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Labor's Freedom From Information

M Santos

The 40-year-old freedom of information (FOI) system is broken. While Labor came to office in 2022 promising greater transparency and accountability, the Albanese government has just rammed legislation through the Lower House that further restricts access to FOI.

In 2022 Albanese said "... the health of our democracy depends on the integrity of our institutions and the transparency and the fairness of our laws, and because the trust that is generated by that accountability and transparency helps to build national cohesion, bringing the country together, overcoming divides, finding common ground ..."

The FOI amendment bill does nothing for the "health of our democracy." Instead it sets out to further increase secrecy, and limit transparency and accountability along with the public's right to access information. Labor's FOI changes are part of a wider agenda to keep the public in the dark about the machinations in the war-making AUKUS alliance.

The FOI bill expands the exemptions of documents relating to cabinet decision-making instead of increasing access.

It bans anonymous requests for information. Anyone making a request will have to provide identification and if it is on behalf of another person or organisation, identify them. This is clearly aimed at whistleblowers, MPs, and anyone who has been wronged by government and its departments such as refugees and social security recipients.

"The ability for freedom-of-information requests to be lodged anonymously also risks undermining the integrity of the framework, and, in combination with new technology, creates risk vectors that could be exploited by offshore actors seeking government-held information for potentially nefarious purposes," Attorney-General Michelle Roland said in an attempt to justify the new provisions.

This is utter nonsense. FOI documents are often heavily redacted in the name of national security, even when they have nothing to do with national security. That takes care of the "risk vectors."

Roland also defends this provision claiming complex, time-consuming, vexatious and frivolous applications are diverting the resources of departments. No evidence is provided of such applications.

This situation "risks inhibiting agencies from providing important and essential government services and delivering on reform priorities that would benefit all Australians," Roland said. So, any requests considered "vexatious" or "frivolous" will be denied, with the Information Commissioner having the final say.

The minister is saying the cost of access and transparency is too high, citing expenditure on requests over 2023-24 of $86.2 million. This from a government that has committed almost half a *trillion* dollars to AUKUS.

In that vein, a new fee is being introduced for FOI applications along with a 40-hour processing cap to rule out "complex, time-consuming" applications.

The only way around the cap would be to submit multiple smaller applications at a high cost.

The bill leaves intact the right of individuals to seek access to their personal information. They are exempt from the fee.

HANDICAPPING THE CROSSBENCH

Also in 2022 the government severely hampered crossbench MPs ability to get information, telling them in an emailed letter that they would be entitled to only one parliamentary staff member. In the previous parliament, crossbench MPs and Senators were entitled to four parliamentary staff.

Crossbench MPs and Senators were furious, recognising the reduced staffing levels as a political manoeuvre to stymie them. "It's a dog act," one crossbencher told the ABC. Albanese told the crossbenchers they could instead avail themselves of the Parliamentary Library for research or the Clerk of the Senate for advice on parliamentary procedure.

Independent Senator for the ACT David Pocock said cutting three-quarters of his anticipated parliamentary staffing resource "removes transparency, hinders the democratic process and reduces our ability to participate fully in parliament."

Pocock said crossbenchers had "concerns about voting on legislation we don't have the resources to adequately scrutinise or ensure the integrity of. To represent my community, I need to have the resources to hold the government to account."

Image: Mohamed Hassan – pxhere.com (CC0)

The Greens said the move contradicted the surge of support for minor parties in the federal election. "It is unbelievable and so short-sighted that the government would cut crossbench staff when the public has just delivered the biggest crossbench representation ever," a spokesperson said.

"The Greens have experienced a staffing cut in real terms with no increase in overall staffing despite a major increase in numbers of Greens Parliamentarians."

FOI is a basic right when it comes to understanding how and what decisions are made by public servants and governments, not just for the general public, but for members of Parliament, whistleblowers, and investigative journalists among others.

REFORM NEEDED

According to the Centre for Public Integrity's (CPI) *Freedom of Information: Secrecy and Delay report* (July 2025):

- The rate of outright refusals has nearly doubled, from 12% in 2011-12 to 23% in 2023-24, and
- Average processing time for Office of the Australian Information Commission reviews has ballooned from 6 months in 2016-17 to 15.5 months in 2023-24.

All too often applicants requesting information receive rejections from a department saying they can neither confirm nor deny the existence of documents requested, or outright refusals on such spurious grounds as that the disclosure of such information substantially or adversely affects the department's operation.

The government is clearly troubled by information that has been gleaned under the present system including on Defence Department procurement procedures and blow-outs.

Greens Senator and Justice Spokesperson David Shoebridge summed it up: "FOI is broken, and rather than fixing it, Labor is seeking to make it more expensive and even more impenetrable.

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Robodebt happened because governments could hide their actions ... we need to fix the laws that make FOI slow, expensive, and restrictive

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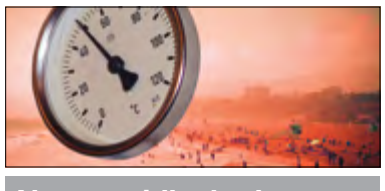
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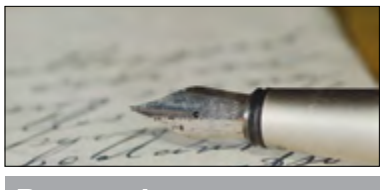
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Triple-0 & the broken promise of privatisation

Optus has been in the news lately, with some interesting numbers. Some small, like the zero per cent company tax Optus paid on profit of $8.2 billion dollars in 2024. Assistant Treasurer James Mulino has said that Optus should be paying more and that he's going to look into it. No hurry James, the rest of us are here to pick up the slack.

Another small but important Optus number is three. That's the number of people who died because they tried to call Triple Zero but couldn't get through. Over seven hundred calls to triple zero didn't get through. That's really serious. By and large, people don't dial Triple Zero lightly. That's 700 incidents of people who needed an ambulance, people who were in personal danger, perhaps people who could see a fire, all waiting in vain to get through.

Of course there have been apologies. Optus' CEO has apologised. The CEO of Singtel, the Singaporean company that owns Optus has apologised. A review has been set up. Both CEOs have explained that they're investing a lot of money in making Optus do what it was supposed to be doing already.

A number we don't have handy is the number of opinion pieces explaining that the three deaths and hundreds of failed Triple Zero calls does *not* mean that Australia needs to undo privatisation. It feels like thousands. Pro-business media outlets like the *Australian Financial Review* are visibly anxious that people might look at a privatised phone system that's just delivered three deaths and decide that privatisation is a bad idea.

Triple Zero is a basic service that's been around for a long time. There's a promise that emergency calls will get through. That promise has been broken, and no amount of talk about investment or human error can cover it up.

Another broken promise is from privatisation itself. In the 1980s and 1990s, privatisation promised a lot. Governments would sell off assets like telecommunications, rail, and utilities in return for a lot of money. That money would pay for lower taxes or even more services for the public. The services sold off would be better run because – so we were told – the private sector is competitive and always does a better job than the public sector. Competition would make the services that had been sold off mean, lean, and efficient. Try telling that to Optus customers now.

Here's how the promises turned out. It's true that governments got paid for the sale of public assets, but the money was a sugar hit, a one-off cash infusion, not to be repeated. What's more, after something like telecommunications has been sold off, the public still needs the service, so we all keep paying.

As for efficient, look at Optus.

Competition takes many forms, but the aim is to win, not to provide better cheaper services for the customer. A company can make better and/or cheaper things to win more business, but it can also win by just advertising better or bamboozling customers. That's how we get phone plans that nobody can understand. In Victoria privatising electricity supply didn't lead to cheaper and more reliable power. It led to an army of desperate underpaid sales people knocking on doors to try to persuade customers to switch electricity suppliers. Thousands of people switched to unsuitable plans.

Privatisation also means governments can outsource and evade blame when things go wrong.

That's what happened here. Optus had outsourced its call centres, which means the company can now blame those call centres and is promising to take network activities "back in-house." The government gets to look like the good guy by scolding Optus.

Privatisation means the government of the day gets its sugar hit and corporations get a stream of income from assets built up from the taxes of working people. The rest of us pay.

The Communist Party of Australia is working for a country owned and run by working people. If you support that, consider joining the Party or donating to the Press Fund.

Labor's Freedom From Information

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"Information requests routinely take months or years to process, and documents are then heavily redacted with entire pages blacked out for questionable reasons. Robodebt happened because governments could hide their actions and the Greens will use our numbers in the Senate to stop that happening again.

"We need to fix the laws that make FOI slow, expensive and restrictive, which means resourcing FOI properly and challenging the increasing culture of secrecy driven by Prime Minister Albanese.

"Democracy dies unless citizens can find out what their government is doing and we have governments that trust their community with the truth," Shoebridge concluded.

