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'Brazen in their brutality'

GAZA – OPEN LETTER

More than 20 months into the conflict, the extremely dire situation in the Gaza Strip is devastating millions of Palestinian lives.

Last month Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), also known as Doctors Without Borders, called a press conference in Brussels to confront the EU Member States with their responsibilities in the face of the patterns consistent with genocide that their teams are witnessing daily in Gaza.

Rally for Palestine, Boorloo/Perth.

Dear President of the European Commission, Dear President of the European Council, Dear President of the European Parliament, Dear European leaders,

The war in Gaza has been allowed to become one of the most egregious, deadly and ruthless wars waged on a people. Gaza's homes, hospitals, markets, water networks, roads, and power grids have all been demolished by Israeli forces, not by disregard but by design. What we are witnessing is the calculated evisceration of the very systems that sustain life. **It is ethnic cleansing, wrapped in the rhetoric of security defence, but executed with complete disregard for International Humanitarian and Human Rights Laws.**

Daily atrocities in Gaza are not unfolding in the shadows. They are occurring before our eyes. They are brazen in their brutality.

For more than 20 months, Israeli authorities and forces have inflicted a punishing campaign against Palestinians in Gaza. On a daily basis MSF Gaza teams witness patterns consistent with genocide through deliberate actions by Israeli forces – including mass killings, the destruction of vital civilian infrastructure, and blockades choking off access to food, water, medicines, and other essential humanitarian supplies. **Israel is systematically destroying the conditions necessary for Palestinian life.**

A recent retrospective mortality survey run by MSF and our epidemiological arm Epicentre showed that nearly two per cent of our staff in Gaza and those in their households have died since 7 October 2023. Three-quarters of them died because of war-related injuries. This ratio is consistent with figures of the Ministry of Health in Gaza, which reports that 55,000 people have been killed across the Strip up until 4 June this year. 40 per cent of the people who died of injuries were aged below ten years. This disregard for civilian life shows that this war run by Israel in Gaza is against Palestinians as a whole.

On a daily basis MSF teams witness patterns consistent with genocide through deliberate actions by Israeli forces.

Christopher Lockyear
MSF Secretary General

AID WEAPONISED

On 11 June, the MSF-supported Al Mawasi clinic received 32 casualties, including three people dead on arrival. They had been shot on their way to a food distribution site, run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF).

This was not an isolated incident.

Three days earlier, teams at Nasser hospital received 40 patients, most of them with gunshot wounds. This is the main referral hospital for thousands of patients in southern Gaza. It is barely able to continue working, due to repeated evacuation orders and movement restrictions on staff and patients. Humanitarian organisations have set up makeshift hospitals to fill the gap, but that can in no way replace regular hospitals. In recent weeks, MSF teams have admitted over 500 patients requiring medical care to Nasser hospital and supported the hospital's medical staff to respond to repeated mass casualty influxes from constant bombings and attacks.

The GHF launched its activities on 27 May, as part of the US-Israeli plan that instrumentalises aid. Since then, hundreds of Palestinians have been treated in hospitals, and scores have been killed, after being shot at these aid distribution sites while waiting to receive basic necessities for survival. One of our colleagues in Gaza observed that some people returned from the distribution sites with a bag of flour; others with a shroud.

Humanitarian aid is being weaponised. It is being used as leverage to forcibly displace people, to meet military objectives, or blocked entirely. Aid is not a bargaining chip. It is a lifeline. Denying it is collective punishment – a war crime.

Since October 2023, healthcare has been consistently under attack, MSF staff and patients have been forced to leave at least 18 different health structures and have endured 50 violent incidents, which include airstrikes against hospitals, tank shells being fired at deconflicted shelters, ground offensives into medical centres, and convoys fired upon. **Eleven of our colleagues have been killed. We are not unique in these experiences; these attacks have occurred across the humanitarian spectrum.** They are part of a systematic disregard for International Humanitarian Law (IHL), including the UNSC resolution 2286 on the protection of the medical mission.

MSF, like many other organisations, has repeatedly called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, unfettered humanitarian access, and respect for IHL – including medical facilities and personnel – by all parties, including Hamas. But this military onslaught, against a besieged people, rages on, growing more brutal by the day.

Christopher Lockyear
MSF Secretary General

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Aid is not a bargaining chip. It is a lifeline. Denying it is collective punishment – a war crime.

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Zohran Mamdani
Could a socialist win NY?

The *Guardian* has a podcast
Search for "Communist *Guardian* Podcast"

Guardian

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Tax – the choice

Tax is in the news again. Since there's a productivity summit coming up this August, the usual suspects are agitating for what they call "reform." Naturally this includes tax reform.

People who own the businesses the rest of us work for are a minority, but they can make a lot of noise, thanks to sympathetic media outlets and politicians who know where the donations come from. What they're making noise about lately is tax "reform." For the corporate class and their mouthpieces, reform means only one thing. Lower taxes for the wealthy, higher taxes for workers and the poor.

Taxation can be progressive or regressive. 'Progressive' means that the more money you have, the more tax you pay. Regressive is the reverse – the less money you have, the higher percentage of it you pay in taxation.

The classic example of this is very relevant to the "reform" business mouthpieces are calling for: GST. This tax which we pay on goods and services is very regressive. If you buy a microwave oven and Gina Rinehart, currently Australia's richest woman, buys the same brand of microwave oven, you pay the same price. That's fair enough. You also pay the same GST, which represents a much higher percentage of your income than it does of Rinehart's.

(We're assuming that our readers have less in the bank than Australia's richest woman does. If any of you have more, please donate to the Press Fund.)

So far, so unfair. The country is used to it, although we shouldn't be. This is where the 'reform' comes in. There is a push for the government to charge less in income and business taxes, and take in more from GST to make up the difference. They can do this in two ways; lifting the rate, and/or broadening the base.

Lifting the rate is self-explanatory. GST is 10 per cent now. The *Australian Financial Review* wants it raised to 15 per cent.

Broadening the base means charging GST on more products. GST is not charged on basic food products, education, some medical products and services and a range of other things. Either way, the Gina Rinehart test applies – the more GST comes in, the more regressive it is.

It's not a coincidence that the people arguing for an expanded GST also argue that reasonable taxes on business and personal income are "incentive blunting." The laughable argument they use is that taxes on wealthy people discourage the rich from trying to be richer. So people who own businesses just give up employing people and we're all out of a job.

There's more wrong with that idea than can be contained in one editorial, but here's the thing about "incentive blunting" – have you ever seen a wealthy person who didn't want to be wealthier? We can't think of any. Here's a thought experiment for you. There have been a lot of tax cuts over the last 30 years. Have a look at one tax cut and ask yourself what the rich were doing before it was introduced. Were they trying to be richer?

Of course they were! Incentive blunting is a myth, a story the wealthy tell to make paying less tax sound like something we should admire.

Capitalist governments like GST because it's hard for people to avoid. People with deep pockets like it because it hits working people harder. The Communist Party of Australia's position on taxation is this: taxation should be based on ability to pay. Those with high incomes, and those who make big unearned profits from shareholdings should pay more tax.

Support the Party for a society that's progressive all round – a socialist society!

Breaking: Israel plans 'crime against humanity'

Peter Farmer

Israel's Defence Minister has instructed the military to plan to move all Palestinians in Gaza into a "humanitarian city" on the ruins of Rafah. He's said that the plan is to not allow people to leave.

An Israeli human rights lawyer, Michael Sfard, has described the idea as an "operational plan for a crime against humanity." He told the media that "While the government still calls the deportation 'voluntary,' people in Gaza are under so many coercive measures that no departure from the strip can be seen in legal terms as consensual," Sfard told the *Guardian*.

Forcible transfers of population are strictly prohibited under international law. It's unclear at time of writing when the plan would be implemented, or even if it is approved by the Israeli government. The fact that it has been announced at all is deeply troubling.

Quote of the Week

"We're not just a vassal state, we're an ally and a partner …"

Andrew Hastie, Liberal MP obviously hasn't got the memo about Australia's relationship with the USA. If it walks like a vassal and quacks like a vassal ...

GAZA – OPEN LETTER

Continued from page 1

LETTER TO EU

The European Union and European governments have the political, economic, and diplomatic means of exerting real pressure on Israel to stop this assault and open Gaza's border crossings to unhindered humanitarian aid. These are not theoretical instruments; they can be effectively mobilised in defence of international law and to protect civilians.

The European Union and many of its leaders have recently chosen to rebuke Israel; yet these words ring hollow, as they fail to take the substantive action needed to stop the slaughter, and hypocritically continue to provide weapons to Israel that kill, burn, or permanently disable the people who end up in our hospitals. This must stop.

There was never a time for hesitation and inhumane double standards. Your words and actions are a test of your credibility and leadership. Now is a moment that will define your legacy and determine whether laws meant to protect civilians in war retain any meaning at all. It requires political courage, legal responsibility, and moral commitment. **The scale of suffering in Gaza demands more than your empty rhetoric.**

Every delay, every equivocation, and every policy that permits the machinery of devastation to roll forward with impunity is an act of complicity.

We urge the European Union and its 27 Member States to act decisively and finally use the leverage they have on Israel in order to:

LIFT THE SIEGE

Blocking lifesaving assistance is not a legitimate security measure – it is a war crime. Claims of aid diversion cannot begin to justify withholding aid from over two million people. This is collective punishment. Every delay is costing lives.

DEFEND HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Reject any mechanism that instrumentalises aid or uses humanitarian relief as a bargaining chip. Aid must be based on needs. Policies that subordinate aid to military strategy are not only cynical; they are deadly.

ACTIONS NOT WORDS

Many European governments have spoken about the appalling atrocities we see Israel perpetuate in Gaza, yet they continue sending the weapons that kill our patients and colleagues. Governments must end their complicity in this campaign of ethnic cleansing.

BOOST MEDICAL EVACUATIONS

Today, around 13,000 people, including more than 4,500 children, remain in urgent need of medical evacuation, with the right to return. Nevertheless, despite these needs and the proven capacity of the European Union, only a few hundred patients have been welcomed by European Member States. Member States must do more to show that solidarity isn't just words.

You can and must act now.

Sincerely,

Dr Christos Christou,
MSF International President

Christopher Lockyear,
Secretary General, MSF International

A Revolutionary Life: Remembering Hannah Middleton

As most of you will have heard, long-time Communist Party of Australia member and formidable activist Dr Hannah Middleton passed last month.

The CPA will be holding a public event on the 19th of July to commemorate the life of Hannah.

Saturday the 19 July – 2:30pm-5pm

NSW Teachers Federation Conference Centre, 37 Reservoir St, Surry Hills, NSW

We encourage all to attend. Hannah dedicated her whole life to the struggle to liberate humankind and worked with countless individuals through that time. All people, party members or not, should attend to commemorate the amazing life and contributions of Dr Hannah Middleton.

Childcare

Kick profiteers out

M Santos

The charging of Melbourne childcare worker Joshua Dale Brown with 70 counts related to the alleged sexual abuse of babies and toddlers in his care has set alarm bells ringing. The case has brought to the fore unresolved problems in the privatised early childhood and education (ECEC) sector.

Brown has tested positive for sexually transmitted diseases, with more than 1,200 children now needing to be tested.

Brown worked in 20 private centres, most of them owned by big private operators, including private equity-owned Affinity Education, listed ASX giant G8 Education and US-owned Only About Children.

Parents of more than half of children aged five and under rely on ECEC centres.

While at the most horrendous scale of child sexual abuse, this case is not an isolated incident. At least one report of sexual misconduct is made every day in Victoria, NSW and Western Australia. In Queensland South Australia and the Northern Territory – there is no requirement to report incidents.

ECEC has become big business to the tune of $20 billion and rising. What should be a caring service has been largely commodified with babies and toddlers a means to profit-churning. When the private, for-profit sharks move into a caring sector, a conflict of interest immediately arises.

Educators cost money. Food costs money. Centres and resources cost money. They all eat into profits resulting in cost-cutting measures that impact on the quality of care and the well-being of the child.

Private equity sharks and other private operators have been drawn into the sector by large government subsidies. The situation is similar to aged care where abuse is all too prevalent (see page 7).

BROKEN SYSTEM

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority warned federal and state ministers 18 months ago about the potential dangers in the shortage of appropriately qualified early childhood educators.

"This has resulted in concerns about the screening and monitoring of behaviour of people seeking to work with children and young people," it said. "With the increased use of casual and agency relief staff, concerns have also been raised about the level of vetting being undertaken pre-employment."

Professor Michael Salter, director of the local branch of the Global Child Safety Institute Childlight said ECEC centres were far safer now than in previous decades when there were very few checks. "But we've had a massive expansion of the sector, and the barriers to entry are quite low.

"There needs to be broader questions asked around the privatisation of childcare, child-to-staff ratios, as well as an awareness of reporting obligations and what constitutes boundary-violating behaviour.

"Childcare centres are a magnet for individuals, and groups of individuals, wanting access to pre-verbal children," Salter said. "They're targeting them because the kids can't talk. And even when they do, the courts are generally very reluctant to accept testimony from very young children."

The number of cases reveals the inadequacy of relying on working with children checks and lack of following through with previous employers.

Photo: Alexander Grey – pexels.com

There are regulations for staff-to-child ratios and quality standards like food and space, across the sector. The strict enforcement of these regulations is lacking. The regulator is under-funded and under-staffed.

