President Donald Trump threatened to cut off funding to South Africa because of land confiscations, without citing evidence, Trump said that "certain classes of people" were being treated "very badly," a reference to white farmers. White landowners still own three quarters of South Africa's freehold farmland. Trump's action was not lost on the Zimbabwean government.

It has been 25 years since Zimbabwe's land reform under Prime Minister Robert Mugabe. Land had been forcibly taken from the local inhabitants during the colonial era, when Ian Smith was prime minister of what was then called Southern Rhodesia. The Zimbabwe War of Independence, 1964 to 1979, led to the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANUPF) winning the 1980 election and Robert Mugabe becoming the first prime minister of Zimbabwe. Land reform began in 1980 with the redistribution of farmland from whites to black Zimbabweans. Mugabe was succeeded by Emmerson Mnangagwa.

In 2020 the new government promised the former white farmers US$3.5 billion for their seized infrastructure. Hundreds of Europeans, whose investments were protected under international agreements, would benefit from the offer. The president of the African Development Bank Group and the Zimbabwe Arrears Clearance and Debt Resolution, Akinwumi Adesina, said: "The compensation demonstrates the government's goodwill and commitment to building trust in the process and improving investor confidence in the country." The compensation is one of the key reforms under the Structured Dialogue Platform on the country's Arrears Clearance and Debt Resolution Process, launched in December 2022.

Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) legislator, Darlington Chigumbu, told *NewZimbabwe.com* that the compensation programme ignores the historical injustices suffered by native workers while developing the farms for the white owners. By December 2024 Zimbabwe had failed to pay white farmers for their expropriated land.

Then in January 2025, with the inauguration of President Trump, the Zimbabwean government began the compensation under the Bilateral Investment Protection and Promotion Agreements (BIPPA) to former landowners whose farms were taken during the Fast-track Land Reform Programme in the early 2000s. Finance Minister, Mthuli Ncube, said US$20 million had been allocated in 2024, and another US$125.9 million would be paid between 2025 to 2028 to compensate white landowners for the farms the State had seized.

Zimbabwe was hit with another blow on 20 January 2025, when Trump issued an Executive Order suspending all USAID funding, worth US$360 million, for 90 days for Zimbabwe. This will be a dramatic setback in the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), and malaria. USAID funded the country's essential medicines and public health initiatives, paying salaries for more than 19,000 village health workers and thousands of nurses and doctors. According to the *Zimbabwe Times* Trump's suspension of health-related funding was later reversed, but it raised concerns about the medicine deliveries.

Trump said: "It is the policy of the United States that no further United States foreign assistance shall be disbursed in a manner that is not fully aligned with the foreign policy of the President of the United States." Any country whose practices were antithetical to American values, would have their aid halted. This policy includes compensation for nationalised assets. It seems likely that Trump's race-related threats to South Africa and Zimbabwe through their aid packages impacted how quickly Zimbabwe began paying compensation to white farmers.

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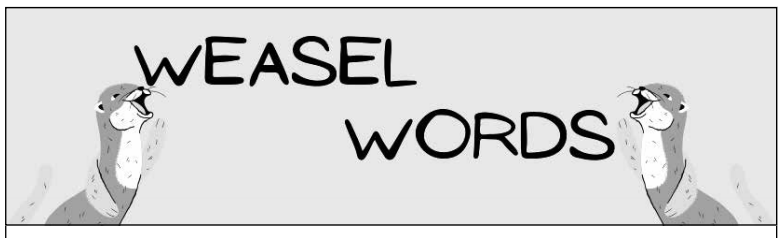

Masthead

This word is weaselly through pomposity. It's very popular with newspapers that take themselves far too seriously. If people aren't respecting your paper any more, possibly because they have to wade through five pages of Harvey Norman ads to get to warmongering against China and gushing stuff about private schools*, try saying "this masthead asked Albanese for comment" instead of "this newspaper asked Albanese for comment." Now you feel all adult and serious.