The CPI puts forward internationally recognised principles as the basis for reforms:

- Maximum disclosure as a fundamental right available to all individuals
- Obligation to regularly publish information of significant public interest
- Promotion of open government including transparency and accountability with public participation to build trust and strengthen democracy
- Limited scope of refusals when providing information to situations where harm outweighs public interest
- Processes to facilitate access such as processing information promptly with an independent mechanism available to review refusals
- Access free or at minimal cost.

The bill has been referred to a Senate committee which is set to report in December. At the time of writing, the Opposition, Greens and independents all opposed the bill. The government is frantically negotiating with different parties in an attempt to gain support.

As it stands the bill should be renamed Freedom From Information and thrown out.

Quote of the Week

"Apartheid ... a word that's thrown around, but South Africans know exactly what it means, and when a South African Jew says that Israel is an apartheid state, that's not just vague description.

South-African born US writer, Ben Moser

www.cpa.org.au

Congress Appeal

From 27 February to 1 March 2026, elected delegates representing Communist Party organisations from all over Australia will gather in Melbourne for the 15th National Congress of the Party. There will be an opening on the Friday night, 27 February, to which all *Guardian* readers, their families and friends are invited. (Details will be provided in a future issue of the *Guardian*.)

Over three days, delegates will discuss the work of the Party, make any amendments to and adopt a Political Resolution. In the lead-up to the Congress, Party members are discussing and submitting amendments to the draft Political Resolution. In January 2026 the Central Committee will consider these amendments and finalise the draft to be put to Congress.

Congress will elect a new Central Committee to lead the work of the Party until the next National Congress. As the highest body of the Party, it can also amend the Party's Program and Constitution and adopt other resolutions as its delegates may determine.

The CPA has launched a Special Appeal to help defray the costs associated with holding a National Congress. These are considerable with delegates coming from as far away as Perth, the printing of documents, etc.

We are appealing to Party members, organisations, and all friends and supporters of the Party, including *Guardian* readers, to help us reach our $10,000 target as soon as possible.

To contribute, please fill in the form below or write your details on a separate piece of paper to send with your contribution. Payment by credit card can also be phoned in on 02 9699 8844 or use the direct credit details.

All contributions will be acknowledged in the *Guardian*, with the names of contributors unless otherwise requested. We look forward to your support for this important occasion.

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Net zero hijacked by fossil fuel polluters

M Santos

Image: pxhere.com (CC0)

Net zero emissions by 2050 is a target adopted internationally under the UN International Framework on Climate Change at the Paris Climate Conference in 2015 with the aim of limiting dangerous climate change. Since then it has been hijacked by major fossil fuel corporations and some governments, including Australia's, as a licence to keep on expanding the production of fossil fuels.

The COP28 climate conference took the Paris decision further with, for the very first time, participating countries making a commitment to "transition away from fossil fuels." Just how is on the agenda for COP30 to be held in Brazil later this month.

The Australian government has extended some fossil fuel projects up to 2070 and even 2080. It is showing no sign of adhering to its commitment to "transition away from fossil fuels," despite programs for renewables.

It's not just Australia that is on the path to self-destruction.

Coal use hit a record high around the world last year despite efforts to switch to clean energy, undermining global attempts to rein in global heating.

The woody biomass of Australian tropical forests has gone from being a carbon sink to a carbon source. Carbon stored in these forests is being lost to the atmosphere as trees are dying faster than they are being replaced by tree growth.

Australia's biggest miners have banked almost $60 billion in diesel fuel tax subsidies in less than 20 years, and the government is expected to hand back close to $84 billion in fuel tax subsidies to major mining companies by 2030 according to a recent report by the think tank Climate Energy Finance.

Daily, there are reports of extreme weather events, with loss of life, biodiversity and property.

HOAX

Despite the urgency of the situation, net zero is being treated as a mechanism to increase fossil fuels with the promise of removing emissions equivalent to those being emitted by such means as carbon capture and storage (CCS) and geoengineering. All hinging on the development of new, as yet unproven technology by 2050. 2050 is too late for real action.

Climate researcher and author Ketan Joshi:

"There is truly nothing quite like carbon capture and storage (CCS) when it comes to prolonging the use of fossil fuels. For decades it has served as the high-emitting industry's unkillable fantasy, theoretically capturing CO_2 emissions and storing them underground to avoid damage to the atmosphere."

"There is one single tune playing on repeat throughout the entire history of every flavour of this technology: massive promise, then total failure, followed by more massive promise, on repeat. The latest update from the Global CCS Institute (GCCSi) puts that capture capacity at about 64 million tonnes of carbon dioxide ($MTCO_2$-e) in 2024, which is about 0.17% of the world's total emissions in the same year. But CCS is valuable for the fossil fuel supply and demand it enables, not the climate damage it avoids."

"CCS has failed to perform against every single type of projection, forecast and scenario used by the industry, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and the International Energy Agency. There is not a single climate solution that displays this same incredible mix of total, persistent failure blended with total immunity to any consequences to this failure (the sole exception may not be a technology: carbon offsetting has been proven to be fraudulent again and again for decades, but it persists with no visible scars). CCS will never stop failing, but that failure will never kill it dead, because it exists to service a fantasy, not to operate as a technology."

GEOENGINEERING

Geoengineering is the intentional, large-scale technological manipulation of the Earth's weather systems, in an attempt to tackle climate change. Apart from CCS, climate geoengineering technologies include so-called solar radiation management (reflecting sunlight to space) and weather modification. It amounts to playing god with global weather systems and climate.

"Geoengineering can refer to a wide range of techniques, including: blasting sulphate particles into the stratosphere or 'whitening' clouds to reflect the sun's rays; dumping iron particles in the oceans to nurture CO_2-absorbing plankton; firing silver iodide into clouds to produce rain or genetically engineering crops so their foliage can better reflect sunlight," ETC Group notes.

There is widespread global research, including in Australia, into geoengineering. The consequences of changing the climate in one region can have catastrophic impacts on other regions. The consequences are not known until the research has been carried out. It is not the sort of research that can be carried out in a laboratory.

So far none of the technologies have proven feasible, with all of them bringing major risks and unpredictable outcomes elsewhere. A number of them require vast amounts of energy which along with the rapid expansion of AI put immense pressure on existing energy sources.

They come with the promise of a quick fix, and are used as an excuse to delay the phasing out of fossil fuels.

Dr Chukwumerije Okereke, director of the Center for Climate Change and Development at Alex Ekwueme Federal University in Nigeria describes some of the fixes:

"The solar engineering technology attracting the most attention would use balloons or aircraft to spray large quantities of aerosols – tiny particles of, for example, sulphur dioxide or engineered nanoparticles – into the stratosphere to dim the sunlight. It's called solar radiation management."

"Other proposed techniques include covering deserts with plastic; genetically engineering plants to have brighter, more reflective leaves; creating or making clouds whiter; and deploying millions of mirrors in space. The point of all of them is to counter warming by reducing the amount of sunlight reaching the planet and reflecting it back to the stratosphere."

Dr Okereke calls solar radiation management "highly speculative."

CLIMATE BUDGET

The warming oceans, partly cleared forests, and melting permafrosts are severely restricted in the amount of CO_2 emissions they can absorb with many already net emitters. These unabsorbed emissions remain in the atmosphere for hundreds or even thousands of years.

The world has an internationally recognised carbon 'budget': the total amount that can be emitted and accumulated before it is considered likely that the world will breach 2°C of heating.

The Climate Change Authority settled on Australia's budget a decade ago, when it was considering Australia's first commitment to the UN Paris Agreement to limit global warming. It determined Australia's share was a national carbon budget of 10.1 gigatonnes CO_2 or CO_2 equivalent between 2013 and 2050. On our current trajectory, Australia will have spent that entire carbon budget by 2036, 14 years early.

That does not even take into consideration the emissions from Australia's exports.

There is no alternative to phasing out fossil fuel production and usage as rapidly as possible if the human species is to survive.

Carbon offsetting has been proven to be fraudulent. Carbon Capture and Storage exists to service a fantasy, not to operate as a technology.

WA: Fifty years since the closure of Roebourne Old Reserve

Late respected Yindjibarndi Elders, Yali and Wimiya King, outside their house in the Old Reserve, Roebourne. Photo: ngaardamedia.com.au

11 November 2025 marks 50 years since a democratically elected Prime Minister was dismissed by an unelected Governor General.

In Ieramugadu (Roebourne), another anniversary has quietly passed; fifty years since the closure of the Roebourne Old Reserve – known as 'Goodjaralla' in language.

From the early 1900s, the government forcibly removed Ngarda-ngarli (Aboriginal people) from Ngurra (Country) and relocated the communities to designated "Native Reserves." The Roebourne Old Reserve – Goodjaralla became one such place.