The employment of individual educators in numerous centres is common, a result of the casualisation of the workforce and use of agencies to supply staffing. Children need continuity of staff and programs. Constant turnover of staff, under-staffing and lack of fully qualified educators only harms the development of the children and makes the system vulnerable to abuse.

IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

The importance of qualified educators and planned programs cannot be overemphasised. The first four years are the most important in a child's development. In that period 90 per cent of our brain is formed. The work of early childhood educators is undervalued and lacks the respect by employers and political leaders.

They are underpaid and carry crippling workloads, resulting in a huge turn-over.

Fully qualified EC educators have three- or four-year university degrees. The 15 per cent wage increase for early childhood (EC) educators won by unions after many years of struggle still leaves their work under-valued. Labor must now push for the full 25 per cent demanded by unions.

At present there is an estimated shortage of more than 20,000 educators. Equal pay to school teachers with the same qualifications, and an overall improvement in wages is needed to retain and attract more educators.

They are not child-minders.

Labor's introduction of multi-employer bargaining has assisted around 30,000 EC educators to improve their wages. But there are still other centres where workers are paid the minimum award rate or are on an inferior enterprise bargaining agreement. This must be rectified.

POLICY

Ten years ago the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse called on the government to "facilitate a national model" for working with children checks. This and many of its other recommendations remain unimplemented. This too must be rectified.

Governments have been jolted into action by Brown's alleged actions.

NSW, Victoria and South Australia are committed to reforms with three- and four-year-old preschool programs and increasing the hours of pre-school programs.

Victoria is developing a register of childcare workers and educators, a ban on personal mobile phones in centres, the tracking of ECEC educators' employment history, and mandatory CCTV.

CCTV does not and should not replace workers. Many centres already have CCTV, but widespread use opens another can of worms. Who controls the recordings and what do they do with them?

Chayanne Carter, a consultant to childcare providers, says: "Requiring two educators to be present at all times acts as a structural safeguard against abuse. Predators thrive in isolation; when no witnesses are present, the opportunity for abuse or grooming increases significantly. By mandating dual supervision, we remove the conditions that enable predatory behaviour."

Dual supervision should be mandatory, with a government commitment to fund the necessary staffing ratios.

"In the event of an incident or allegation, services with robust supervision protocols are better positioned to demonstrate compliance, respond promptly, and protect both staff and children," Carter said.

The Royal Commission emphasised the need to make sure the physical environment minimises opportunity for abuse to occur. This includes glass walls around toilet and nappy change areas and no blind spots in centres. Continuity of staff is important.

Education Minister Jason Clare said he would give his department the power to pull funding from childcare centres "persistently failing" to meet safety and quality standards. But this only leaves parents with higher fees or looking for another centre when there is an acute shortage in many areas.

Effective child protection training that covers grooming behaviour and how to recognise signs that a child might be being abused is also needed.

Funding is critical. This crisis in ECEC comes at a time when the Albanese Labor government is cutting social spending to fund US war preparations, including AUKUS.

New public ECEC centres in rural, regional and remote areas are also required to alleviate the lack of ECEC centres.

NSW Greens MP Abigail Boyd, chair of a state upper house inquiry into the ECEC says: "People are doing six months' training and then they're put into a centre. These courses aren't weeding out the people who don't care what the job is, and it can be one way you get paedophiles in the industry, because it's so easy."

The focus of ECEC should be on education and care, on the children, their development and socialisation. Not profits. Removing the private profit layer would ultimately result in reduced costs for parents and governments.

The Labor government is considering a proposal for a fixed $10-a-day flat fee per child.

The Communist Party of Australia believes that there is no place for the private, for-profit sector in ECEC. The important role of early childhood educators in the emotional, intellectual, social and cultural development of pre-school children should be recognised. These educators should be paid a salary commensurate with their qualifications and responsibilities. All children should have access to free, safe, quality early childhood education.

Readers seeking support can ring Lifeline crisis support on 13 11 14 or text 0477 13 11 14, Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467 and Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 (for young people aged 5 to 25). Anyone seeking information or support relating to sexual abuse can contact Bravehearts on 1800 272 831 or Blue Knot on 1300 657 380.

Adelaide

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Safety is union business

More than 70 Site Safety and Health Representatives (SSHRs) from across Queensland gathered in Mackay in June for the 2025 SSHR Conference – an intensive five-day event focused on equipping workplace safety leaders with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to keep their workmates safe.

With 20 first-time attendees, the conference underscored the growing importance of SSHRs in Queensland's mining industry and the need to keep up to date with emerging issues.

Queensland District ISHRs Jason Hill, Blair Kidd and Craig Smith led the conference with a strong message: "Safety is union business – and it's up to us to lead from the front."

The conference provided a mix of expert presentations, practical training, and peer-to-peer learning. A key focus was on empowering SSHRs, especially those newly elected, to return to their sites with the confidence to challenge unsafe practices and audit safety plans effectively.

Topics ranged from respiratory health and fatigue management to risk assessment and hazard identification.

Dr Bob Cohen (Clinical Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, University of Illinois) and Dr Nikky LaBranche (Dust & Respiratory Health Program Lead, Minerals Industry Safety and Health Centre, The University of Queensland) delivered critical updates on respiratory health risks, including dust exposure, and welding fumes.

The United Mine Workers of America's Safety representative Josh Roberts gave an update on the state of OHS and safety in the USA.

Professor Maureen Hassall (Director of the Sustainable Minerals Institute's Industrial Safety and Health Centre at The University of Queensland) led a full-day session on risk management, emphasising the need for SSHRs to understand hazards deeply and implement hard controls.

"It's about knowing what can go wrong, and making sure it doesn't," she said.

Attendees also examined past incidents involving cranes and slings to identify gaps in previous safety protocols. These case studies helped SSHRs understand how to audit current practices and prevent repeat failures.

The conference also addressed emerging risks, such as the psychosocial impacts of digitalisation and algorithmic-managed work.

Beyond physical safety, the conference highlighted the importance of mental health. A session with Mates in Mining reinforced that looking out for each other's wellbeing is just as vital as managing physical hazards.

Thanks were extended to Queensland Safety Policy Officer Stephanie Kameric, who presented valuable statistics on reported safety events, helping SSHRs understand trends and areas for improvement.

With a new conservative Queensland government in place, concerns were raised about upcoming policy reviews and what might be triggering them. The MEU committed to working through these changes with transparency and continued advocacy for worker safety.

As the conference wrapped up, the message was clear: SSHRs are not just safety reps. They are leaders, educators, and protectors of their crews. With the right support, they are ready to take that responsibility back to their mines.

Very 'big bank'

In a move which calls into question its positioning as the "better big bank," Bendigo Bank has announced the closure of 10 branches – five in regional communities where they are the last remaining bank branch.

The Finance Sector Union (FSU) has written to the Bank's CEO, Richard Fennell, as well as local Members of Parliament, and the Federal Minister, as it seeks to save the branches. Only a full reversal of this move will protect the 32 full time equivalent roles and the essential service they undertake in their local communities.

These closures are scheduled to begin on 1 August with the final branch slated to close on 31 October.

FSU National Secretary Julia Angrisano said: "To close 10 branches, five in regional communities with no other bank branch, is a slap in the face from a bank which most Australians know as the largest regionally-based bank, and a supporter of regional communities. While 32 full time equivalent roles are impacted, many more individuals are at risk due to the number of part time staff engaged in these branches.

"Three Victorian communities – Bannockburn, Korumburra Yarram, along with Malanda in Queensland, and Queenstown in Tasmania will lose the last of their local bank branches. Also impacted are regional branches in Kings Meadows (Launceston, Tasmania) and Tully (in Northern Queensland)."

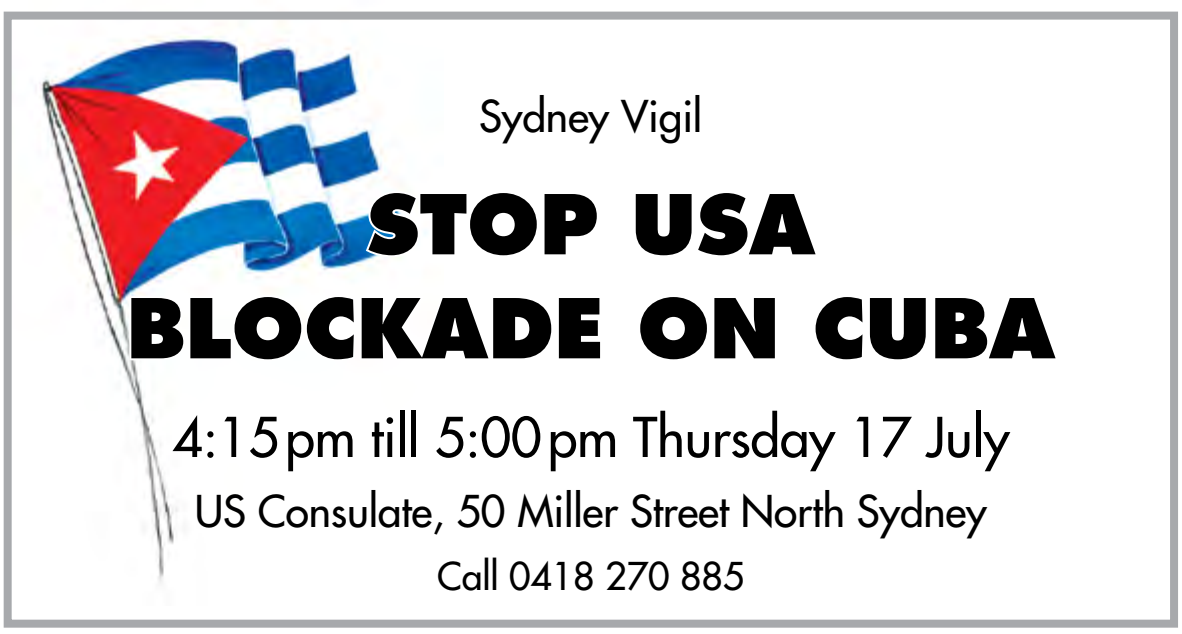
The largest impact from the decision will be felt in the bank's home state of Victoria with six branches closing including larger regional branches in Geelong and Ballarat, and a suburban branch in South Melbourne.

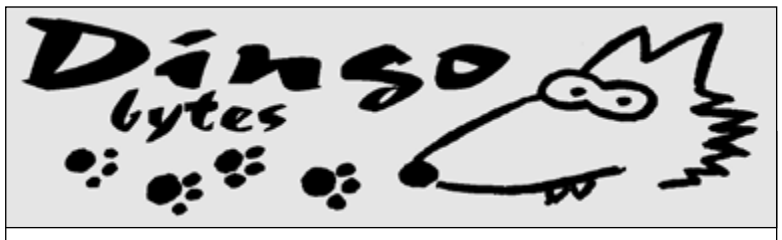
"This is an incredibly disturbing development and does not bode well for the future of Bendigo Bank's presence in regional Australia," said Angrisano. "For a bank which proudly has its regional centre hometown as part of its name, and is fondly known for its community branch network, this decision feels very 'big bank' for all the wrong reasons.

"It's been almost 14 months since the Senate Inquiry into regional banking handed down its report calling for banking to be regulated as an essential service, especially to protect regional communities. We've written to the local MPs in the regional communities affected by this closure asking them to stand up for these branches, and the workers who staff them.

"The Finance Sector Union has also raised the issue of consumer and worker regulation of banking with new Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services Daniel Mullino MP. It is critical that the federal government step in and protect bank workers and customers given the banks have proven themselves to be incapable of doing anything other than putting profits and shareholders first."

FSU





Australian unions have won the right for thousands of workers employed in McDonald's fast-food outlets to bargain together to improve their pay and conditions. A full bench of the Fair Work Commission has agreed to let workers across multiple McDonald's franchises bargain together for higher wages and better conditions, overruling the global fast-food giant's opposition to the union bid.

In a major union win, the industrial umpire decided that one of the unions for fast-food, retail and warehouse workers, the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA), has the right to bargain on behalf of more than 5,100 workers employed in 18 South Australian McDonald's franchises. The other, the Retail and Fast Food Workers Union (RAFFWU) has led McDonalds' first ever union rally and first ever walk out (over sexual harassment).

The ruling means unions can support low-paid workers to level up against the multinational food chain to win higher pay and better conditions.

The decision forces McDonalds to the bargaining table to negotiate its first Australian collective agreement in more than a decade.

Workers at Star Brisbane Casino took strike action on 4 July for the first time, protesting a pay offer that would leave them facing a real-wage cut. After years of keeping Star afloat through crisis after crisis, workers took protected industrial action after Star failed to bring a reasonable offer to the table, instead attempting to slash weekend penalty rates and offering a deal that fails to address the cost-of-living crisis.

Workers voted against a company pay offer that attempts to shortchange workers on wages and conditions, and have now voted for protected industrial action to make their voices heard.

United Workers Union National President Jo Schofield said union members were taking a stand against being sold out.

"While workers kept the place going in the dark days earlier this year, the shiny suits at Star Brisbane Casino blundered from disaster to disaster," said Schofield.

"Now they're failing to respect the importance of Star Brisbane workers who have kept the place running through crisis after crisis – with workers often stepping up to take on higher duties."

The union says Star's management needs to come to the table with a fair offer that meets workers' needs.

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: Monash University management, with the National Tertiary Education Union winning a major wage theft case against Monash over systematic underpayments.