* looking at you, Melbourne's *The Age*

'this issue'

Asked about cost of living issues, PM Albanese said "I'm focussed on this issue," meaning that he'd rather talk about how bad Cyclone Alfred had been than about anything he could do to help people affected by, errr, Cyclone Alfred. Any more narrow focus and Albanese would have to use one of those jeweller's lenses.

Troubled

Nine papers have been on an absolute crusade against the Construction Forestry Mining and Engineering Union (CFMEU), and this paper has documented some of the excesses of that campaign (eg, CFMEU driving up the price of cocaine because tradies who are well paid can afford the stuff, not enough houses because CFMEU members are working on large infrastructure projects and Nine thinks it's impossible to increase the number of tradies …).

A feature of the Nine campaign is to call the union "troubled" as though Nine had no part in the situation. The CFMEU is indeed troubled – democratically elected officials have been arbitrarily replaced by an administrator who is exempt from work laws, and who can use union members' money to persecute union members and officials. As far as that goes, 'troubled' is accurate. What makes it weaselly is Nine writing about this as though the trouble wasn't urged on by Nine in the first place.

Pro-regulation

One person's legal protection is another person's 'pro-regulation.' Regulations aren't in themselves a weaselly term – they're just things that authorities set up that the rest of us have to follow. Regulations can be good and useful, like the ones that mean our workplaces are fire-safe. They can be silly or obsolete, like the Victorian law that makes it illegal to do business with pirates (this must frustrate Captain Feathersword no end).

We have to follow regulations, and if we don't like them, we can campaign to get them changed. Unless we're Australian banks, in which case we can ignore a bunch of regulations, shaft Australian people, wait until there's a Royal Commission, then moan about any regulations designed to stop us doing all the evil stuff that lead to the RC in the first place.

What's weaselly is calling that Royal Commission "pro-regulation," as though Justice Haynes just has a regulation fetish, and isn't reacting to massive law-breaking and ripoffs from the banks.

Ambitious

One of many weasel words that does a good job of putting lipstick on a pig, 'ambitious' is a way of making something that's unhinged and/or harmful look a lot more positive. The right-leaning *Australian Financial Review* has described the Coalition's nuclear 'policy' as 'ambitious,' where adjectives such as 'impossible', 'delusional' or 'bonkers' would be far more accurate.

Dubbed

The ABC has just done a reasonably good report on the 1998 waterfront dispute in which people recruited from the military and farming sectors were hired to replace a unionised workforce which had been sacked overnight. The report says that the 'non-union workers' were "dubbed scabs." Dubbed makes it sound like 'scabs' was a personal choice by union members. It's more like dubbing a spade a spade. Scabs is what the non-union workers were, it's an ugly word for an ugly practice.

Syria: imperialist rape of a nation

William Briggs

Photo: pexels.com

Events in Syria have exposed the barbarity that flows from imperialist intrigues. As many as a thousand Syrians have been killed. Sectarian violence by jihadists, former Assad loyalists, and by the security forces have led to columns of people seeking refuge where there is little refuge to be had. Those who remember the debacle of Libya have already drawn obvious comparisons.

As the carnage was underway, the interim government and its president Ahmed al-Sharaa was signing a deal with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). This will bring the Kurdish group and the territory it holds, back into alliance with the Hait Tahir al-Sham-led government. This has deep implications for the future of Syria, as 90 per cent of its oil reserves are in SDF occupied territory. The Syrian Democratic Forces are backed by the USA and American military bases are in and around these same oil fields.

BLAME

Some observers lay the blame for the crisis that is tearing Syria apart on the fall of the Assad regime. Others see the chaos coming from the Western-backed rebels 'rising' against him and say that at least Assad maintained a degree of 'stability.' Syrians are burying their dead. They know who killed them. They are justifiably angry. It hardly matters anymore from whence the current crisis sprang. The here and now is what motivates the ordinary struggling Syrian people.

When Assad fled Syria for Moscow the vultures of imperialism moved in. The country was quickly carved up into regions controlled by Türkiye, Israel, and the USA. None of these powers have any interest in rebuilding a new and united Syria. Their driving motivation is to control significant territory, to control ports, to control oil fields. Imperialists are doing what they have done for so long.