Yindjibarndi, Kuruma, Yaburrara, Marthudhunera, Banjima, and Kariyarra peoples were forced onto Ngarluma Country, over the river from the colonial town of Roebourne. Not only was this a breach of human rights, but it was also a severe breach of cultural law.

The reserve remained open until 1975.

Under restrictive laws and protection policies, Aboriginal people were pushed off pastoral stations and denied freedom to live, travel or work without government permission. In Iermaugadu (Roebourne), Aboriginal people were banned from entering town limits after dark, and were not allowed to access local shops, schools, or public services.

Families who had lived on Country since time immemorial were gathered and confined to the Reserve – a flood-prone area two miles out of town – where the community were expected to live under supervision, away from the gaze of the non-Aboriginal population.

Throughout 1975 – the same year the Whitlam government was famously dismissed – Ngarda-ngarli (Aboriginal) families were again forcibly removed. This time from the Old Reserve to a new settlement called The Village, built near the Roebourne cemetery. It marked the end of the Old Reserve – one of the most important places in Western Australian history.

For the older generation, some of whom are still alive today, this meant being dispossessed and moved three times: first, when taken from traditional Country; again, when the Old Reserve was closed in 1975; and once more, when The Village itself was condemned and demolished in 2012.

The 1970s were a time of transformation in Australia. The Sydney Opera House had just opened in 1973, symbolising a confident, modern nation. The Pilbara was booming with an expanding iron ore and petroleum industry, and new mining towns like Dampier, Wickham, and later Karratha, were being built. Wickham was built only eight kilometres away from the Old Reserve.

While towns grew with neat homes, green lawns and boats parked in driveways, Aboriginal families at the Reserve were still living in humpies and tents, drawing water from wells and washing clothes by hand in the Ngurin (Harding River).

Today, the site of the Old Reserve is a vacant tract of land – no buildings, no signposts, no plaques to mark its story. Nothing stands there now except the collective memory of the Ieramugadu (Roebourne) community, which keeps its spirit alive through stories, songs, and shared remembrance. Each year, the community gathers at the Old Reserve to celebrate the Elders, known as the Old People's birthday.

Ngaarda Media (edited for space)

Sydney Vigil

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Dingo bytes

The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) has welcomed new Australian content requirements for major streaming services, describing the announcement as a vital lifeline for the screen industry.

New rules requiring major streaming services to ensure that 10% of total program expenditure, or 7.5% of total Australian revenue, goes towards Australian-made content will deliver safe and secure employment opportunities for actors, directors, and crew members, and support a sustainable future for Australian film and television production.

The union's long-running Make It Australian campaign has been at the forefront of advocating for stronger protections and support for Australian content.

The MEAA says it will continue to work with the government and industry partners to ensure these reforms deliver lasting benefits for Australian workers and audiences alike.

"We look forward to a new era for Australian stories, where our screens are filled with the richness and diversity of our culture, and our film and television professionals enjoy safe, secure, and rewarding careers for years to come."

Professional Footballers Australia (the PFA) has secured a new partnership with MoleMap, a leading skin cancer detection service, to provide comprehensive skin checks for all Socceroos, Matildas, A-League players, and members of the PFA's Past Players Program.

The initiative reinforces the PFA's commitment to player health and wellbeing, ensuring that those who represent the game at the highest level have access to life-saving early detection services.

Through the partnership, players will receive full-body skin checks by MoleMap's accredited melanographers, digital imaging for dermatologist review, and individual risk assessments and education on sun safety and self-checking.

PFA Chief Executive Beau Busch said the new partnership reaffirmed the importance of supporting the players' wellbeing on the pitch.

"Skin cancer remains one of Australia's most prevalent and preventable diseases. By partnering with MoleMap, we are taking proactive steps to protect our players and honour our responsibility to their long-term health."

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: Big tech companies. There's an AI bubble well under way and all of us have noticed AI "assistants" being shoehorned in to applications which were working absolutely fine without it. Artificial Intelligence has a lot of promise, but under capitalism it's being forced on anyone who uses a phone or a computer. Any google query leads to google producing an AI-generated paragraph you didn't ask for and almost always don't need.

It's not just the annoyance of less efficient search results and summaries we didn't ask for. AI uses a fantastic amount of power and water, and data centres are springing up around the world, often in places that can't spare either. The tech industry is trying to spin this as a net benefit, but the extra demands on power threaten to undo progress made in installing renewables. To make matters worse, the big tech companies have started setting up their own fossil fuel generators in the US.

Naturally they're spinning it. OpenAI boss Sam Altman has claimed that the average ChatGPT query uses the same amount of energy as a high-efficiency lightbulb would use in a couple of minutes and one fifteenth of a teaspoon of water. Altman didn't provide any evidence for this highly misleading, but cute statement. In fact, the growth of data centres is a major factor in increased demand for electricity, the associated rise in use of coal and gas-generated power, and the increased carbon emissions that go with it.

NT: 'Racism exists in our police force, and we need to fix it'

Dechlan Brennan

Overhauling an organisation with the "hallmarks of institutional racism" – while facing a government that denies such racism exists – is one of the "hardest jobs I've ever had to do in my life," says Northern Territory Police Cultural Reform Command Director, Leanne Liddle.

After years of criticism over racism within the force, the NT Police launched their first-ever anti-racism strategy. Led by Liddle, the initiative follows widespread revelations of racism which emerged during the inquest into the 2019 death of 19-year-old Warlpiri-Luritja man Kumanjayi Walker.

Aboriginal Territorians have long shared experiences of racism at the hands of police, but the issue gained national attention during the inquest, when evidence was presented of racist "games" and "awards" within the force.

Speaking to ABC's *Stateline*, Liddle – a former police officer in South Australia – said there was no denying the problem.

"Racism exists in our police force, and we need to fix it," she said.

The Arrernte woman emphasised real change must come from the majority, noting it "isn't an Aboriginal issue, this is actually everybody's issue."

"The heavy lifting is going to have to come from the non-Aboriginal people both inside and outside of the police force because that's where a lot of the power and the privilege sits and where the decisions are made," she said.

The charge of systemic racism has been rejected by the Country Liberal Party (CLP) government. Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro, who also holds the Police Minister portfolio, has repeatedly dismissed such claims, telling reporters last month she didn't accept "the premise" of a question about systemic racism in the NT Police.

Liddle said systemic racism is more difficult to identify than overt racism, as it is embedded in practices and institutions. She said she has witnessed "lots of cases of racial profiling" involving Aboriginal people by serving officers.

"A lot of people have difficulty in understanding what systemic racism looks like and how it sits in agencies, particularly agencies like the police force," she told the ABC.

"People might align certain characteristics and therefore have biases in front of them that, you know, 'Aboriginal people are heavy drinkers, they don't look after their kids'.

"The stereotypes are layered, and it's something I've seen whilst I've been working with police."

Last year, former Police Commissioner Michael Murphy apologised to Aboriginal Territorians for "the past harms and the injustices caused by members of the Northern Territory Police".

"I know that I can't change or undo the past, but as police commissioner alongside our police officers, we can commit to not repeat the mistakes and injustices of the past," he said at Garma. "Northern Territory Police need to be accountable for the past treatment of Aboriginal people."

Liddle said the "degrading" and "demoralising" behaviour of racism could no longer be tolerated in 2025.

"The old police force that once allowed this behaviour perhaps to go unaddressed and for people not to be held accountable for it, is no longer the police force that we have moving forward," she said.

Kumanjayi Walker's cousin, Samara Fernandez-Brown, told *National Indigenous Times* last year that racism towards Aboriginal Territorians from police "has been something that has existed forever."

"I think when you work within the police force, it's hard for us to believe that anybody within the police force doesn't know that racism exists, because it comes across so obviously to us, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people," she said.

During the Walker inquest, Coroner Elisabeth Armitage found Zachary Rolfe – who shot and killed Walker and was found not guilty in a 2022 Supreme Court trial – was "racist," and that he "worked in and benefited from an organisation with the hallmarks of institutional racism."

The CLP government has not formally responded to the findings but has criticised the length and cost of the inquest and flagged changes to the Coroner's Act.

The Coroner found racist attitudes were entrenched within parts of the NT Police, identifying "grotesque" examples of racism within the specialist Territory Response Group which were ignored by then-commissioner Murphy.

Five senior officers told the court the so-called "C**n of the Year" award held no racist connotations.

An investigation by the Office of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption (OICAC) into racism in the force found "no admissible evidence" the five officers lied to the court, but concluded "any person of reasonable intelligence" would recognise evident racism in the series of informal awards for "C**N of the year".

In response, Finocchiaro said: "The CLP has never supported the view that there is systemic racism within the Northern Territory police force."