A Federal Court decision found Monash University had broken workplace law by failing to pay casual academics for student consultation work.

The amount of backpay owed to workers is expected to be worth millions of dollars. The Court is yet to rule on what penalties the University will have to pay.

The Federal Court also dismissed the University's extraordinary claim that the NTEU had no right to enforce an expired enterprise agreement – a move that would have upended long-standing precedent on unions' ability to take action on behalf of workers.

NTEU Monash Branch President Dr Ben Eltham called the decision "vindication for thousands of casual and insecure teachers who have had their wages stolen by Monash.

"Casual academics at Monash University do huge amounts of the teaching here. They deserve to be paid for all the hours they work.

"This is the third different tranche of wage theft at Monash University since 2021. So far, the University has admitted to underpaying more than 9,000 staff members more than $17.6 million.

"This case raises serious issues about the governance of Monash University."

The vice-chancellor at the time was Margaret Gardner, now governor of Victoria on $485,000 per year.

CPA greeting to the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation

Gennady Zyuganov
Chairperson

Dear comrade,

The Communist Party of Australia conveys its warmest greeting to the members and leadership of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation on the celebration of its 19th ordinary Congress to be held 4-5 July 2025.

We are confident that your 19th Congress will contribute to strengthening of the CPRF and its role in the ongoing struggle for peace and socialism. Your Congress takes place at a crucial time for humanity fighting against the drums of fascism, war in Europe and elsewhere.

In a recent visit to Moscow as part of the Second International anti-fascist Forum organised by the CPRF we witnessed its work on the ground leading those who strive for socialism and peace.

We wish your 19th congress every success in its deliberations and we extend our wholehearted greeting to the party leadership, congress delegates and party members in general on the challenge for a better world.

We look forward to hearing about your congress resolutions as we strengthen the fraternal relations between the Communist Party of Australia and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation on the basis of international solidarity and the struggle for socialism and peace.

Long live proletarian internationalism!

Communist Party of Australia, CPA International Department
2nd July 2025

$66 million Same Job Same Pay win

Mining and Energy Union (MEU)

The Fair Work Commission has backed Same Job Same Pay at three BHP coal mines in Central Queensland in the biggest win so far under new labour hire laws.

The landmark decision will lift pay for over 2,000 workers and is a nail in the coffin for BHP's sham labour hire model, the Mining and Energy Union said.

The decision means the Commission will make orders covering labour hire workers employed by WorkPac, Chandler Macleod, and BHP's in-house labour hire subsidiary Operations Services at Saraji, Peak Downs, and Goonyella Riverside Mines.

MEU Queensland President Mitch Hughes said that once made, the regulated labour hire arrangement orders would deliver annual pay rises in the order of $30,000 for about 2,200 workers, while the decision has broader ramifications for the coal industry.

"BHP has fought our Same Job Same Pay applications tooth and nail, trying to protect the wage-cutting employment model it pioneered," said Hughes.

"This decision reaffirms that BHP's approach of using labour hire to undercut bargained wages is no longer lawful and it's time to pay up.

"The community has spoken and the courts have spoken; BHP can no longer use outsourcing and dodgy corporate structure to cut pay."

Allan, an Operations Services worker, said he was relieved to finally have recognition that he is performing the same work as direct employees.

"My crew performs the same work, on the same equipment, under the same policies as my directly employed workmates, but are paid far less. I hope today's decision ends this dodgy practice for good."

The decision is the MEU's sixth successful Same Job Same Pay application in Queensland, and seventeenth nationally – delivering over $100 million in annual pay rises.

With ten Same Job Same Pay applications remaining before the Fair Work Commission; MEU General Secretary Grahame Kelly urged employers to cease time-wasting legal interference that is delaying long-awaited pay rises.

"This is a great result following a long campaign by MEU members; and I thank everyone involved in delivering this outcome.

"There are still thousands of workers across the coal industry waiting for Same Job Same Pay decisions that are being held up by employers' delaying tactics.

"This clear decision by the Full Bench of the Fair Work Commission should send a message not just to BHP but to the whole industry that the time for ripping off labour hire workers is over."

MEU

UWU strike at The Star Brisbane Casino

Graham Holton

Hundreds of United Workers Union (UWU) workers at The Star Brisbane Casino, owned by Star Entertainment, have initiated a protected strike in response to the inadequate offer of a 4 per cent wage increase.

Brisbane staff earn considerably less than their counterparts in Sydney. In an *ABC News* interview with Marcia Conlan, a games dealer with Star for eight years, said the workload had greatly increased since moving to the Queen's Wharf site. Kaine Kennedy, a bartender, said he would make $2 an hour more doing the same job at the company's Sydney casino.

Jo Schofield, union president, said the offer was "insulting" and warned of escalated industrial action unless an improved deal was presented. Cuts to penalty rates had a big impact on the lowest paid workers, "the cleaners and the housekeepers." Schofield said: "They have been forced into this position because of the failure of Star to recognise the cost-of-living pressures [workers] are under, but also the skills, commitment and loyalty workers have shown to the company during what has been an incredibly tumultuous time."

The casino's financial stability is under scrutiny due to potential investor withdrawals and a looming $400 million fine from AUSTRAC. Star shareholders approved a $300 million rescue deal backed by US casino giant Bally's Corp and investor Bruce Mathieson. The Brisbane luxury riverside project is in limbo until a financial bailout is found.

Photo: unitedworkersoz Twitter

Check out the official Instagram account of the Communist Party of Australia
communist.party.australia
www.instagram.com/communist.party.australia/

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

24-hour hunger strike for Palestine

Vinnie Molina

A group of trade unionists and concerned people in Perth held a 24-hour hunger strike for Palestine Friday 4th July 4 at the Murray Street Mall, Boorloo (Perth).

The action was in solidarity with the Gazan people who have been victims of genocide and of starvation as a weapon of war by the Zionist terrorist state of Israel.

The actions of Israel have had the support of the United States for more than seven decades. It supplies the weapons and the political endorsement for Israeli war crimes on the Palestinian people.

The event coincided with US Independence Day, a perfect opportunity for peace activists to speak out against the Australia-US Alliance and call for independence from the USA.

IPAN WA, Stop Aukus-WA, Medical Association for the Prevention of War, drummers for climate and other antiwar activists joined the strikers to call for the Australian government to cancel AUKUS and for an independent foreign policy.

Speakers on behalf of the hunger strikers demanded a ceasefire, an independent Palestinian state and called on the Albanese government to sanction Israel, to cut all military and trade links with the terrorist state.

The hunger strike action was well attended by passersby who stopped for chats, picked up information and made donations for the Union Aid Abroad APHEDA appeal for Gaza. The strike appeal had a $5,000 target which by the time of writing had been almost achieved.

Visitors to the action included a number of trade union leaders, secretaries and organisers of the CFMEU, ETU, CPSU, State Teachers' Unions, Teachers for Palestine, Unionists for Palestine. We also received a visit from Greens WA Parliamentarian Sophie McNeill who has been a voice on urgent matters like the environment and Palestine. Passing by Indigenous legend Ernie Dingo also stopped for a yarn and expressed solidarity.

The action achieved what it set out to do; raising awareness through the action of trade unionists and members of the community fasting for 24 hours in a symbolic expression of commitment to a free Palestine and the end of the genocide.

Backgrounder

Privatisation's toll on childcare

M Santos

In 1993 Australia's first national system for early childhood education and care (ECEC) was introduced by the Keating Labor government. The Quality Improvement and Accreditation System was formulated through discussions with ECEC organisations in the states and territories.

Publicly run centres were set up with federal funding and funding from local councils. Care was strictly regulated. It was based on 52 principles and recognised that "good quality care must appreciate the individuality of every child and treat all children equally." The special needs of children with disabilities, children from non-English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were included.

The principles set four fundamental standards of care: Unsatisfactory, Basic, Good Quality and High Quality. These took into consideration the relationship between staff and parents, staff and children, staff and staff, the programs for the children, nutrition, health and safety, centre management and staff development.

Quality of care was paramount. Staff-child ratios were set and strictly adhered to, with children under two requiring extra qualified staff.

A strong grassroots movement for the provision of quality, affordable ECEC had gathered considerable momentum by the 1980s. As a result, community-based and government-funded centres received operational subsidies and parent fee relief on a sliding scale, which allowed access for low-income families.

In 1990 the government began providing funding to the for-profit child care industry by extending fee assistance to parents using private centres.

The drive for profits by the private sector put downward pressure on quality and pressure on fees to be constantly raised. The rent and profits are factored into the fees. This meant the government, rather than parents, was largely subsidising the private sector.

Neoliberal policies of deregulation and privatisation have resulted in not only an expansion of the private sector but the commodification of ECEC. Childcare, which plays a crucial part of the lives of so many working people and their children, is used as a cash cow by corporate cowboys.

Both major parties are guilty of handing over ECEC services to the private for-profit sector.

With their main motive maximum profits, private centres increased their fees. Most refused to take children under two years of age because they didn't want to employ the extra staff required.

In 1997, after less than a year in government, the Howard government's hatchet men had left their own trail of destruction, cutting hundreds of millions of dollars from ECEC funding. The resultant fee increases forced thousands of parents away from the community centres. Centres across Australia began closing.

Educators were made redundant or had their hours cut. Private operators reduced wages and conditions using the Howard government's infamous Australian Workplace Agreements (individual contracts).

Food budgets were slashed, in some cases to $1 a day per child in private centres.

PROFIT AT ALL TIMES

A recent ABC report highlighted testimony from a former manager at privately owned Affinity Education described the culture as "profit at all times."

Affinity has more than 250 early childhood education and care (ECEC) centres across Australia with 20,000 children. Private equity firm Quadrant purchased Affinity Education in 2021 paying $650 million to enter the ECEC sector. Affinity Education is just one of its many investments.

Quadrant's investments are also in companies providing legal services, car care, IT, electronics, spine technology for surgeons, food products, property valuations, and beauty products.

Affinity's revenue in 2023 was $553 million with a large portion of that from government subsidies. Declared profit after tax was $13.7 million.

The *Sydney Morning Herald*'s Adele Ferguson describes Affinity as offering "a window into how the regulatory system is failing families. Between 2021 and 2024, its NSW centres racked up more than 1,100 regulatory breaches, averaging more than two a day. Yet in that time, the regulator issued just nine infringement notices, totalling less than $2,000 in fines."

"Thousands of pages of internal regulatory documents reveal the same problems surfacing again and again: unsafe sleep practices, staff out of ratio and incomplete records ranging from expired working-with-children checks to missing staff qualifications and children's medical histories. In most cases, they are told to do better by the regulator. Despite this, since December last year, Affinity has been allowed to expand – acquiring 13 more centres in NSW."

Pro-corporate zealots at the *Australian Financial Review* (*AFR*) have responded to the alleged wholesale abuse by warning that "Cutting out private equity will ultimately put taxpayers on the hook for a bigger bill" and clash with "the lower-tax agenda" they think Australia needs.

That's absolute nonsense. Profits add an additional layer to costs. Parents and taxpayers foot the higher bill for those profits.

"Unions, advocates and experts in favour of government-owned and operated childcare services have again flooded the media with claims that quality and safety are compromised by cost-cutting and understaffing in for-profit centres," the *AFR* notes.

That's right. Unions, advocates and experts are on the money here.

There are strong parallels with aged care and the role of private for-profit outfits in that area.

Greens MP and chair of a NSW upper house inquiry into the early childhood education sector Abigail Boyd is scathing of federal regulations that are poorly enforced by states and territories, suggesting that lax punishment for non-compliance has led to governance issues at for-profit centres, below legally mandated staffing ratios and other safety provisions.

"There's a pattern of these companies cutting corners as part of their business model, waiting to get caught, because they know the response will be so lax that it makes good business sense to just continue in their ways," Boyd says.

Prac Payment explained

Photo: UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe.– flickr.com (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

W Varga

In late 2024 the Higher Education Support Act 2003 was amended by the Albanese government. The amendments included the addition of the 'Commonwealth Prac Payment,' which will allow eligible teaching, nursing, midwifery, and social work students to receive $331.65 per week whilst completing mandatory professional placements for their degrees. The programme was implemented to address the issue of 'placement poverty.'

Placement what? Well, during placements, university students often have to work full time hours whilst also completing coursework for their degree. Since a lot of students rely on part-time work to survive while studying, this means students doing placements have to take time off from their normal jobs. That's a significant financial burden for students who come from low-income backgrounds and who rely on these jobs to survive. For a lot of students, that's so onerous that they don't go for careers in nursing or teaching in the first place.

PROBLEMS

This new programme is a step forward for Australian students, but it has shortcomings. Tertiary students wishing to access payments under the scheme must satisfy a means test.

Think about it. If the government told employers they didn't have to pay apprentices who failed to pass a means test there would be national outrage. Wages are not a privilege. They are not a government benefit scheme. They are a basic right which we are all owed.

In addition to the means test, the Albanese government has also excluded numerous professions from the scheme, such as medicine and psychology.

This clearly demonstrates that his government does not believe that students have a right to be paid wages for their labour. The fact that they are treating such a fundamental right as nothing more than a privilege is an insult to the working people of Australia. Just as all apprentices deserve a wage, all university students on placements deserve a wage. Work is work.