Former jihadists occupy government positions and now, to keep the peace, must seek to do deals with their former foes. Other forces, ISIS, former Assad troops, militias of all stripes, maintain a low level civil war aimed at carving out a space in this benighted land.

European Union leaders quickly sniffed the wind and joined the unseemly conga line of carpet-baggers seeking to turn tragedy into a profitable exercise.

Both the French and the German foreign ministers were quick to visit and meet with the new leader. They immediately called for sanctions to be withdrawn. Business opportunities are on the horizon. Ahmed al-Sharaa had been regarded as a dangerous terrorist with a $10 million US bounty on his head. That has been removed. Former German foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, cynically declared that "despite all our scepticism, we must not let the opportunity to support the people of Syria at this important crossroads slip away." Support for the people, or support for business?

BREAKTHROUGH?

Compounding the issue is the new alliance between the interim Syrian government and the Kurdish (SDF). This is being hailed as a major breakthrough that will unite large parts of the country. The SDF currently hold almost 25 per cent of the territory of Syria which contains the bulk of Syrian oil reserves. It must be borne in mind that the Kurdish group has long been backed by the USA which has made no bones about wanting to keep control of the oil fields. What this means for the future of the country and for any pretence of actual Syrian sovereignty remains to be seen, but given the track record of US imperialism, things do not bode well.

While the various players seek ways to make the best of the opportunities that a dismembered Syria presents, the killing goes on.

It is all but impossible to know for sure how many have died in massacre and counter massacre in recent days. Some sources put the number of dead at much higher than 1,000.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights suggest that in the early stages, pro-Assad gunmen had launched a series of attacks aimed at government infrastructure. It has been estimated that 170 members of the security forces were killed. It is clear that numbers of civilians also died in these attacks. As many as 750 civilians as well as insurgents were killed by security forces and groups 'aligned' with the new regime.

This outburst of violence did not come out of the blue. There had been reports almost since the end of the Assad regime, of scores being settled, of former soldiers and their families being executed and of a range of repressions and persecutions against Alawite and other minority religious groups.

Syria's interim president, Ahmed al-Sharaa, declared that those responsible for the outrages will be brought to justice. He had also issued an earlier statement on video saying that "remnants of the ousted regime tried to test the new Syria without understanding it, and today they are relearning Syria."

Media and human rights groups have had difficulty in accurately reporting the massacres. The authorities are denying access on the grounds that it is 'unsafe.' A statement from the Syrian Network for Human Rights commented that "it's impossible to know exactly what has gone on in these places because the authorities are not letting journalists in. They say it's unsafe, but it's also unclear if they don't want the world to see the horrors that have allegedly unfolded – possibly by their own troops or allied factions."

Life in Syria is increasingly difficult. The country is deeply divided, not only by sectarian alliances. Factions, backed by rival imperialist groups, occupy the country. The Syrian people will suffer. Imperialism seeks both strategic advantage and access to wealth. The rebuilding that is needed is already attracting the rapacious and European capitalist states, anxious for lucrative business opportunities. They wait in the wings.

The massacre is a raw and horrible symbol of the rape of Syria. The poor, the working class, the ordinary men and women of Syria simply want what all people want; to live in peace. ✪

Syrian ceasefire deal

Syria's interim government has signed a deal with the Kurdish-led authority that controls the country's north-east.

The move includes a ceasefire and the merging of the main United States-backed force there into the Syrian army.

The deal would bring most of Syria under the control of the government, which is led by the jihadist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham that led the ousting of President Bashar al-Assad in December.

It was signed by interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa (previously known as Abu Mohammed al-Julani) and Mazloum Abdi, the commander of the US-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

The deal, to be implemented by the end of the year, would bring all border crossings with Iraq and Turkey, airports and oil fields in the north-east under the central government's control.

Syria's Kurds will gain their 'constitutional rights,' including using and teaching their language, which were suppressed by successive Ba'athist governments from the 1960s.

Hundreds of thousands of Kurds, who were displaced during Syria's nearly 14-year civil war, will return to their homes and will be given the right to citizenship.

Morning Star (edited for space)

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