During a parliamentary debate on police oversight and deaths in custody last month, Deputy Chief Minister Gerard Maley falsely claimed that Independent Justine Davis had called NT Police "untrustworthy" and said comments from the Human Rights Commissioner – which argued police have "often been the agents of this injustice" – were "embarrassing."

The first stage of the anti-racism plan, to be rolled out by 2027, will tackle racism "in all its forms." It focuses on four key areas: "serve and protect," "eliminate racism," "represent and reflect our Territory," and "be accountable."

It also sets a target to boost Aboriginal employment to 30 per cent – reflecting the NT's Indigenous population – and to strengthen protections for whistleblowers and victims of racism.

Liddle told the ABC while there has been support from within the organisation, there has also been resistance from those under investigation for racism against Aboriginal Territorians.

"It's not a nice, pleasant experience to allege racism, let alone define that it has occurred," she said.

In July, she confirmed internal disciplinary action was underway in some racism cases, though she could not provide details. Asked again, she said she couldn't share numbers, but added, "It keeps me busy, how's that."

"At the moment I am seeing more good police officers than bad police officers and I think I want those bad racist police officers to be the minority," she said.

"I've had police officers who have been gifted or taken artefacts from communities – that might have been 10-15 years ago – return those items to me because they know it wasn't theirs to take."

National Indigenous Times

Photo: Dickelbers – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 3.0)

"racism comes across so obviously to us, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people"

Action on climate change 'essential' for human rights

The Australian Human Rights Commission is calling for urgent action from government and business to address the escalating impacts of climate change on Australians' human rights.

Launching its first major report on climate change, Human rights on a Warming Earth, Commission President Hugh de Kretser said, "The evidence on the extreme threat to humans posed by climate change is clear. By focusing on the human rights impact, we can focus on the action governments and business must take to protect current and future Australians.

"People's rights to life, health, housing, food, and water are not luxuries. They are legal obligations that Australia has committed to uphold under international law. In the face of climate change, these rights are increasingly under threat."

The report outlines recommendations to government and industry, including:

- urgently phasing out fossil fuels
- ending subsidies for fossil fuel companies, and
- supporting workers affected by the transition to renewables.

President de Kretser emphasised the need for a more rapid shift away from fossil fuels, guided by human rights principles.

"Australian governments and businesses must act with greater urgency to protect our human rights from climate change. Central to this is cutting fossil fuel pollution and speeding up the transition to renewable energy.

"The International Court of Justice in its recent landmark decision confirmed that nations have a legal duty to prevent significant harm to the climate system and could be liable for harm caused by continued fossil fuel production, consumption and subsidisation."

The report also recommends that the Australian government establish an Australian Human Rights Act.

"We need to protect Australians' human rights in law through a Human Rights Act. This is what the Australian Parliament's human rights committee recommended last year.

"A Human Rights Act would help to guide governments to make the right decisions on climate change. It would help to ensure the transition to renewables is just and fair. It would help to better plan, adapt and respond to more frequent and severe disasters," President de Kretser said.

The report highlights the disproportionate impact of climate change on certain groups in Australia.

"Climate change will not affect people equally. Those who are already disadvantaged are more vulnerable to harm. People living in poverty, older people, people with a disability, First Peoples, children, and rural communities will be hit harder.

"The pace at which we act will determine how dangerous the future is. If we want to protect our quality of life, we must address climate change with greater urgency," de Kretser said.

Australian Human Rights Commission

Australia's COP30 turning point

As the COP30 UN climate conference began in Belém, Brazil, Greenpeace Australia Pacific has urged the Australian government to drive forward the action needed to close the 1.5C ambition gap and end forest destruction.

The COP30 climate conference commences in Belém, Brazil – 10 years on from the landmark Paris Agreement.

The annual climate talks begin as Super Typhoon Uwan batters communities across the Philippines – the second typhoon to hit the country in just a week – leaving a trail of destruction and deaths. A recent report shows Australia has been expanding fossil fuel production faster than any other major producer, including doubling its gas production, since the Paris Agreement.

Shiva Gounden, Head of Pacific at Greenpeace Australia Pacific, said: "The COP30 conference comes at a critical moment for climate action globally. We are dangerously off course from the 1.5°C goal, and soaring fossil fuel production is driving climate pollution to disastrous new highs.

"As delegates meet to begin negotiations today, over one million people across the Philippines have been evacuated from their homes as Super Typhoon Uwan makes landfall, the second severe storm to hit in just one week. Last year, over half a million people were displaced by Brazil's most catastrophic floods on record. This same story is playing out in the Pacific and around the world as climate-fuelled disasters accelerate, driven by the rampant expansion of the fossil fuel industry.

"In Belém, we ask governments not to lose sight of the significance of the decisions being made in air conditioned rooms over the next two weeks. Every fraction of a degree of avoided heating will be measured in lives and livelihoods saved, cultures protected, the places we love safeguarded.

"Australia must confront its status as a major driver of the climate crisis globally and uphold the 1.5°C Paris Agreement target. 1.5°C must remain the goal, the scientific imperative, our legal obligation, and the lifeline for Pacific and Australian communities. We have the solutions and what matters is the action we take now."

In Belém at COP30, Greenpeace Australia Pacific has called on the Australian government to:

- Keep the 1.5C Paris Agreement goal alive by halting new fossil fuel projects, committing to a fast, fair phase out of fossil fuels including exports, and revising Australia's NDC to a science-aligned target.
- Ensure more grant-based climate finance for mitigation, adaption, and loss and damage.
- Introduce a 'polluters pay' mechanism that would unlock climate finance, and ensure fossil fuel corporations pay their fair share for climate damage.
- Support action to protect forests and biodiversity, including a new 5-year Forest Action Plan to fulfil the goal of ending deforestation and forest degradation by 2030.

Carolina Pasquali, Executive Director, Greenpeace Brazil said: "COP30 needs to be a turning point. We can no longer treat forest protection, transitioning away from fossil fuels or adaptation as a menu of options. The climate crisis is advancing on all fronts, and the response needs to be ambitious, courageous and immediate.

"Brazilian President Lula made this clear at the Leaders' Summit, stating that COP30 must deliver concrete road maps to reverse deforestation and to overcome our dependence on fossil fuels. He has sent the political signal; now it is time to turn it into real action.

"The world expects more than ambition in speeches, it expects leadership through action. That means concrete plans to end deforestation by 2030, to transition away from fossil fuel dependence, strengthening adaptation to increase climate resilience, and ensuring the finance needed to make it all real. The era of partial answers is over."

Greenpeace Australia

Deakin University admits underpaying staff almost $3 million

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) has welcomed Deakin University's pledge to backpay casual staff underpaid almost $3 million. The university announced it would start repayments, with roughly 440 staff affected by $2.9 million in underpayments over eight years.

NTEU members have engaged in a long-running campaign including allegations of systemic underpayment of casual academics in the Fair Work Commission. The total figure is expected to rise beyond $2.9 million as more staff come forward.

Deakin has previously acknowledged underpayments to sessional staff following union pressure and investigation into unlawful piece-rate-style payment practices for marking.

The latest revelations take the national confirmed university wage theft tally beyond $284 million.

Universities have made provisions for a further $168 million in underpayments, with the combined figure now more than $450 million.

NTEU Deakin Branch President Professor Reece Walters said the announcement was a hard-won and long-overdue outcome.

"This is a major victory for NTEU members at Deakin who have fought hard against wage theft over many years," he said.

"To management's credit, they are working with the NTEU to repay the staff owed millions of dollars.

"There's almost certainly more people affected than just this initial announcement so we'll be working hard to ensure every staff member past and present gets every cent they're owed.

"We're encouraging all casual Deakin staff who believe they may have been underpaid to contact the NTEU for advice and support."

NTEU Victoria Division Secretary Sarah Roberts said Victoria continues to be ground zero for university underpayments.

"Once again we're seeing casual staff bearing the brunt of wage theft, which speaks volumes about the devastating impact of rampant casualisation across our universities," she said.

"The fact that casualised workers continue to be the primary victims of wage theft is a direct consequence of universities' deliberate strategies to maximise insecure employment."

NTEU National President Dr Alison Barnes said the situation at Deakin was part of a much wider problem.

"University wage theft is a national disgrace that demands national action," she said.

"The NTEU won't take a backwards step in our campaign for major reform of the broken university governance model that's allowed wage theft to become baked into business models.

"We need governments to make university executives accountable for wage theft, casualisation and other serious issues in our public institutions."

National Tertiary Education Union

Privatised employment services 'a complete failure'

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) has labelled Australia's employment services system a complete failure, after new figures revealed a system that is delivering worse outcomes year after year.