All international students are excluded from receiving payments under the scheme. International students are often some of the most financially disadvantaged students in Australia. Locals can move back in with family during a placement. International students usually can't do that. They also often rely solely on their regular jobs to be able to afford the basic necessities of life. Some international students' families can send money to help support them, but most can't. Unlike domestic students, international students have to pay their course fees up front. International students pay close to $20,000 a year in tuition fees. Accordingly, international students are often forced to work onerously long hours for very little pay at some of the worst jobs on offer in this country. This makes unpaid placements a significant burden for them.

The callous and unjustifiable exclusion of international students from receiving the Commonwealth Prac Payment is nothing more than blatant discrimination on the part of the Albanese government. Again, think of apprentices. If apprentices from overseas can be paid a wage, why can't international students undertaking placements?

Students who do manage to satisfy the scheme's eligibility requirements will still receive very meagre wages. A pre-service teacher working 35 hours a week and receiving $331.65 per week under the scheme will only be making around $9.50 an hour. As Australians we often baulk at the fact that in many US states the minimum hourly wage is only US$7.25 (AUD $11) an hour.

A pre-service teacher in Australia will be paid $3.78 less than this under the Commonwealth Prac Payment scheme. That's $14.6 less than the minimum wage owed to someone over 21 years of age. At a minimum, the Commonwealth Prac Payment should be equivalent to the wages paid to apprentices.

The Commonwealth Prac Payment is certainly a step forward for Australian students, but is sadly lacking. It treats the right to a wage as a privilege, and is blatantly discriminatory in its exclusion of international students. All workers deserve a wage for the labour they perform, regardless of who they are, their life circumstances, or where they are from. ✪

PEACE NOTES

Ignoring History

Hannah Middleton

(*Comrade Hannah Middleton inaugurated the* Guardian*'s Peace Notes column. As we prepare to commemorate her life and achievements, it seems appropriate to reprint these words taken from a 2022 speech to the CPUSA*)

Defence Minister, Richard Marles, has gone so far as to say that we are not only working "inter-operatively" with the US military in numerous ways but we are now committed to "integration" of the ADF into US force structures.

Prime Minister Albanese has said "We will deepen our regional defence co-operation with close partners – including Japan, India, Singapore and others – to bolster our joint capabilities, shape our strategic environment and uphold the rules of the road."

This is imperialist spin for encircle, contain, and defeat socialist China.

Australian governments are ignoring history and refusing to acknowledge that Western imperialist domination is ending. This geopolitical shift is characterised by, among other things, changes in trade. In 2000, over 80 per cent of the world's countries traded more with the US than China. By 2020, seventy per cent had more trade with China.

The narrative built to hide US fear of China as a rival power challenging US imperialism's regional hegemony is that China is an authoritarian state that is a military threat.

However, there has been no pattern of China moving outside its boundaries, other than in respect of territory, such as islands, which it has always insisted were its own.

Today US imperialism is fighting to maintain its domination of the Pacific, pouring millions of dollars into "aid," funding the Peace Corp's return, establishing new embassies across the Pacific and appointing the first US envoy to the Pacific Islands Forum.

After World War II, the US was so far in the lead that it could establish and run the global order. The US gave the orders. Gradually however, industrial powers recovered and decolonisation and the non-aligned movement grew.

US imperialism responded by beating all this back violently, using wars, assassinations, overturning governments, and more.

With Asia now the centre of global economic power, imperialism is working to retain its economic and political primacy, risking war – and even nuclear Armageddon.

This madness has its origin in the United States, whose ruling class is greatly threatened by the advances of the Chinese people which pose an existential threat to the advantages long enjoyed by Western corporations that have benefited from centuries of colonialism.

The aim of US imperialism's foreign policy is to prevent any national power becoming a challenge. The US has defined China as its principal threat and is now working to instigate a war between Taiwan and China.

Recognising that war is the product of the anarchic and competitive character of the capitalist world order, we know that in order to end bloody imperialist wars we must overthrow capitalism.

This is an urgent task for as a declining imperial empire struggles viciously to retain its domination, we face a fight that can end "in the common ruin of the contending classes."

In this situation we must confront this on a global scale. We must build the widest and strongest peace movement possible to win reforms that can save the planet and also contribute to the fight to replace capitalism by socialism.

We have to argue that countries buying more and more deadly weapons systems in an escalating arms race does not create peace or security. It has not worked in the past and it never will.

Human security is not based on escalating military spending and war games but on care for the planet and its inhabitants – a state which is impossible under capitalism.

It is time for us to insist that governments around the world redirect their massive war spending to serve humanity suffering from lack of food, water, and other human needs amid an expanding climate catastrophe.

Kumanjayi Walker's death a powerful call for justice reform

Australian Human Rights Commission

Coronial findings on Kumanjayi Walker's death a powerful call for justice reform.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Katie Kiss, says the coronial findings into the death of Kumanjayi Walker in police custody are a painful but powerful reminder of the urgent need for sweeping reform across police and justice systems to fully address ongoing injustices against First Peoples.

Kumanjayi Walker, a Walpiri-Luritja man from Yuendumu, north-west of Alice Springs, was 19 years old when he was shot dead by a Northern Territory police officer during an attempted arrest in 2019. The officer in question was found not guilty of all charges related to the death in 2022.

However, the coronial inquiry exposed deeply disturbing allegations of systemic racism within NT Police, and a culture of excessive force and impunity. In delivering her 600 pages of findings, Coroner Elisabeth Armitage condemned the "grotesque examples of racism" that were "normalised" by the Territory police force, saying she could not rule out racism as a factor in Kumanjayi Walker's "avoidable" death.

"This has been a slow, painful six years towards something that will never deliver complete justice for Kumanjayi Walker or the Yuendumu community," Commissioner Kiss said.

"My heart continues to break for them, and all First Peoples families suffering over the national shame which is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody. As the coroner said emphatically, this death should not have happened.

"Kumanjayi was a loving and much-loved young man, who was failed by our justice system even before the night of his death. His history of trauma and intellectual disability were not adequately addressed during his time in detention. As the coroner found, his wellbeing was not prioritised by the officer who killed him.

"Racism is running rife in our institutions, and it lies at the heart of these shocking injustices. But today marks a powerful moment. These findings, delivered on the lands of Yuendumu People – Kumanjayi Walker's People – not only outline who, and what, is to blame, but offer a clear pathway for reform.

"Like the coroner, I sincerely hope these findings will help prevent further tragedies."

Since the start of 2025, there have been 13 Aboriginal deaths in custody. This includes the May death of another Walpiri man, Kumanjayi White, who died after being restrained by police at an Alice Springs supermarket. The national total now approaches 600 deaths since the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC).

Despite RCIADIC's landmark recommendations, Commissioner Kiss says governments have failed to implement many of its key reforms, particularly around police training, community policing, and the use of force.

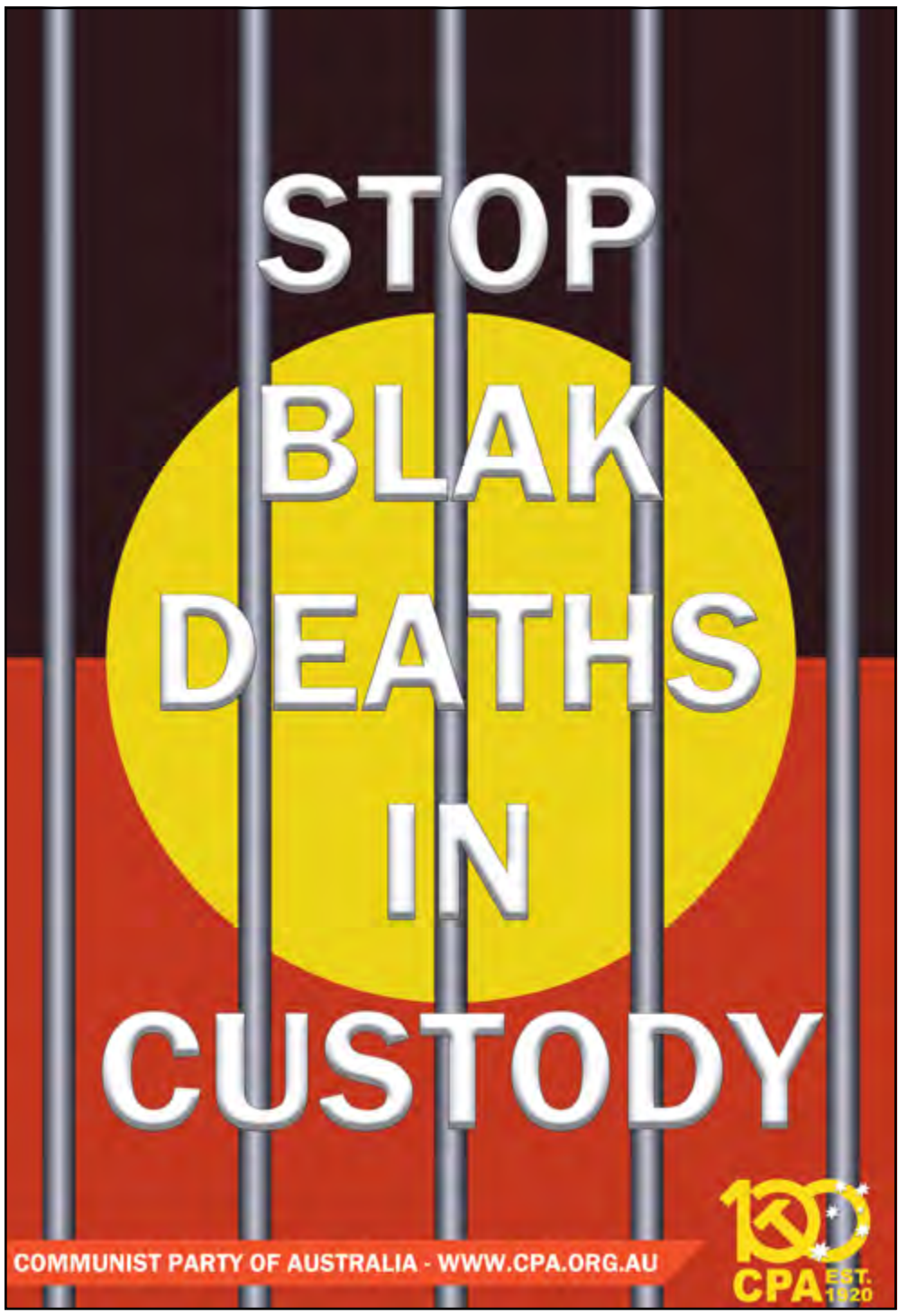
"Our governments must respond in a genuine way to the commitments they have undertaken to meet Closing the Gap targets," Commissioner Kiss said.

"We must urgently shift our focus to prevention, because the best way to stop our people from dying in custody is to stop them from being drawn into a system that has failed them from the very beginning."

Commissioner Kiss echoed calls by the Justice 4 Walker campaign, formed by Mr Walker's family and community, for police accountability, divestment from punitive policing, and investment in culturally safe, community-led alternatives. This includes the need for independent oversight bodies, ending the practice of police routinely carrying guns in communities, and the reinstatement of Warlpiri cultural authority and governance. Many of the coroner's 32 recommendations, at least in part, align with these calls.

Commissioner Kiss also called on the NT government to reinstate its racism review into police, and for Australian governments to establish independent police complaints ombudsmen in all jurisdictions. She said that in order to ensure the full implementation of the RCIADIC recommendations, the federal government should re-establish a national body, similar to what existed under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

"Without an evidence – and human right – based approach to justice and corrections, the unacceptable over-representation of our peoples in custody, and dying in custody, will remain a national shame. Today's findings must be the final alarm. This must end."



Thailand: Another Shinawatra suspended

Kay Young

Paetongtarn has become the third Shinawatra to be ousted from the Prime Minister's office, following her aunt (Yingluck 2014) and her father (Thaksin 2006). The Shinawatra family, in particular Thaksin, have long been the figureheads behind the Red Shirt movement – a big tent coalition made up largely of the rural poor, but also including some big capitalists and local elites. These were the same people who were killed during the infamous Red versus Yellow street wars of the 2000s.

The past three years of governance were relatively successful for the Red Shirt (Phue Thai) Party, consistently upholding its mandate to uplift and empower the rural poor. Such policies included a mass expansion of universal health care to include dentistry and mental health, a large cash stimulus for the poorest 20% of society, the stabilisation of rice prices and the passage of the 2024 Farmer Debt Moratorium Act, suspending loan repayments for millions.

This was all achieved despite a significantly waning percentage of the vote, in large part due to the newly established Liberal Party.

After the 2023 elections, Phue Thai was forced into a governing coalition along with military-aligned parties – including Bhumjaithai and United Thai Nation. While many saw the coalition as a betrayal, after decades of violent oppression, it was the only strategic manoeuvre on the table to prevent total exclusion from power. Pheu Thai faced an existential choice: collaborate with reactionary establishment factions or allow a royalist-military government to dismantle every pro-rural policy enacted since 2001. As Thaksin Shinawatra said himself, "We enter the fire to rescue the people, not to burn with them."

However, despite the coalition's relative success in parliament during the past three years, the reactionary state apparatuses have again been mobilised to create a casus belli against Phue Thai. Prime Minister Paetongtarn's suspension was engineered by reactionary elements within the Thai state. The inciting incident was a leaked diplomatic call between her and former Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen in which she is heard trying to calm tensions and apologising for the Royal Thai military killing a Cambodian soldier on a disputed patch of border. In the phone call, she says, regarding a Royal Thai Military General, "He is on the opposite side [to her]." This is an oblique reference to what everybody in the region has known for decades, that the Royal Thai Army, which has enacted more coups than any other army in modern history, are not answerable to a civilian parliament.