According to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations' annual report, only 11.7% of jobseekers secured long-term work last year, while billions of taxpayer dollars were funnelled into private providers.

The current employment services system is projected to cost taxpayers $8.2 billion over the next four years, and is dominated by only a handful of providers owned by multinational companies.

These providers have been caught engaging in unethical behaviour, gouging as much money as they can from their already highly lucrative government contracts. Whistleblowers have revealed that providers are falsely claiming credit for jobseekers who have secured themselves a job, enabling them to claim taxpayer dollars for doing absolutely nothing. Media reports have revealed that more than $40 million a year is being pocketed by providers for shuffling jobseekers through jobs and training programs within their own companies.

This is not value for money, and it is not delivering for Australians who need real support to find secure employment.

A modern and fit for purpose Commonwealth Employment Service would provide real pathways to employment, support local communities and businesses, and restore integrity to a system that has well and truly lost its way.

Melissa Donnelly, CPSU National Secretary says that privatisation has turned employment services into "a tick-a-box profit-driven industry that rewards providers for keeping people in a cycle of unemployment, and these numbers are proof of that."

She called the 11.7 'success rate a failure to support jobseekers, to meet workforce demands, and provide value for money.

Donnelly added: "Australians deserve better than a system that punishes jobseekers while lining the pockets of multinational corporations. It's time to end this failed experiment and bring back the CES."

CPSU

Westpac deforestation backdown

Westpac's annual results, released 3 November, reveal the bank has weakened its approach to deforestation.

The bank's deadline for achieving its earlier 'no deforestation' commitment was looming.

In 2023, the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) welcomed Westpac's announcement that it would be the first Australian bank to set a 'no deforestation' commitment for beef, sheep, and dairy.

Now, the bank has announced it would "no longer require" a formal commitment but instead "develop practical ways we can help customers manage deforestation risk effectively."

"As banks increasingly recognise the nature and climate-related risks of deforestation, it's disappointing to see Westpac loosen its approach while Australia's deforestation problem continues to grow," said ACF's corporate campaigner Jonathan Moylan.

"This backdown is a slap in the face for Westpac customers and investors who don't want the bank to be linked to the destruction of koalas and Greater Gliders' homes.

"This move raises questions about Westpac's net zero commitment, along with its ability to accurately report emissions if it is not monitoring deforestation rates.

"With the upcoming COP30 being touted as an opportunity to reduce financial flows to harmful practices like deforestation, banks should be raising their ambition, not lowering it."

ACF investigations have found multiple instances of deforestation on properties financed by Westpac, including the destruction of mature koala habitat in the Desert Uplands region in Central West Queensland.

This year ANZ and NAB shareholders filed Australia's first bank shareholder resolutions on deforestation, calling on their banks to disclose how much they lend to customers involved in deforestation and set a strategies to stop financing land clearing.

ANZ and NAB will be required to respond to those shareholder resolutions on deforestation at their annual general meetings in December.

Legal opinion in 2023 concluded failure on the part of company directors to identify, manage and disclose material nature-related risks may lead to them being found in breach of their duties of care and diligence.

Australian Conservation Foundation

Tragedy at Cobar

Statement from the Mining and Energy Union

We have been shocked and saddened by the tragedy at Endeavor mine at Cobar NSW which cost two mineworkers their lives.

Our NSW Mine Workers Alliance organisers Todd Ferguson and Daniel Brookman have been on the ground supporting members; and our South Western District Industry Health and Safety Representative Steve Barrett is attending the site.

Mineworkers Ambrose McMullen and Holly Clarke were killed in an uncontrolled detonation, caused by use of explosives in the underground workings. Another injured worker was airlifted from the site.

Police have released the site for investigation by the NSW Resources Regulator. Unlike the coal industry, union check inspectors don't have legal authority to conduct independent investigations in metalliferous mines.

However, we will be actively engaging with the regulator, the company and all relevant parties to ensure full transparency of the investigation, the preservation of evidence, and the implementation of any learnings that will improve underground mine safety.

South Western District President Bob Timbs described the event as "a catastrophic failure in the safety systems around the use of explosives."

He said: "In this day and age, that type of accident just should not have happened ... We will do everything in our power, once we've dealt with and supported the families and mine workers in the community, to find out what happened and make sure that it never happens again."

Endeavor mine produces lead, silver, and zinc and is operated by Polymetals. The mine recently reopened after a period in care and maintenance.

This tragic loss reverberates not only through the families of the workers, but through the small, tightly-knit Cobar mining community, and across the whole mining industry.

We extend our sincere condolences to the families and loved ones of Ambrose and Holly.

Our collective commitment remains: safety must always come before production. We owe it to every miner, every family, and every community.

Leaked report undermines WA Premier's claim about 'natural' gas

The Western Australian government's claim that its domestic gas production is helping Asia's clean energy transition has been undermined in a leaked report – which it commissioned.

The report states "there are substantial risks that natural gas could crowd out investments in renewable technology or delay the broader adoption of renewable energy technologies."

These revelations come two months after Federal Environment Minister Murray Watt granted final approval for Woodside to extend the life of its North West Shelf gas project until 2070. The report was received by the WA government in January.

The North West Shelf extension will result in over 4 billion tonnes of emissions, wiping out any emissions cuts by Australian governments many times over.

The report follows the leaking of a CSIRO report commissioned by Woodside which undermined similar claims, and a report by the US Department of Energy that found emissions from LNG could be greater than coal emissions in customer countries.

"The government for a long time now has been trying to make the ludicrous argument that if you extract and export more gas, which is a fossil fuel, it will be good for the climate and reduce emissions," said Dr Richard Denniss, co-CEO of The Australia Institute.

"That's not true, because climate change is caused by fossil fuels and gas is one of the main fossil fuels.

"It is no surprise the report was kept secret. It cost taxpayers $400,000 and did not support the government's claims."

The Australia Institute

The *Guardian* encourages readers to donate to the 3CR Radiothon. 3CR is a Melbourne Community Radio station, but anyone can hear its programs via podcast. If you donate, please nominate 'Alternative News' as the show you support.

www.cpa.org.au

Check out the official Instagram account of the Communist Party of Australia

www.instagram.com/communist.party.australia/

PEACE NOTES

Salivating admirals: words from the arms fair

Denis Doherty

Here are some stomach-turning remarks from Richard Marles, Minister for Defence in his opening address to the opening of the recent Indo-Pacific Expo/arms fair in Sydney:

"On the Navy side of the house, last count, there are 58 countries that are represented here with 35 chiefs of Navy, and I know that Admiral Hammond has literally been salivating about the prospect of the Sea Power conference this year, to have so many chiefs of Navy congregated in one spot is a kind of version of Navy Disneyland.

"Of course, there is good news about AUKUS to be announced. AUKUS, in the words of President Trump is 'proceeding at full steam ahead' according to Minister for Defence Industry.

"We also have decided to pursue the Mogami Class vessel from Mitsubishi Heavy Industries as our new general purpose frigate at a cost of $10 billion."

Defence Minister Marles reminded us of the decision to "invest" $12.5 billion in the Henderson Defence Precinct in Perth, for AUKUS.

GHOST SHARK

The Ghost Shark is the creepy name given to a special underwater drone that will be a part of the Australian Navy's portfolio of assets to protect Australia from attack. Naturally it is designed for interoperability with US forces.

The Ghost Shark is an extra large underwater vehicle (XLUUV) which can do different roles in the single platform. It can provide surveillance, and strike capabilities with different weapons on board. This special drone is arriving as the Australian Navy is undergoing its largest peacetime modernisation and expansion.

Pat Conroy Minister for Defence Industry is excited to announce that Australia will have 15 of these weapons platforms at a cost $1.5 billion. The Defence Department claims that these drones will be ready in five years. A US-owned company Anduril has opened a Sydney factory to build these items.

BATTERIES

Conroy announced that a "great innovative Australian company based in Adelaide will be supplying batteries to the AUKUS submarines, not just Australia's AUKUS submarines, but the submarines to be manufactured for the Royal Navy in the United Kingdom."

BAE systems is the company which will design and start manufacturing the SSN-AUKUS submarines that are planned to be made in both Britain and Australia and will be operational in Australia around 2040 and costing $386 billion.

The contract for PMB is worth $34 million. This is part of a feeding frenzy of companies lining up to pick up contracts connected to AUKUS.

RAAF's use and meaning

In RAAF the first A stands for Australia but recently it can be seen to stand for Anyone's Air Force. The RAAF has been patrolling for NATO. Recently on a "routine patrol of the South China Sea" flares were shot at an RAAF plane who was in international airspace on routine patrol work. The South China Sea is a long way from Australia (5,000-7,000 kms). Patrolling it does not make sense. As an island we only need to patrol our near shores for renegade fishing vessels and other local concerns. These South China sea patrols are at the request of the US; they are surveillance operations and deliberate provocations of China. Why should Australia provoke a friendly country that we rely on for our trade?

Poetry, class, and the individual

Marcus Browning

One's-self I sing, a simple separate person,

Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.

Of physiology from top to toe I sing,

Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone is worthy for the Muse,

I say the Form complete is worthier far,

The Female equally with the Male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse and power,

Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,

The Modern Man I sing.

Walt Whitman
Leaves of Grass

Photo: rawpixel.com (CC0)

Poetry's subjects are many – love and death and nature. And work, that fundamental activity carried out daily by people around the world – labour and the means to have shelter, food, warmth. As poet Tom Wayman put it, "Any literature which omits this governing experience of daily life is a literature with an enormous hole in the middle."

It is not my intention here to discuss individual poets. I have used the opening lines of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* because of the poem's epic proportions in recounting the emergence of the nation that is the USA. The poem's 10,500 lines are unified by the poetic techniques of succession, cataloguing, cadence, structure and symbolism.

Whitman (1819-1892) had this to say about his purpose in writing it: "It was a feeling or ambition to articulate and faithfully express in literary or poetic form, and uncompromisingly, my own physical, emotional, moral, intellectual and aesthetic personality ... tallying the momentous spirit and facts of its immediate days, and of current America ..."

One hundred years after Whitman's death another US poet, Jessica Greenbaum, complained that contemporary poems made the reader feel like a beggar at the idea of a banquet.

"We feel lost not only regarding the direction of ideas – what does the poet mean, where is the poet going, can I come? – but also regarding the subject. What was that all about? we often ask." All good questions.

We live in a society that promotes the absolute predominance of the individual, while at the same time depriving individuals of the economic and aesthetic means for satisfying their aspirations. Capitalism thus produces poetry that is full of contradictions, the source of Jessica Greenbaum's annoyance.

People are individual. They differ from one another because of inborn characteristics, and this individuality is stimulated and developed as society develops – this development becomes the means of realising individuality.

We express our perception of the world through language, and measure the power of the word by the degree of perceptual change that results for the reader. The word, like money, is the expression of a transfer between two people – commodity with the former, ideas with the latter.

Just as commodity production brings with it the concept of "value" so the word brings "meaning," "emotion," and "enlightenment." It can also mislead and confuse.

Because of the complex and contradictory social relations that have developed – and the corresponding growth of the inner world and imagination of the individual – there is simmering anger about the way society crushes the individual.

There are endless possibilities for self-realisation, but there are forces preventing this from happening: primarily a system which enriches the minority through exploiting and depriving the majority, arising out of the relations of production under capitalism.

Art can change the consciousness and emotions of the individual, allowing for a deeper understanding of the world (art could be defined as organised emotion attached to experience). This may, in turn, act on others and raise a collective understanding that this, and all other achievements, come about when people work together in common.

Art may also obscure the reality of the world. It may mislead and be used to promote the concept of individualism or to divide and even justify war and killing.

Art is then propagandist, because the rhetoric of propaganda appeals to the day-to-day needs, activities and demands of people. Just as rhetoric can be false, hypocritical and misleading so too can art.

WORDS

A poem is made up of words and is condensed and rhythmical. Each poem is a world of its own. Its dialectic is composed of two main elements – form and content.

Its form relates to its rhyme, rhythm, and – the words. Without the presence to varying degrees of rhyme, rhythm, and repetition, one may have a fine essay or editorial but not a poem.

Poetry will endure if it gives meaning to contemporary experience, conveys vision and the aspirations of the reader. Because a poem's content is organised emotion it creates for the reader something like a real emotional experience.

The need for self-expression of inner feelings and personal experience – and the fact that these are also the result of the artist's social development and experience – come together to form the contradiction which causes the movement and dynamic of artistic expression.

The best poetry may be abstract and generalised but is also concrete and specific. Inner feelings and experience are unique because they are the product of an individual consciousness and imagination but are, at the same time, generalised because of their social nature and origin. Many may share the same inner feelings because they share the same social experience.

A work of art is the social expression of an individual's experience – it becomes part of the social world as a work of art.

The art world is changed by this, as is the artist who becomes more deeply aware of the world. So, in dealing with the emotional the artist will give expression to the experiences and unconscious instincts of people in general, exposing the timeless instincts and aspirations beneath the surface layer of culture and civilisation.

Art is also specific to time and place which is why we can find an immediacy and a kind of self-recognition in contemporary works, including poetry. This is because art reflects social relations in a given period and expresses the general experience of specific classes.

There are also "timeless" art contributions because they reflect the historic experiences and aspirations of humankind over a period of history.

The artist records these experiences as an everyday member of society. Artists may also present an amalgam of unique inner feelings and broad social experience, embrace the strange, the unexpected, the new and those phenomena marginalised by the predominant class's social, moral and economic edicts.

This means the artist is not merely an individual, separate and apart from society but, on the contrary, is very much an active participant in the entire social and class relationship, as in this poem by Roque Dalton:

LIKE YOU

Like you I
love love life, the sweet smell
of the earth, the sky-blue
landscape of January days.

And my blood boils up
and I laugh through eyes
that have known the buds of tears.

I believe the world is beautiful
and that poetry, like bread, is for
everyone

and that my veins don't end in me
but in the unanimous blood
of those who struggle for life,
love,
landscape and bread,
the poetry of everyone.

a work of art is the social expression of an individual's experience

Yolanda Colom: The memory of Guatemala's revolution

Alejandra Garcia

Yolanda Colom. Photo: entremundos.org

Yolanda Colom was born in Guatemala in 1952. She is an educator, author, and former guerrilla member of the EGP (*Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres* – Guerilla Army of the Poor). She spent more than 20 years in hiding and in exile. She currently works with Ediciones del Pensativo in Guatemala, compiling the works of her late partner, Mario Payeras, who was also a leader in the EGP.

The voice that greets me is gentle, though every word seems shaped by years of struggle and memory. Yolanda Colom, once a guerrilla leader in the EGP – begins her story with a quiet laugh, after I asked her for brief recount on the Guatemala of her childhood: "I'm quite old now," she says, "almost seventy. But I remember it perfectly."

She was born in Guatemala City, back when it was still a small town – a place that could be crossed on foot. "Everything was done by walking," she recalls. "We went to school walking, to the park, to the market. The buses were safe, cheap, clean. There were no supermarkets, no malls. Everything was in the markets, and the centre of the city was where life happened."

She remembers the simplicity of those years: afternoons in the few city parks, trips to the outskirts where families spread out blankets and shared food under open skies. "Nothing was fenced in. We played with balls, jumped rope. They were simple, beautiful times."

But even as a child, Yolanda's gaze turned beyond her own world. "I realised very young that I lived in a privileged sector," she says. "I saw poverty everywhere – children like me, but with nothing. I asked myself why. I never identified myself with the wealthy; I always put myself in the place of those who suffered."

By the age of ten, she had already decided she would not accept the injustices she saw. "I told myself I would rebel against that reality." She joined charity and solidarity activities as a teenager, but soon discovered that goodwill alone could not change structural injustice. "I saw how people spoke about the poor, about Indigenous people – with so much prejudice. I didn't believe it. I wanted to prove with my actions that it wasn't true."

That inner rebellion would eventually lead her to the revolutionary movement that marked her life.

THE PATH TOWARDS THE GUERILLA

Yolanda's decision to join the armed struggle came years before the fall of Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973, though the Chilean experience deeply moved her generation. "Allende's victory filled us with hope," she explains. "It made us believe there could be a peaceful path. But when he was overthrown – violently, with the intervention of the United States – that hope died again. It confirmed what I already believed: that in Guatemala, a peaceful change was no longer possible."

Her choice was not born out of romanticism or adventure, but out of a sense of historical inevitability – the conviction that injustice would not yield to petitions or votes. She joined the EGP, one of several groups that would later form the URNG, the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity.

FEAR, SEXISM AND THE MOUNTAINS

Did she feel fear? "Fear as a woman? No," she says without hesitation. "Fear as a human being, yes. Fear of capture, of torture, of death. But not because I was a woman."

What was difficult, she adds, was confronting the sexism that persisted even among comrades. "We came from the same society we wanted to change. So discrimination against women came with us. Inside the movement we had to fight another battle – against being underestimated, against being silenced."

Her years in a clandestine existence were long and complex. "I prefer to call it a revolutionary process," she says. "The guerrilla war was just one part of it – the military form of a much broader struggle that included politics, education, and humanism."

She spent over twenty years in clandestine work, both in the countryside and in cities, always under threat. The stories from that time, she admits, could fill volumes. "I wrote a book about a small fragment – the years I spent in the mountains. For me, those were the years I learned the most about my country, my people, and myself."