It was this phone call that led to her suspension as Prime Minister and the resignation of a large number of reactionary MPs from the coalition, throwing the government into further jeopardy. Yet this continued persecution seems to only validate the Shinawatras' calculus: that Thailand's elite tolerates rural empowerment only when utterly powerless to prevent it. Their willingness to endure judicial assaults and public scorn reflects a commitment to sustaining incremental gains rather than martyrdom. Despite being far from perfect, the Phue Thai party is the only real force capable of challenging the reactionary military-monarchy complex, which has dominated the Kingdom since the end of WWII. The most recent assault is just the latest in a decades-long war against both the Phue Thai party and the kingdom's poor. As of 3 July, what the next few months hold is unclear, be it a weaker coalition government or another coup.

The Phue Thai story transcends the Shinawatras. It exposes a structural truth: in Thailand's oligarchical system; advancing rural interests demands morally fraught alliances that appear to betray ideological roots. Yet these compromises – from accepting military-backed partners to tolerating judicial humiliation – have shielded foundational pro-poor institutions for 25 years. Universal health care still functions. Village funds still finance tractors and community seed banks. The tragedy lies not in Phue Thai's pragmatism, but in a system that forces reformers to collaborate with their jailers to achieve even minimal justice for the poor. The party and the poor have weathered harsher storms than these and will surely continue to do so into the future.

globetrotter

‘When the CPC succeeds, the people succeed’

Interview with Communist Party of Australia National President Vinnie Molina, first published in *Global Times*

Vinnie Molina with Chinese Consul General Long Dingbin in Perth/Boorloo.

You once said that the CPC has given a strong leadership to the people of China in the development toward a socialist society. What do you think is the key advantage of the CPC’s leadership?

In my view, the CPC’s leadership has three major advantages. First, it has the broad support of the masses. Second, its policy-making is long-term and highly coordinated at the state planning level, with a scientific approach. Third, there is a commitment to protecting the rights of both minorities and marginalised groups. One specific example that stands out is China’s impressive push to decarbonise and build a green economy. In this area, China is far ahead of many countries. The concept of “ecological civilisation” is a field in which China has made real progress. This approach integrates economic development with environmental goals, aiming to improve both the environment and the livelihoods of the people. By setting an example, China has shown the world that it can take the lead.

In contrast, Western-style democracies often fall short in these areas. The two-party model tends to prioritise short-term interests and often represents the views of a minority, rather than the broader public. Moreover, there is no coordinated or centralised long-term planning to resolve key issues which are of concern to the people. The government appears more aligned with private interests than with the needs of the population. In that sense, I see a big difference in how the CPC manages public issues in China.

You mentioned that China’s modernisation is based on the development in the interest of its people which has led to strong public support for the CPC’s initiatives and leadership. How do you understand the CPC’s people-first governance philosophy?

I think that the CPC’s people-first socialist governance model is one of its institutional strengths based on consensus. For example, in the National People’s Congress (NPC), the sessions involve a consultative process that reflects socialist democracy. This process is reaching new levels, and it appears to be a kind of deep democracy, rather than the superficial or shallow democracy that is practiced in some Western countries. In the West, we change governments every three to five years, but in reality, very little changes in terms of the well-being of the people. By contrast, in the NPC, democracy is expressed in the administration of things – in economic democracy, and in the progressive development of the rights of the Chinese people, including minority nationalities, people with disabilities and women. These aspects were evident in the recent sessions of the NPC.

Another key point is that, in China, centralisation goes hand in hand with consultation. Centralisation and consultation are combined, reinforcing each other. This is what we in the Communist Party refer to as “democratic centralism.” Once a decision is made, it is binding on everyone in the interest of the collective. Also, it is important to have not only democracy in the economic system but also to uplift the spiritual and cultural level of the people. Of course, that is impossible without first raising the material conditions of the people. There needs to be advancement in legal rights, economic rights and so on. In this regard, I believe the Chinese leadership has shown a welladvanced model for others to follow.

You once noted that, key to being able to make continuous progress, the CPC has always tried to resist dogmatism. How do you understand the CPC as “a party of reformers”?

One of the key reasons the CPC has demonstrated resilience and survived for over 100 years is its insistence on testing truth through practice. We must take theory to the people, and let the people tell us whether we’re serving their interests or not. That means resisting dogmatism – sticking to theory without testing it in real life will not yield the best outcomes. Marxism is not a set of rigid dogmas, but a guide to action that must evolve as society and conditions change. For Marxists, it’s critical to understand and adapt to reality, to align theory with practice. We need to study Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era as an advanced form of Marxism. It addresses many key areas: diplomacy, rule of law, ecological civilisation. It offers an all-around Marxist framework, and a practical tool for socialist governance that we can all learn from.

In March 2023, Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward the Global Civilisation Initiative at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting. In your opinion, what significance do inter-party exchanges hold for countries? How does the CPC align China’s national development strategies with global public interests?

I think it’s a very good initiative to exchange ideas and perspectives, and to have the opportunity to participate in such exchanges. We’ve been fortunate to enjoy warm and fraternal relations with the CPC. This helps promote mutual understanding of different philosophies and approaches. When it comes to eliminating poverty, especially for developing countries, we need to work together. This represents a completely different approach to international solidarity compared to what is often offered by the West, where aid frequently comes with ties. They often engage in zero-sum games. Instead of respecting the diversity and flourishing of civilisations, they intervene in the internal affairs of other countries.

China’s cooperation with other countries, by contrast, is built on mutual interest. We can see this clearly in the Pacific and in other developing regions. China’s approach considers not only material wellbeing but also cultural and national security. The idea of a community with a shared future for mankind is, in my view, a more responsible and hopeful approach to global governance – a force for human progress. It’s a vision where all people can look forward to a better life, a beautiful future and truly enjoy it together.

This year marks the 104th anniversary of the founding of the CPC. As China moves toward its second centenary goal under the Party’s leadership, what are your expectations for the country’s future?

It is striking to remember that the CPC began with just 13 people coming together – likely never imagining that it would grow into the over 100 million-strong organisation it is today. It is a story of survival. It’s a story that we need to learn about. This history shows us that socialism is not only possible, but that it is being built, and that Marxism is here to stay. As a communist myself, I believe that communism is inevitable. But it will not arrive on its own – we need parties like the CPC that are able to put theory into practice. China’s socialist system today is stronger than ever before, thanks to the leadership of the CPC and the support of the Chinese people. I believe that the majority of the working class stands united behind the Party and wants it to succeed because when the Party succeeds, the people succeed.

By 2049, on the centenary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, we will see China as an advanced socialist nation. People will be there to enjoy a society that is democratic, civilised, harmonious, strong and modern.

On this occasion, I would like to extend my congratulations on the 104th anniversary of the founding of the CPC. Long live the CPC. Long live socialist China! ✪

Marxism is not a set of rigid dogmas, but a guide to action that must evolve as society and conditions change

Letters to the Editor
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The (real) greatest threat

Dear Comrade
Thank you for giving front page cover to the article "Israel's Nuclear Threat" by M Santos (*Guardian* 7 June 2025).

It clearly shows that the most dangerous nation in the Middle East is Israel with the backing of the US.

The leaders of both nations – Benjamin Netanyahu and Donald Trump – illustrated this by their unprovoked attacks on Iran's nuclear sites claiming that they were the greatest threat to the region. They hypocritically did not admit that Iran has no nuclear weapons and that Israel does, and that Israel has been responsible for most of the conflicts in the Middle East since it was founded in 1948.

These actions reminded us of George W Bush's, Tony Blair's and John Howard's "weapons of mass destruction" argument as the reason for the Coalition of the Willing's unprovoked attacks on Iraq in 2003 that led to the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians, much human suffering and the devastation of the country.

Those weapons that Iraq supposedly had were called "weapons of mass deception" because they didn't exist, showing that the justification of that unnecessary war was based on a lie.

Following these attacks, Australia's leaders made no criticism and repeated the same dubious reasons for them as Netanyahu and Trump. Australians who care about peace, human rights and the international rule of law are sickened by the hypocrisy of our leaders as they continue to support the belligerent actions of Zionist Israel and the US even while Israeli soldiers are shooting starving Palestinian civilians seeking food at distribution points in Gaza.

In the 1970s, when the extreme right wing, racist and apartheid Afrikaaner regime was committing brutality against black Africans in Africa, western leaders – including Bob Hawke – took effective action which contributed to South Africa becoming a democratic nation.

Albanese, Wong, and Marles seem to lack the courage to speak out about the ethnic cleansing and warmongering that is currently occurring in Palestine and are intent on continuing to keep AUKUS as the cornerstone of our defence. This means that Australia will be more embedded into belligerent US policies and the huge amounts being spent on the production of US nuclear-powered submarines will mean that the government will not be able to fund effective social justice and environmental policies they have promised. Already the Albanese Government has paid $4.8 billion to the US submarine manufacturing industry. This money is needed for programs to meet human needs.

We need a government that speaks out about crimes against humanity and that moves to making Australia a free, independent and non-aligned nation.

Yours sincerely

Andy Alcock

Book Review

One day, everyone will have always been against this

By Omar El Akkad

Reviewer: Alex Hall

Politics used to make one indignant. Angry, even. Emotional reactions to clear injustices prompt multiple practical push backs. Most of these are straightforward: grasp the subject in detail, understand the background and context, work out how things must change.

Politics today prompt moments away from the world. Day to day life is heavy. The world and people we thought we knew are simply not what we spent all our lives believing. Some call it cognitive dissonance. For many more it means just finding yourself weeping while going about what you thought was a 'normal' life. For yet others, it means you've actually seen the world as it is.

This is a book about Gaza. Not the slaughter, although that is addressed, but how it has fundamentally fractured something in the West.

The situation is so disorientating its a struggle to find the right words. But Omar El Akkad is able to start to provide some grounding, and starts with the colonial experience of the colonised.

El Akkad was born in Cairo, moved to Qatar with his father's work, as a teenager found himself in Canada and is now lives in the US. He details the humiliations his father had to face in both Egypt and in the West, his own experiences as an Arab, a Muslim and a Canadian, and the expectations that he encounters: he looks one part, but sounds another. He's expected to be grateful, to understand that the civilised world only does what is necessary, that history's starting points can be shifted so that one side always instigates.

Once enough time has passed the resistance will be venerated. Once the land is stolen and the natives dead everyone will agree it was wrong. An indigenous affirmation at a book event will acknowledge the displaced owners of the land and thank the hedge fund for sponsoring the event. Imperial capitalism defines groups of people by their non-existence, whether they be migrant workers in Doha, the Algonquin in Ottowa or Palestinians in Palestine.

This provides something of a cognitive basis for the experience of bearing witness to the ceaseless atrocities and injustices that have flooded our screens. It is the experience of the colonised, and to see our political leaders respond without a shred of humanity, with a moral vacuity and only able to take the prompts of power, is precisely a colonised experience.

That is why in the US people with a moral compass were urged to vote for the lesser evil of the Democrats because the Republicans would be so much worse. Much the same choice was presented to the UK electorate. (*Editor's note: and the Australian electorate*) But the problem is that once the greater evil has been prevented from taking power there is no incentive to change anything. Many simply will not vote when presented with these choices. They are then berated with allowing the evil right wing to win. But as El Akkad points out: "How empty does your message have to be for a deranged right wing to even have a chance of winning?"

But we cannot abandon hope. Change requires one to participate in change. There have been multiple moments of courage, of solidarity, of bravery. Western elites did not change overnight but now we do see them as they really are. El Ekkad's work is a vital reflection of the West to itself. The West is in the process of rupture, of decay from within, as its systems strip back everything from everyone but the richest.

El Akkad's work is not a catharsis, and the injustices are ongoing. But it has a startling coherence, and is written with the force of poetry.

Morning Star

Now streaming: NAIDOC week ongoing

NAIDOC week, goes from the first Sunday in July to the following Sunday. It stands for National Aboriginal and Islanders Day Observance Committee, and celebrates the culture, history and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia.

A look at the calendar will tell you NAIDOC week 2025 has been and gone. A look at SBS' streaming platform SBS On Demand will show it's very much still with us. SBS have piled on the NAIDOC content this year. As well as interviews, dramas and documentaries, they have the following Australian movies, all well worth a look:

Sweet As (2022) coming-of-age drama, based on a true story about an Aboriginal woman who finds her way ahead as a photographer

Bran Nue Dae: The first Aboriginal Australian musical, which came from the stage to the screen in 2009 to be one of Australia's most successful films.

Samson and Delilah: internationally successful 2009 drama, starring two first-time Indigenous actors.

The Tracker: 2002 historical drama starring the phenomenal David Gulpilil (there's a lot of Gulpilil content on SBS; you could do a lot worse than watching the two documentaries on him, *My Name is Gulpilil* and *One Red Blood*).

Sweet As

Warwick Thornton Great director of our time

A Carruthers

That Warwick Thornton, Kaytetye man from Alice Springs, has only directed two films, and that those two films are both masterpieces is astonishing.

When I first saw *Samson and Delilah* (2009), immediately I was hooked. There is a gritty realism to *Samson and Delilah* and an epic ability to paint broad brushstrokes and bring the cinematic world upwards to the highest level of allegory, in this case biblical.

Underneath it is a scathing exposé of the exploitation of capitalist white Australia and the degradation of the lives of the two characters, Samson and Delilah, who struggle to make a life together. Yet it's a story of survival and extreme tenderness – Delilah's relationship with her grandmother, with art, and with Samson, is extraordinarily portrayed.

The cinematic effects are arresting, impossible to forget – Thornton can bring us so close to the earth and to the humanity of the characters as to almost smother us, and yet also step back and take us to middle distance or even farther out (the camerawork is so fluid, so purposive yet so spontaneous) – there is a heaviness on the one hand and a lightness of touch on the other that is rare for filmmakers in our time, or any time really. Surely he is a genius.

Thornton followed this up with the 2017 film *Sweet Country* – he may have gotten even better with this one. Again there's a lightness to it. It can be funny, but who has created images like this?

Sergeant Fletcher is held up, almost dangled before us on the screen, as this colonial absurdity – the frames of him struggling to survive in the desert clearly have a Sidney Nolan quality. But none of this detracts from the sheer bitterness and horror of it either. The dialectic of lightness and darkness carries the extremity of effects.

I think this is something that needs to be better understood in liberal accounts of Aboriginal art. I saw Vincent Namatjira's exhibition at the National Gallery not too long ago and I felt that the way liberal media reflected on it, both right-wing and left-liberal, completely misunderstood it.

Do they not realise how *funny* it is to see a caricatured Prince Charles stuck in the red desert? Looking at some of the reviews and the reception, it would seem that white-liberal viewers really don't yet know how to process the levels of humour, irony and complexity in Aboriginal art, and in some cases, treat it too seriously and forget that lightness of touch and thematic darkness are both part of the experience.

That exhibition was not just about the infamous Gina Rinehart portrait – it was probably one of the greatest exhibitions in Australian art history. The best way to view it was from the standpoint of sovereignty and the horizon of Aboriginal national liberation.

Aboriginal film, art and literature is undergoing a world-historical renaissance. Aboriginal achievement is unstoppable. We have seen this in the epic novels of Alexis Wright. We have seen it in the poetry of Ellen Van Neerven and Lionel Fogarty. The dialectic of deep tradition, deep civilisational expression and the reality and brutality of capitalist modernity is producing clashing polarities and penetrating the deepest wellsprings of human expression.

I for one cannot wait to see what Warwick Thornton does next. If he isn't captured by Hollywood, it is sure to be great (again!).

Sweet Country

Samson and Delilah

Trump's threat against BRICS

China has condemned US President Donald Trump's threat to impose an additional 10% tariff on BRICS countries, calling it an arbitrary and counterproductive measure that undermines international cooperation and global economic development.

"BRICS cooperation is open and inclusive, and does not target any country. China opposes using tariffs as a tool for coercion and pressure," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said during her regular press briefing in Beijing.

The statement came on the second and final day of the BRICS summit in Rio de Janeiro. The economic bloc, initially formed by Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, is holding its latest gathering amid growing geopolitical tensions.

When asked about China's potential response to any new US tariffs, Mao Ning reiterated China's opposition to trade wars and the use of tariffs as coercion. She warned that unilateral tariffs "do not serve the interests of any party." "There are no winners in a trade war," the Chinese diplomat emphasised.

Trump posted on his social media platform that any nation aligning itself "with the anti-American policies of the BRICS" would face the additional tariff. "There will be no exceptions," he warned.

That same day, BRICS leaders released the summit's final declaration early. In it, the bloc rejected trade protectionism and condemned recent bombings in Iran, while avoiding direct confrontation with Trump.

"We express serious concerns over the increasing use of unilateral tariff and non-tariff measures that violate World Trade Organization rules and distort trade," the document stated. However, it did not directly name Trump or the United States when addressing the more sensitive issues.

Zhou Mi, an economist at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said Washington's tariff threat reflects its fear of BRICS' rise as an emerging economic force.

"Cooperation among developing countries does not seek to exclude anyone, but rather to ensure inclusive, sustainable, and sovereign development. The United States sees this as a threat to its hegemony, not as an opportunity for collaboration. The attempt to use tariffs as a political and economic pressure tool is not only counterproductive – it runs counter to the global trend toward integration and multipolarity," Zhou told the *Global Times*.

Telesur

Trump angers Hibakusha

Japanese A-bomb survivors (the Hibakusha) have voiced their outrage over US President Trump's remarks equating the US strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities with the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

President Trump, in his meeting with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte on the previous day, compared the strikes on Iran this time to the A-bomb strikes on two Japanese cities 80 years ago and said, "This was essentially the same thing. That ended that war. This ended this war."

Tanaka Terumi, a representative director of the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo), said, "I think he knows nothing about the damage and aftereffects of the A-bombings. Tens of thousands of people were killed in an instant, and survivors are still suffering from radiation-related diseases and long-term genetic effects. The Japanese government should protest against President Trump's remarks."

Tanaka continued to say, "Whenever this kind of issue arises, Hibakusha are always asked for comments. However, it is not just an issue for Hibakusha. It is an issue for everyone around the world. We must speak out and take action for peace so that no one will be victimised by nuclear war. People must urge their own governments to engage in 'dialogue, not war' to address the issue.

Yasui Masakazu, secretary general of the Japan Council against A and H Bombs (Japan Gensuikyo), also voiced his outrage over Trump's remarks.

He criticised Israel and the US for unilaterally launching armed attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities, though Iran is an NPT signatory as a "non-nuclear-weapon state" whose nuclear sites have been regularly inspected by the IAEA.

He demanded a retraction of President Trump's anachronistic remarks, saying that the victims of the A-bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were unarmed civilians and that the dropping of the A-bombs was unjustifiable mass murder even under the international law of the time.

Japan Press Weekly

Trump increases ICE budget by US$45 billion

Graham Holton

Abolish ICE march. Minneapolis, Minnesota. Photo: Fibonacci Blue – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

President Trump's signing of the "Big Beautiful Bill" has tripled funding for locking up immigrants to US$45 billion(~AU$70 billion). This is larger than the amount spent on hounding migrants by presidents Obama, Biden, and the first Trump administration, combined. The funding will go to private prison contractors to double the United States migrant lock-up capacity. Lauren-Brooke Eisen, senior director at the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University's School of Law, says: "We are seeing a wholesale expansion of ICE detention centres."

ICE (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement) detained 56,000 people in June, the highest number since the first Trump administration. The US immigrant detention system is already the largest in the world. Tricia McLaughlin, spokeswoman for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), said the funding will pay for additional detention beds and ICE agents. As ICE has been given increased capacity to arrest undocumented immigrants, it requires doubling the detention capacity to 100,000 beds.

The immigrant detention network consists of dozens of private contractor detention centres and dozens of county jails. Up till now these centres mostly held border crossers deemed a flight risk or migrants charged with a crime. As of June, one-third of ICE detainees have never been charged with a criminal offense. According to Austin Kocher, research assistant professor at Syracuse University, 40 per cent of ICE detainees have no criminal charges and only 8.4 per cent have convictions for violent crimes. Trump has announced he is arresting all the "violent criminals."

The House of Representatives Appropriations Committee says ICE's spending had surpassed the agency's budget by US$1 billion. ICE is expanding contracts to at least nine facilities owned by the Geo Group or CoreCivic, the two largest detention contractors. These companies have at least fourteen additional unused prisons, which could be repurposed to hold thousands of detainees across various states. ICE also has contracts with companies housing immigrants in makeshift tents.

Masked ICE agents, dressed in military gear and driving in unmarked cars, do not need to give their names during arrests and it is illegal for the police to assist those being arrested. The lack of identification worn by ICE agents makes them appear like kidnappers. In Los Angeles, Police Chief Jim McDonnell said the police have no authority to interfere with federal operations performed by ICE. In reaction to this, a motion by the Los Angeles City Council would limit the LAPD's "support to agencies performing immigration enforcement."

Masked ICE agents have been filmed: accosting people in public places; smashing car windows, dragging people into unmarked vehicles; and dragging detainees from court houses and churches. ICE has provoked mass protests by using flash bangs in restaurant raids and violently arresting law-abiding members of the public. In response the Trump administration sent in hundreds of marines to California and Florida to assist ICE agents.

ICE appears to act without any legal consequences. On 12 June Senator Alex Padilla (D-Calif.) was forcibly thrown to the floor, handcuffed and removed during a Homeland Security Secretary press conference held by secretary of homeland security Kristi Noem, while clearly identifying himself and shouting, "I have questions for the secretary!" On 18 June New York City Comptroller and Democratic mayoral candidate, Brad Lerner, was arrested outside a federal immigration court. His demands to see a judicial warrant were ignored.

White House spokesperson, Abigail Jackson, ignoring the protests, has described the expansion of ICE as "the largest mass deportation operation in history and a secure ... border."

Escalating the genocide

Israel has bombarded areas across Gaza killing, 630 Palestinians and wounding more than 2,300 between 25 June and 2 July in airstrikes, tank shelling and by snipers – in attacks on residential buildings, tent shelters, cafes, and, at US-run so-called aid distribution sites.

The Palestinian health ministry in Gaza said on 3 July that 118 Palestinians were killed and 581 injured in 24 hours, including 12 people killed and 49 injured at the aid points.

Since late May, when operations at these US-Israeli sites began, 652 starving Palestinians have been killed and more than 4,500 injured trying to obtain food aid.

Twenty four people were killed on 2 July trying to obtain a box of food.

The United Nations humanitarian office stated on 30 June that the Israeli military had issued yet another displacement order for people in areas of Jabaliya and Gaza city, in northern Gaza, affecting at least 150,000 Palestinians. The orders followed other displacement directives in central Gaza just days before.

People are being "pushed into overcrowded areas where thousands of others are already staying," the UN added. These spaces lack shelter, water and sewage systems, as well as adequate medical facilities.

And they are being bombed.

On 1 July, at least 17 Palestinians were killed when Israel bombed a building housing forcibly displaced families in al-Zaytoun, a neighbourhood of Gaza City.

Mahmoud Basal, the spokesperson for Gaza's Civil Defence, said that Israeli forces bombed 25 homes in Gaza City on Tuesday alone.

Basal added that the Israeli raids resulted in the deaths of 70 people that day, including 11 people waiting for aid, 12 children and 14 women, in addition to more than 200 wounded – some of whom are in critical condition.

Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor said that five people, including two children, were killed when Israeli airstrikes attacked the tents of displaced people in al-Mawasi, west of Khan Younis in southern Gaza, also on 1 July. Al-Mawasi is where Israel has ordered Palestinians to evacuate to.

On Monday, 30 June, Israel bombed the crowded Baqa cafe on the seaside in Gaza City, killing more than 30 Palestinians, including children, and those gathering for a child's birthday party. The cafe was a gathering spot for families who sought a moment of rest from the bombings, and for journalists who needed internet access and a place to charge their phones.

A survivor of the attack, Ali Abu Ateila, who was inside the cafe when it was bombed, was quoted in the Associated Press, saying, "Without a warning, all of a sudden, a warplane hit the place, shaking it like an earthquake."

Ismail Abu Hatab, a photojournalist who worked with various media outlets and who organised photo exhibitions outside Palestine, was killed in the bombing.

KILLING FIELDS

Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor stated this week that "through the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, Israel has introduced a new killing mechanism cloaked in a humanitarian facade, further escalating the genocide in the Gaza Strip."

"The Israeli army's targeting of starving people near distribution centres has become a systematic daily practice, carried out openly before the world, with international silence perpetuating impunity and allowing this dangerous pattern to continue unpunished," the rights group added.

"This occurs as the international community – states and institutions – remains unable to take serious action to hold Israel accountable for its crimes, compel it to permit independent relief organisations to resume their work in the Gaza Strip, and lead humanitarian efforts that ensure the population's vital needs are met while safeguarding their lives and dignity."

Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF, also known as Doctors Without Borders) said that the US-Israeli scheme "is slaughter masquerading as humanitarian aid and must be immediately dismantled."

An emergency coordinator for Doctors Without Borders in Gaza said that "The four distribution sites, all located in areas under the full control of Israeli forces after people had been forcibly displaced from there, are the size of football fields surrounded by watch points, mounds of earth and barbed wire. The fenced entrance gives only one access point in or out. GHF workers drop the pallets and the boxes of food and open the fences, allowing thousands in all at once to fight down to the last grain of rice.

"If people arrive early and approach the checkpoints, they get shot. If they arrive on time, but there is an overflow and they jump over the mounds and the wires, they get shot. If they arrive late, [or] they shouldn't be there because it is an 'evacuated zone,' they get shot."

On 1 July, more than 160 non-governmental organisations operating in Gaza issued an urgent call for immediate action to end the slaughter at the military-controlled food distributions.

"Concentrating more than two million people into further confined areas for a chance to feed their families is not a plan to save lives," the joint statement said.

The groups demanded that third-party states not fund these militarised schemes, but instead support the restoration of "a unified, UN-led coordination mechanism – grounded in international humanitarian law and inclusive of UNRWA, Palestinian civil society, and the wider humanitarian community – to meet people's needs."

The Electronic Intifada

Brazil: Solidarity for Cuba from 'landless workers'

Illustration: Rini Templeton

The Brazilian Landless Rural Workers' Movement has launched a new solidarity campaign to help the Cuban people, who are currently experiencing a deep economic crisis impacting all sectors.