WRITING AFTER DEFEAT

Yolanda began writing after the fragmentation of the revolutionary movements. "After more than twenty years of giving your life to a cause, to see it collapse – it's terrible. You feel as if the ground disappears beneath you."

Worse still was hearing some former comrades say that it had all been for nothing. "I couldn't accept that. The fact that we were defeated doesn't mean it wasn't worth it. So I began to write – to honour the people who gave their lives, to make sense of my survival." Her writing, she says, was both an act of remembrance and resistance – a way to preserve the human, moral, and political complexity of a movement that history often reduces to failure.

Today, at 76, Yolanda no longer lives in hiding, but she hasn't stopped fighting. "If you look at the history of Guatemala – or of humanity – it's a history of struggle. Some dominate, others resist. Many conform, but there are always those who don't."

She considers herself part of that small minority who refuse to give up. "I'm a survivor – maybe less than five per cent of those who lived through that time. But new generations continue in other ways – through human rights work, civic movements, memory projects. Their struggle is criminalised and distorted, but it continues."

A LIFE WITHOUT TECHNOLOGY

In her modest home in the outskirts of Antigua Guatemala, Yolanda lives surrounded by books and plants. "There's very little technology here," she admits, laughing. "I've lived most of my life without electricity, without running water, without television. I got used to solving problems without technology, and I never missed it."

Her stove is still made of clay and wood. "I never needed a TV – I prefer to read, to take care of my plants." When she reentered public life after the war, she was confronted by a world ruled by screens and devices. "Now everything is mediated – work, relationships, communication. I reject that. I want human contact, direct and free." Economic hardship also plays a role. "Technology is expensive – maintenance, internet, new programs. I can't afford that. But more than that, I simply don't want it to dominate my life."

CUBA: A LIGHTHOUSE

Before we hang up, I ask her what message she would send to the women of Cuba – a country that has shared much of Latin America's revolutionary legacy. Her voice softens.

"With Cuba, I have only gratitude and admiration," she says. "For its people, for its women – who have carried the hardest burdens of daily life with strength and grace. Cuba has been an example of dignity, of perseverance, of resistance before the empire. Many of us saw in Cuba's firmness our own trampled dignity."

She remembers the joy she witnessed there – in music, in children, in the streets. "To the women of Cuba, thank you. Don't give up. Cuba is a lighthouse for many of us."

The line goes silent for a moment. Then, her voice, faint but smiling: "Thank you, Alejandra. It was a beautiful surprise to receive your call." A pause. Then – a soft goodbye from a woman who once carried the dream of a revolution on her shoulders, and still believes in it.

Resumen Latinoamericano

If you look at the history of Guatemala – or of humanity – it's a history of struggle

Worth Streaming

Annabel Crabb's *Civic Duty*

Reviewer: Peter Farmer

If you want to understand Australian democracy and you're not allergic to twee jokes, the ABC has a show for you. In *Annabel Crabb's Civic Duty*, Crabb takes us through the history of Australia and voting, explaining what's so very special about democracy as practiced in this country.

There's things to be learned here, things we could learn just as enjoyably without the condescension. Anyone who wants to understand what's unique about democracy as practiced in Australia would mostly do just as well to search on the ABC's *Behind the News* a venerable short program for high school students.

Did you know that Lewis Caroll wrote *Alice in Wonderland*? Annabel Crabb seems to think you don't, as she explains, with the help of cute clips from old Alice in Wonderland movies, how Caroll also came up with the idea of preferential voting.

Is this really true, this viewer wondered, or was preferential voting devised for more self-interested reasons? Sure enough, it was, although you'll have to watch the show to find out which Australian PM made preferential voting a thing in order to stop discontented voters putting the Labor Party in power.

Along with Crabb laughing at her own jokes, we're treated to a range of short interviews with George Megalogenis, Tony Abbott, Penny Wong, Waleed Ali and the rebarbative Tim Wilson, as well as a gaggle of Australian political journalists to demonstrate Crabb's balance and access.

We're also treated to interviews with the hard-working people at the Australian Electoral Commission with Crabb extracting maximum whimsy from the number of pencils that have to be handed out each year.

Overall, the message is that Australian democracy is pretty terrific and more unusual than you might think. This country is one of the few with compulsory and preferential voting, and the show gives some solid reasons why both are good things, and fun facts about how they were introduced.

Topical relevance and some gentle debate come from guests explaining their conflicting views on the topics of marriage equality and 'crossing the floor.'

The question of why we have two major parties comes up. Crabb interviews a guy from the Belgian parliament and does some ooh and ahhing over a coalition of the centre-right and centre-left parties there, ignoring the fact that a coalition between centre-right and centre-left is pretty much what we have here. Pressure from large companies gets a quick mention.

Apart from the independents, of course. Crabb gives time to Fatima Payman, Zali Steggall and others to explain why independents get into both houses of parliament.

One of the last topics in the show is the situation of Indigenous Australians, who Crabb calls "the

Photo: ABC

people with the least power of all, people whose voices the system is not yet trained to hear." Professor Clare Wright and Djapu leader Yananymul Mununggurr explain about the 'bark petition' that was sent to parliament from the Yulu people of Yirrikala. Their land had been given to mining companies to mine for bauxite without asking their permission.

This part of the show is worthwhile and important. Other big problems with Australian democracy are given a cursory mention or just brushed past. What kind of democracy consistently gives outcomes that suit large corporations and the USA? That's the kind of democracy we've got, and cute talk about "democracy sausages" won't fix it.

Streaming on ABC iview

Music: albums

Peter Peter Hughes – *Half-Staff Blues*

Reviewer: RJ Harris

Recorded in Melbourne by Pop Filter née Ocean Party musicians, *Half-Staff Blues* is a record of the imperial core directed against the imperial core. An excellent mid-fidelity American rock record played and produced by Australians, fronted by US export Peter Hughes. The desire to continue with the vassal state metaphor is strong but I will relent. The album sounds loosely like Lou Reed.

The title track reflects the self-assumed wounded national spirit of the United States of America: "Flag's at half-staff again, nobody knows why … Can't remember the last time we saw it up high."

Fintech Vest is a humorous dig at the acolyte-participants of the financial services sector, followed closely by an examination of the eschatology of Christian Zionism with which the American psyche is deeply affected in *Suicide Cult*.

The word 'core' has been very fruitful in the last decade or so. We have 'normcore' (ultra normal tastes or music), 'cottagecore', which fetishises idyllic rural lifestyles, 'nerdcore' (exuberantly nerdy) and more recently 'Naarmcore' (a slur to describe tryhard Melbourne/Naarm lefties). All the songs on *Half-Staff Blues* are from a first-person perspective set in the imperial core, making the record what we could call an example of "imperial-core-core," a genre of struggle from inside the gated community, so to speak. *Permanent State of Exception* is a love song explained through the logic of war on terror legal strategy.

Works like this record are important for the current political environment. Alongside information-rich, long and deep analyses of contemporary geopolitics and the shallow meme-fied versions of similar arguments rests this audio contribution against USA's foreign policy choices. T*wo Stroke Solution* points out that rare earths enable the Western culture of excess, leaving the audience to ponder if the two-state solution is an artefact of the same.

With this record Peter Hughes has made both a series of important political statements without compromising on convincing presentation of a dozen tunes for posterity.

Dick Cheney 1941 – 2025

Peter Farmer

> "true dereliction, negligence, and irresponsibility: at worst, lying, incompetence, and corruption."

That's how the career of Dick Cheney, who has just passed away at the age of 84, was summed up by one of the US generals who worked for him, Anthony Zinni. Cheney saw it differently of course. He was Vice President of the US under George W Bush from 2001 to 2009. Cheney was widely regarded as more powerful than Bush, and actually took over in the immediate aftermath of the 911 attacks in 2001.

Cheney profited immensely from his time in politics. Halliburton, a company where he had been chair and chief executive was awarded billions of dollars in contracts during the invasion of Iraq, an invasion that Cheney had championed and was heavily involved in.

To prosecute that invasion, Cheney derided reports that showed Iraq to have had no involvement with the 911 attackers and pushed hard for alternative reports. Cheney also supported the use of torture of the suspects during the 'War on Terror.'

Cheney did not support Donald Trump. After

Dick Cheney, 2004. Photo: World Economic Forum – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

the attempted coup on 6 January 2020 by Trump supporters, he called Trump a threat to the US and a coward. However, it was Cheney's push for presidential power that paved the way for what both he and Trump's enablers called 'the unitary executive,' a fancy way of saying that the US president should be able to do whatever they like with the country.

Cheney, like Trump after him showed the US with the mask off, with all the arrogance and brutality that goes with imperialism.