It's not just about helping a sister country; it's about defending a symbol of resistance, say voices from the heart of the Brazilian farmers' struggle. Others assert that the island is always present wherever it is most needed; now it's time to give back.

Promoted by the Landless Workers' Movement and organised in 24 states across the five regions of the South American nation, the campaign has the urgent and clear goal of raising funds to purchase vital medicines for Cuban hospitals.

These health centres are facing difficulties due to the intensification of the US economic blockade, especially after President Donald Trump recently signed a memorandum that will tighten restrictions imposed on Cuba.

"The lack of energy, gas, medicines, and hospital supplies is hitting the Cuban healthcare system hard, and this directly affects the most vulnerable population," explained the organisers, who have already formally consulted the Cuban Ministry of Public Health to obtain a list of priority medications.

The logistics will be complex but transparent: the funds raised will be used to directly purchase medicines from laboratories and then airlift them to Havana. Every peso donated will be a dose of relief.

"We know it's just a drop in the ocean, but we cannot remain silent in the face of injustice," said the Landless People's Movement, which hopes to enlist the help of other grassroots organisations.

What is the Landless Workers Movement?

Brazil's Landless Workers Movement, *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST) in Portuguese, is a mass social movement, formed by rural workers and by all those who want to fight for land reform and against injustice and social inequality in rural areas.

The MST was born through a process of occupying large landed estates and became a national movement in 1984. Over more than two decades, the movement has led more than 2,500 land occupations, with about 370,000 families – families that today settled on 7.5 million hectares of land that they won as a result of the occupations. Through their organising, these families continue to push for schools, credit for agricultural production and cooperatives, and access to health care.

Currently, there are approximately 900 encampment holding 150,000 landless families in Brazil. Those camped, as well as those already settled, remain mobilised, ready to exercise their full citizenship, by fighting for the realisation of their political, social economic, environmental and cultural rights.

Mstbrazil.org

BRICS Summit: calls for peace and Cooperation

The BRICS Summit 2025 officially opened on 6 July in Rio de Janeiro, marking a pivotal moment for the Global South's collective voice and cooperation. With heads of state, foreign ministers, and high-level delegates present, the summit underscores the bloc's growing influence in shaping a more inclusive and sustainable global order. Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva set the tone with a powerful inaugural speech urging urgent reforms in global governance and a steadfast commitment to peace amid ongoing international conflicts and inequalities.

CALL FOR PEACE

At the heart of the summit opening, President Lula emphasised unity and dialogue as essential tools for achieving global peace. He called on member countries to support ongoing diplomatic efforts to end the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which he criticised as exacerbated by NATO's involvement. "The world needs peace, not more wars that only serve imperialist interests," Lula declared, condemning the Israeli occupation's actions in Gaza and highlighting the complicity of the United States and other imperial powers in this humanitarian crisis.

Lula also expressed deep concern over NATO's recent decision to increase military spending at a time when resources should prioritise fighting poverty and growing inequalities worldwide. "The current international structure is archaic and exclusionary, incapable of resolving the severe crises facing humanity," he argued. He praised the BRICS' efforts to strengthen the United Nations and reform its Security Council, pointing out that the current body no longer reflects the balance of power in today's world.

NEW MEMBERS, GROWING INFLUENCE

The BRICS Summit 2025 is particularly significant as it consolidates the bloc's expansion, now comprising ten full members and several associate countries. Founded in 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India, and China, with South Africa joining in 2011, the group has grown substantially. In August 2023, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates were admitted as full members during the Johannesburg summit. The following year, Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, and Uzbekistan joined as associate members.

This expansion reflects the bloc's ambition to represent a broader spectrum of the Global South, enhancing its geopolitical and economic weight on the world stage.

Telesur (edited for space)

Global Briefs

UK: The activist group Palestine Action has been prescribed a terrorist organisation under the Terrorism Act 2000. The House of Commons passed the motion by 385 votes to 26. The proscription comes after members of Palestine Action broke into a military base to spray red paint on two planes in protest of the UK-backed genocide being carried out by Israel in Gaza and beyond. Other groups prescribed as terrorist organisations under this legislation include ISIL (ISIS) and Al-Qaeda. Members and supporters of Palestine Action could face 14 years imprisonment.

USA: The first group of immigrants have been detained at "Alligator Alcatraz," the concentration camp established in the Florida Everglades by the Republican state government of Ron DeSantis. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem has said that Alligator Alcatraz will be partially financed by funds meant for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which has also had funding cut by the Trump administration just before hurricane season. Trump called the alligators "bodyguards" and "cops" who don't need to be paid, while Florida Republicans have sold official Alligator Alcatraz merchandise.

India: Protests have erupted in West Bengal following two incidents with alleged ties to the ruling Trinamool Congress. 10-year-old Tamanna Khatun, daughter of Communist Party of India (Marxist) supporters, was killed in a bombing on the day of the Kaliganj by-election results. A 24-year-old law student at South Calcutta Law College was the victim of a gang-rape on campus, with the main accused being Monojit Mishra, a contractual employee of the college with alleged ties to the student wing of the Trinamool Congress. The ruling party has been subject to public backlash for fostering a "culture of impunity" and allowing individuals with criminal backgrounds to hold influential positions. The Kolkata Police have also come under scrutiny. Protests have been led by student, youth, and women's organisations, including wings of the CPI(M) and Left Front, as well as teachers' unions and the All-India Lawyers' Union.

Luxembourg: Minister for Defence Yuriko Backes, Chief of Staff Steve Thull, and Belgian Minister for Defence Theo Francken visited Kosovo as part of their ongoing support for NATO military operations. Luxembourg's military returned to Kosovo earlier this year as the leaders of a Benelux detachment of NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR). Comprised of 7 soldiers from Luxembourg, five from Belgium, and one from the Netherlands, the detachment uses drones to obtain intel from the northern border with Serbia. The KFOR's stated goal is stability and democracy for all ethnicities, however Serbs, Roma, and other groups continue to face oppression.

Peru: Peruvian lawmakers have introduced four bills aiming to annul President Dina Boluarte's decree more than doubling her own salary. Lawmakers have criticised the move given Peru's economic difficulties and the record unpopularity of Boluarte's government. The Congressional Oversight Commission has unanimously approved a decision to summon Boluarte to a special session of congress to explain the decree.

Venezuela: Celebrations have commemorated the 214th anniversary of Venezuelan independence. The National Assembly of Venezuela also observed a minute of silence in honour of the mothers of Venezuelan children kidnapped in the United States. President Nicolás Maduro has previously pledged to rescue the more than 200 Venezuelan migrants detained by the US in El Salvador and reunite families.

HAITI: A UN report has warned that the capital of Haiti, Port-au-Prince, is almost entirely under the control of armed gangs. Violence has soared to critical levels with over 1.3 million internally displaced people and a 24 per cent increase in homicides over last year.

Lumumba's centenary reminds us why he was murdered

Keith Barlow

Patrice Emery Lumumba, Brussels 1960. Photo: Anefo, Dutch National Archives – wikimedia.org (CC0 1.0)

2 July marks the centenary of the birth of the Congolese independence leader, Patrice Emery Lumumba, the first democratically elected prime minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and icon of the anti-colonial struggle in Africa.

Alongside independence leaders like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and the anti-apartheid leader Nelson Mandela, Lumumba symbolises the struggle against colonial domination, oppression and racism at the height of the cold war.

The DRC became a Belgian colony when King Leopold II seized land across central Africa in 1885, making it his personal property. This became known as the Congo Free State. Leopold's alleged goal of developing the country was, in practice, to plunder its resources. Its people suffered the most atrocious forms of deprivation and brutality. Malnutrition, disease, and torture – including the amputation of hands and feet – became the order of the day. Resistance to the king's rule was not tolerated.

In 1908, international pressure forced Leopold to turn the country over to the Belgian government, and the territory was renamed the Belgian Congo. This in no way changed the plight of its population. Resistance to foreign domination continued.

Through the 1950s, demands for independence from colonial rule swept much of the world, including Africa and the Belgian Congo. Out of this came, in 1958, the founding of the Congolese National Movement, led by Lumumba until his execution in 1961.

On 4 January 1959, thousands demonstrated for independence in Kinshasa (then named Leopoldville), a mobilisation followed by a two-day rampage by Belgian security forces. Three hundred demonstrators were killed.

Yet resistance to Belgian rule quickly grew to the point where Belgium realised a new response was required. On 22 May 1960, national elections took place for the first time. Belgian hopes for a compliant government were not fulfilled.

The alliance around Lumumba won 71 of the 137 seats in parliament. However, in the Senate, 23 seats out of the 84 were reserved for local leaders, generally supporters of the colonial authorities and Lumumba remained two seats short of a majority. Consequently, Lumumba was forced to form a coalition with his Belgian-backed rival, Joseph Kasa-Vubu. Kasa-Vubu became president, and Lumumba prime minister.

Independence was set for 30 June 1960. That day, the Belgian Congo became the Democratic Republic of Congo. The then Belgian king, Baudouin, in his speech at the Ceremony of the Proclamation of the Congo's Independence in Kinshasa, sought to glorify what his great-grandfather did for the Congo.

He mentioned various economic projects and totally disregarded the years of suffering by the native Congolese. He praised his great-grandfather "as a bringer of civilisation." For Lumumba, those 80 years could not be ignored.

The new prime minister said: "Although this independence of the Congo is being proclaimed today by agreement with Belgium, an amicable country, with which we are on equal terms, no Congolese will ever forget that independence was won in struggle, a persevering and inspired struggle carried on from day to day, a struggle in which we were undaunted by privation or suffering and stinted neither strength nor blood ... It was filled with tears, fire and blood. That was our lot for the 80 years of colonial rule.

No Congolese will ever forget that independence was won in struggle

"We have experienced forced labour in exchange for pay that did not allow us to satisfy our hunger, to clothe ourselves, to have decent lodgings or to bring up our children as dearly loved ones. Morning, noon and night we were subjected to jeers, insults and blows because we were 'negroes.' Who will ever forget that the black was addressed as 'tu,' not because he was a friend, but because the polite 'vous' was reserved for the white man?

"We have seen our lands seized in the name of ostensibly just laws, which gave recognition to the right of might. We have not forgotten that the law was never the same for the white and the black, that it was lenient to the ones, and cruel and inhuman to the others. We have experienced the atrocious sufferings ... exiled from our native land: our lot was worse than death itself ...

"Who will ever forget the shootings which killed so many of our brothers, or the cells into which were thrown those who no longer wished to submit to the regime of injustice, oppression and exploitation used by the colonialists as a tool of their domination?"

Lumumba's speech went round the world. He spoke for the millions engaged in the struggle against colonial rule and oppression. His key message was that independence must also mean former colonial powers coming to terms with how the peoples in their colonial territories were ruled – not just colonial authorities being replaced by pliable governments defending the colonisers' interests.

Within months, Lumumba was murdered. His fate must be seen in the context of the cold war.

The new president Kasa-Vubu plotted with Belgium and the CIA to dismiss him. Almost immediately, the DRC was faced with mutiny in the army. Just 12 days after independence, on 11 July 1960, the president of the mineral-rich Congolese province of Katanga, Moise Tshombe, an opponent of Lumumba, announced that Katanga was going to break away.

Although his move was backed by foreign mining concerns, his regime did not secure international recognition, not even from Belgium. However, Belgian troops, ostensibly sent to protect Belgian nationals, were used to prop up Tshombe, ensure continued access to the mineral resources and to set up a puppet regime as part of the plot to depose Lumumba.

On 5 September 1960, Kasa-Vubu dismissed Lumumba and a number of his closest ministers. Lumumba sought to resist dismissal by arguing that the procedures for doing this did not comply with the country's new constitution and sought to dismiss the president. The DRC now had two parallel governments.

On 14 September, the Congolese colonel Mobutu launched a military intervention to back Kasa-Vubu. Lumumba was placed under house arrest. He escaped in an attempt to get to another part of the country but fell directly into the hands of Mobutu.

On 17 January 1961, Lumumba and two companions, Joseph Okito and Maurice Mpolo, were flown to Katanga. During the flight, they were beaten by soldiers and, upon arrival, subject to further beatings by Belgian and Congolese officers. They were then executed by a Katangan firing squad under Belgian supervision and their bodies thrown into shallow graves.

Later, a Katangan government official ordered that the bodies "disappear." A Belgian police officer led a group to search the graves, hacked the bodies to pieces and dissolved what they could in sulphuric acid. Anything that remained was to be burned.

All that survived from Lumumba was a tooth, which was taken as a souvenir by a Belgian police officer and later returned to Lumumba's family on a court order. It was placed in a coffin and transferred into a specially built mausoleum in his memory in Kinshasa.

Only in 2002, after an 18-month parliamentary inquiry, did Belgium formally apologise for its role in the killing of Lumumba. The apology was given by then Belgian foreign minister, Louis Michel, in a parliamentary debate on this inquiry.

Today, the name of Lumumba is honoured around the world and not only in Africa. In Leipzig, where I live, there is still a street named after him, Lumumbastrasse. A memorial in his memory dates back to GDR (German Democratic Republic) times.

Perhaps the most fitting memory of Lumumba is to be found in Moscow through the naming of a university after him (which I briefly visited when I was in Moscow in 1982). This university had already been opened in 1960 for the purpose of providing students from developing countries with a university education. It was named in his memory just five days after he was killed.

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Kent State at 55

Peter Farmer

In 1970 in the USA, the Ohio national guard opened fire on students at Kent State University, killing four students who had been protesting the US war in Vietnam. Fifty-five years later, Mike Alewitz, a Kent State student at the time has spoken out about what it was like to witness the massacre first hand, and about the whitewashing of that important moment in US history.

At the time, Alewitz was chairman of the Student Mobilization Committee against the war in Vietnam.

Alewitz recalls the after effects of the shootings: "4 million students were on strike. Over 900 campuses had protests and demonstrations, including high schools, many high schools, and 400 universities were occupied. It began to be a major national student strike. Some of us socialists who were involved were basically trying to follow the example of the students in France in May/June of 1968 who marched to the factory gates and called out the workers, 10 million workers joined, and it became a revolutionary situation in France. They used the base of the university to organise from, they called it the red university, the concept of the university."

As for the shootings themselves, Alewitz says that the actual number of killed and injured was higher. He says that Black students understood that they were going to get different treatment than the other students at Kent State, saying that "some didn't go to seek medical help because they felt they would've been charged and thrown in jail, which is quite probable."

Alewitz also describes the effect of the event on the US attitude to war, pointing out that "the use of the National Guard had a profound effect on a lot of people because, basically, what they were seeing was the US military now turned its guns on its own people." He argues that the history of resistance to the war from within the US armed forces has been suppressed, citing a figure of 600,000 desertions over the course of the war.

The US no longer practices conscription, but Alewitz points out that now "really it's an economic draft. A lot of these kids are Black and Latino kids who have no other options."

Looking at protest now, Alewitz reflects that "in my opinion, we're fighting for the very existence of the species because capitalism is dying. The US empire is dying, and it's not pretty. It's a very ugly thing ... capitalism cannot solve these problems."

The full interview with Alewitz can be found at therealnews.com

Top charities call for disbanding of Gaza aid body

Dozens of international charities and non-governmental organisations, including Oxfam, Save the Children, and Amnesty International, have called for the notorious Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) to disband.

The US and Israel-backed agency runs sites under Israeli military guard. Hundreds of Palestinians have been shot dead while trying to reach them.

At least 12 Palestinians were killed while seeking aid in southern and central Gaza on 1 July. At time of writing, the death toll for the day was 95.

The deaths followed Israeli forces killing at least 74 people in Gaza earlier.

Among them were 30 Palestinians slaughtered in an air strike on a seaside café and 23 gunned down as they tried to obtain food aid, witnesses and health officials said.

A statement from more than 165 major aid organisations said: "Palestinians in Gaza face an impossible choice: starve or risk being shot while trying desperately to reach food to feed their families."

The call by the charities and NGOs was the latest sign of trouble for the GHF, a secretive initiative headed by evangelical Christian leader Johnnie Moore, who is a close ally of Trump.

GHF started distributing aid on 26 May, following a nearly three-month Israeli blockade that has pushed Gaza's population of more than two million people to the brink of famine.

In a statement the GHF claimed to have delivered more than 52 million meals over five weeks.

"Instead of bickering and throwing insults from the sidelines, we would welcome other humanitarian groups to join us and feed the people in Gaza," the statement said.

"We are ready to collaborate and help them get their aid to people in need."

Israel's blockade prevents almost all other aid from entering Gaza.

Last month, the GHF asserted that there has been no violence in or around its distribution centres – despite clear evidence to the contrary – and that its personnel had not opened fire.

According to Gaza's Health Ministry, more than 500 Palestinians have been killed around the chaotic aid distribution sites over the past month. Israeli soldiers told the country's *Haaretz* newspaper last week they had been ordered to fire on unarmed crowds, while today the newspaper said senior officers admitted Palestinians were being killed by "inaccurate and uncalculated artillery fire."

Israel, without evidence, accuses Hamas of siphoning off aid.

Israel's Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment

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Half the Sky

Speaking out

Last month the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) released a report outlining urgent reforms with the aim of addressing workplace sexual harassment. The *Speaking from Experience* report reveals the systemic barriers faced by people who experience workplace sexual harassment. One of its most important recommendations centres around workplace transparency and protection of workers' rights. This includes amending the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* and relevant industrial laws to restrict the use of confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements in workplace sexual harassment cases.

Confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements, not only gag the victim survivor, but facilitate cover-ups by employers. Other women, also subjected to sexual harassment by the same perpetrator, are unaware of the outcome, and that they are not alone. It serves to protect the perpetrator, most commonly a male co-worker or manager. Disclosure of the details – the perpetrator and the settlement – make it more likely other women will gain the courage to report their experiences. Women can find it hard to come forward, fearing they will be sacked or not believed.

As an interim measure it is also recommended that the Australian Human Rights Commission be resourced to update the Respect@Work Guidelines on non-disclosure and confidentiality agreements. The report also calls for an increase in funding for specialist support services and the introduction of civil penalties for employers who breach their Positive Duty under the Act.

"These solutions to prevent workplace sexual harassment come from listening to those who have lived it," says Sex Discrimination Commissioner Dr Anna Cody. "We heard the experiences of more than 300 Australians from diverse backgrounds, who told us what needs to change in addressing workplace sexual harassment." The 2022 National Prevalence Survey, a period that occurred post #MeToo, found that one in three women were still reporting they had experienced sexual harassment in the previous five years. "Workers shouldn't have to choose between their safety and their livelihood," Cody said on the Women's Agenda Podcast.

"Workplace sexual harassment can affect every part of life, and people who experience it often have the least amount of power: those in insecure work, who are younger, on temporary visas, facing racism, ableism, homophobia, language barriers and other forms of discrimination."

"The report calls for real action, accountability, and cultural shifts for everyone to be safe and respected at work. … what we heard over and over again was that people who had reported workplace sexual harassment and gone through a formal complaint process then felt silenced by having to sign a confidentiality agreement.

"They felt that they were the ones who then felt they were responsible in some way, and that there was a shame attached to them not being able to talk about it and not being able to necessarily discuss what happened with friends, family or counsellors."

"If a workplace is serious about dealing with workplace sexual harassment – and they have to be under the positive duty and a range of other laws – then they should be talking about what steps they're taking to eliminate workplace sexual harassment," she said.

Those who've experienced workplace sexual harassment have different ideas of what they want to see happen after making a complaint that don't necessarily include the harasser being dismissed, Dr Cody explains. "They want to know that they've been listened to, they've been treated with kindness and compassion, and that there is a consequence for the person who has been harassing them and that no one else has to go through it."

The AHRC recommends that confidentiality agreements be included only if the person who has been sexually harassed actually wants it.

Zohran Mamdani: could a socialist win New York?

Zoltan Zigedy

It's no surprise that many US leftists are excited by the victory of Zohran Mamdani in the New York City primary election. They should be buoyed by a rare victory in a bleak political landscape.

Mamdani defeated an establishment candidate showered with money and endorsed by Democratic Party royalty. His chief opponent, Andrew Cuomo, enjoyed the support and the forecasts of all the major media, locally and nationally.

Cuomo fell back on every cheap, spineless trick: redbaiting (Mamdani is a member of Democratic Socialists of America), ethnic and religious baiting (Mamdani is a foreign-born Muslim,) and "unfriendliness" to business (Mamdani advocates taxing the rich, freezing rents, and fare-less transit). And still Mamdani won.

Admittedly, Cuomo is ethically challenged and tarnished by his prior resignation from New York's governorship. One supposes that Democratic bigwigs could easily have seen an advantage in masculine sliminess after witnessing the king of vulgarity – Donald Trump — enjoy great electoral success.

For the left, the important fact was that Cuomo represented the strategy and tactics, the programme (such as it is), and the machinery of the Democratic Party leadership. The left needed a victory against the Clintons, Obamas, and Carvilles to demonstrate that another way was possible.

The left also needed to see that a programme embracing a class-war skirmish against developers, financial titans, and a motley assortment of other capitalists can win in the largest city in the US.

Nearly every major policy domestically and internationally that the Democratic Party considers toxic was embraced by Mamdani's campaign. And still Mamdani won.

And why shouldn't he?

Democratic Party consultants methodically ignore the views of voters – views expressing economic hardship, a broken healthcare system, mounting debt, a housing crisis, etc — delivered by opinion polls. Mamdani listened. And he won.

Clearly, the seats of wealth and power were shaken, reacting violently and crudely to Mamdani's victory. A major Cuomo backer, hedge fund exec Dan Loeb, captured the moment: "It's officially hot commie summer." We wish!

Wall Street quickly panicked, according to the Wall Street Journal: "Corporate leaders held a flurry of private phone calls to plot how to fight back against Mamdani and discussed backing an outside group with the goal of raising around $20 million to oppose him, according to people familiar with the matter."

The *WSJ* quotes Anthony Pompliano, a skittish CEO of a bitcoin-focused financial company: "I can't believe I even need to say this, but socialism doesn't work ... It has failed in every American city it was tried."

Others, including hedge-fund manager Ricky Sandler, threaten to take their business outside New York City.

The *Washington Post* editorial board scolds readers with this ominous headline warning: "Mamdani's victory is bad for New York and the Democratic Party."

It gets even wackier in the right wing's outer limits. My favourite libertarian site posted a near hysterical call for the application of the infamous 1954 Communist Control Act to remove him from office, even put Mamdani in prison. The never-disappointing notorious thug Erik D Prince calls for the Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem to initiate deportation proceedings.

Yet not so shockingly, many fellow Democrats nearly matched the scorn and contempt heaped on Mamdani by wealth, power, and Trumpers. Senate and House minority leaders — Chuck Schumer and Hakeem Jeffries — refused to endorse the primary winner. New York Representative Laura Gillen declared that Mamdani is the "absolute wrong choice for New York."

Her colleague Tom Suozzi had "serious concerns," as reported by Axios under the banner: "Democratic establishment melts down over Mamdani's win in New York."

Other Democrats ran away from discussing the victory. Of course, the overworked, overwrought, and abused charge of "anti-semitism" was tossed about promiscuously.

Where there is no fear and alarm, there is euphoria. Nearly every writer for *The Nation* enthused over the primary victory, with the capable Jeet Heer gleefully proclaiming that "Mamdani defeated a corrupt, weak Democratic Party Establishment."

Similarly, David Sirota, former adviser and speechwriter for Bernie Sanders, wrote — with understandable gloating — on *The Lever* and in *Rolling Stone*: "Democratic Assemblyman Mamdani's mayoral primary victory in New York City has prompted an elite panic, the likes of which we've rarely seen: billionaires are desperately seeking a general-election candidate to stop him, former Barack Obama aides are publicly melting down, corporate moguls are threatening a capital strike, and CNBC has become a television forum for nervous breakdowns. Meanwhile, Democratic elites who've spent a decade punching left are suddenly trying to align themselves with and take credit for Mamdani's brand (though not necessarily his agenda)."

Zohran Mamdani at a resist fascism rally. Photo: Bingjiefu He – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

This breakthrough — he surmises — could lead to a "Democratic Party reckoning."

But wait a minute.

We can't let euphoria blind us to the track record of other Democratic Party insurgencies. We cannot forget how deeply opposed the Democratic Party's bosses, consultants, and wealthy benefactors are to popular reforms and even modestly visionary candidates.

Party intellectuals fully understand — as hotshot consultant James Carville bluntly reminds us — that in a two-party system all the oppositional party has to do is wait for the other party to stumble and then take its turn. Why would the Democrats bother to construct a voter-friendly programme leaning towards social justice?

A glance at the crude sabotage of two Bernie Sanders presidential campaigns by the Democratic Party godfathers should dispel even the most gullible from any delusion that the party will change course.

Should Mamdani actually win the mayoral race — and we must work hard to see that he does — there is absolutely no reason to believe that the party of Bill Clinton and Barack Obama will draw even the most modest conclusion about the way forward. They are not interested in going forward, only in returning to power.

Of course, they will welcome — as they have in the past — idealistic foot soldiers who want to believe that the Democratic Party is the path to social justice. Generations of well-meaning, change-seeking youth have been ground up by this cynical process of bait-and-switch.

Though the party's leadership will not acknowledge it, the Democrat brand is widely discredited. As Jarod Abbott and Les Leopold conclude: "Polling shows Americans are ready to support independent populists running on economic platforms. But what they don't want is anything associated with the Democratic Party's brand."

Stopping short of calling for a new party, Abbott and Leopold asked poll respondents in key rust-belt states if they would support a worker-oriented association independent of both parties to support independent candidates. Fifty-seven per cent of respondents would support or strongly support such an association.

This squares with recent polls that show strong disapproval of elected Democrats and the Democratic Party. The recent late-May *Financial Times*/YouGov poll shows that 57 per cent of respondents have an unfavourable view of Democrats in Congress. A similar 57 per cent have an unfavourable view of the Democratic Party. Only 11 per cent have a very favourable view of the Democratic Party.

Whether an "association" or a party is necessary, Abbott and Leopold are correct in recognising that it must have a strong working-class base in order to break away from the corporate ownership of the Democratic Party.

As Charles Derber has perceptively noted, the worse outcome of the current crisis is to revert to the earlier times that spawned the Trump phenomenon. That is exactly what the Democrats are offering.

With the Republican Party leadership facing a schism over Iran between war hawks and non-interventionists, who favour war with China instead, and with the growing split between cultural warriors and Silicon Valley libertarians (Musk's threat to launch a third party), the Democrats may well slip back into power by default. Surely, they can do better.

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