Solutions to Crossword

Guardian 10 November 2025 #2170

Across

3 **APEC** – Meeting where Xi and Trump talked tariffs again

7 **LABUBU** – Mysteriously popular doll

8 **CEASEFIRE** – Israel keeps breaking this

10 **RARE** – The kind of earths Albo is giving away

12 **POSEIDON** – Greek god, new Russian weapon

13 **TSHIRT** – Garment, recently showed how desperate Sussan Ley is

14 **NIGERIA** – African country, threatened by Trump

15 **BAILOUT** – Trump present to mini-trump leader

Down

1 **TESLA** – Subject of two year-long Swedish strike

2 **WATERMELON** – Ice cream flavour in support of Palestine

4 **YOUR PARTY** – New party on the left of UK Labour

5 **SUNSCREEN** – Summer essential not as strong as we thoughts

6 **DETAINEES** – What Israel calls its hostages

9 **USA SNAP** – Program for food aid to 42 million in

11 **MELISSA** – Unwelcome visitor to the Caribbean

16 **LADDER** – Useful tool for removing Louvre jewellery

US warning to Iraq: A signal of a wider regional war?

Abbas Hashemite

In a recent interview the Iraqi Defense Minister Thabit al-Abbasi said that the United States has issued its most serious and final warning to Iraq regarding Iran-backed resistance groups. Al-Abbasi said that the US's latest message "concerns armed factions and includes a direct threat in the event that those factions carry out any operations in response to what Washington intends to do in the region near Iraq in the coming days."

The warning was issued to Iraq during a phone call between Iraqi military officials and the US Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth. The two sides also discussed cooperation in various sectors, including an intelligence-sharing memorandum, a pending agreement for Bell helicopters, and drones.

ISRAEL AND IRAN: A CONFLICT THAT REFUSES TO END

Israeli and US official statements, and Hegseth's warning to Iraq, could mean that the United States and its regional proxy, Israel, are planning a wider regional conflict and are laying out a potential framework for the destruction of all anti-Zionist factions in the region.

Israel has long been portraying Iran's nuclear program as a threat to regional stability and peace. However, Israel's attack on Iran in June was not mainly about the country's nuclear program. Rather, it was an attempt to alter the regional balance of power. Tehran responded with numerous missile attacks on Israel.

The failure of Israeli strikes to achieve their desired outcomes added to the chagrin of the Zionist state. Since then, the Israeli military officials have been alluding to another potential Israeli strike on Iran. In August 2025, Israeli Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir signaled the country's intent to attack Iran again. He stated that Israel is prepared to repeat its attack on Iran. Zamir also said that the aim of the "preemptive war" on Iran in June was to remove an "escalating existential threat before it became a concrete danger" and that "we are ready to pay a heavy price to ensure our survival." Israel views Iran as a permanent threat to its "Greater Israel" ambition. Iran-backed militias in different regional countries have been targeting Israel since 7 October due to the latter's indiscriminate bombing in Gaza.

The United States seeks to perpetuate Israel's occupation of Palestine and help it materialise the Zionist dream of Greater Israel.

Israel has successfully neutralised Hezbollah through its bombing campaigns and airstrikes in Lebanon and has been continuously attacking Southern Lebanon for the past few months to counter Hezbollah. Many of the leaders and commanders of the Hezbollah organisation have been killed.

However, the Yemen-based, Iran-backed armed resistance group, the Houthis, are still targeting Israel due to its war crimes and genocide in Gaza. Despite several attacks by Israel, the US, and their European allies, the Houthis are still showing strong resistance to the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. Similarly, Iraqi resistance factions are also fighting the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory and are providing significant support to Hamas.

DANGEROUS VISION

In October 2023, Iraqi militias banded together to attack US bases in Iraq after the Israeli attack on Gaza. These attacks were stopped in January 2024 after intense pressure by the Iraqi government. Nonetheless, Israel and the United States deem the presence of these resistance groups as a threat to their regional ambitions. The United States seeks to perpetuate Israel's occupation of Palestine and help it materialise the Zionist dream of Greater Israel.

Trump's recent controversial peace deal is also a plan to perpetuate the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Moreover, President Trump's proposal of an International Stabilization Force (ISF), comprising troops from Muslim nations, will destabilise the whole region and other Muslim states that will send troops to Gaza. The mandate of this force is to disarm Hamas. Countries contributing their troops to this force would face intense domestic upheaval.

It appears that the United States and Israel are planning an all-out occupation of Palestinian territory and are also prepared to initiate an invasion of different regional countries, including Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and Iran. The warning issued to the Iraqi government further strengthens these suspicions. However, any Israeli attack on Iran or offensive in Gaza would not only spread chaos in the region, but could also spark a global conflict between the Western and Eastern blocs. Any such adventure would have nightmarish consequences for Israel and the United States, as Iran is also prepared for a long-term, bloodier war. It is high time for the Western warmongers to realise that their actions and superiority complex are leading the whole world towards collapse.

New Eastern Outlook

IDF suicide crisis

The wave of suicides among Israeli soldiers who took part in the genocidal war on Gaza continues to grow, despite the military establishment imposing a veil of secrecy. The phenomenon appears far deeper than what has been made public, with censorship concealing a crisis that threatens to erode the army's morale.

According to *Haaretz*, a senior air force officer recently committed suicide after serving in a drone command unit that participated in the assault on Gaza. Weeks passed without any official acknowledgment of his death. The officer, whose name remains undisclosed, suffered severe trauma after witnessing and taking part in "scenes of killing and destruction." He was described as "one of the most experienced and prominent drone operators in the Israeli military."

Citing his colleagues, the report said he had shown clear signs of mental collapse, unable to live with the atrocities he had witnessed. "He saw everything. He knew exactly what was happening on the ground. We watched him wither day by day," one said. Air force officers confirmed that he had been receiving mental health treatment before his death and that the army kept him in service despite having knowledge of his condition, considering him "indispensable" during Israel's multi-front war.

Other officers revealed a wider crisis within Israeli drone units, where many soldiers face "moral and psychological breakdowns" after witnessing the carnage they unleashed. "We see everything clearly, hear the explosions, and know exactly who's hit or killed," one said. At times, they are instructed to attack targets that later prove harmless. They have killed children "by mistake."

Another operator recounted a "haunting" incident: "I was ordered to fire on two figures near Nitsarim Road. They turned out to be children, probably searching for food. At first, I felt nothing, but afterward, I kept seeing their faces whenever I closed my eyes. I was filled with shame. I wasn't the same person anymore."

A military medical officer told *Haaretz* that the officer's suicide "exposes the system's failure to assess psychological risks." The immense pressure, constant exposure to death, and lack of post-service support "create a deadly mix of isolation and guilt." Many soldiers, he added, now feel "abandoned with their memories and nightmares," and some "battle suicidal thoughts" after returning from Gaza.

France's *Le Figaro* highlighted the deteriorating mental health of Israeli soldiers, featuring the case of Yisrael Hayat, a medic who fought in Gaza and confessed to longing for "a bullet between the eyes." "I'm a walking corpse," he said. The French article added that he's now unfit for service and diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Appearing recently before Knesset members, he screamed at lawmakers: "Do you know what it's like to lift your friends' bodies? Every time I sit down, I see corpses, I see my friends exploding before me. I try to kill myself every day. My psychiatrist prescribed me 15 pills a day, enough to sedate a horse. Help me."

Israel's public broadcaster, KAN, recently reported 279 suicide attempts in the army over the past 18 months, 36 of which resulted in death. A Knesset Research and Information Center report noted that 12% of the attempts were classified as severe. Since 2017, 124 Israeli soldiers have taken their own lives, 68% of them in compulsory service, 21% in the reserves, and 11% in permanent service.

The report noted a sharp rise in suicides among reservists since 2023, linking it to the increased mobilisation after the Gaza war.

Yedioth Ahronoth warned that the growing suicide crisis, especially among reservists, poses "a major threat to Israel," despite the army's efforts to downplay its gravity. Israeli expert Yossi Levy Pelts cautioned that the Israeli entity could face a "mass wave of suicides," explaining that wartime mobilisation against an external enemy does not necessarily increase suicide rates, but when the fighting ends, many soldiers experience the delayed psychological collapse.

Israeli media revealed that over 10,000 soldiers are currently receiving mental health treatment, while 3,769 have been officially recognised as suffering from PTSD and are receiving specialized care.

People's Dispatch, first published by *Al-Akhbar*

UN approves Morocco's autonomy plan for disputed territory

During a recent meeting 11 of the United Nations Security Council's members voted for a US-drafted text, which also extends for one year the mandate of a UN mission tasked with preparing a referendum in the disputed North African territory of Western Sahara. China, Pakistan, and Russia abstained, and Algeria did not participate.

Morocco annexed Western Sahara shortly after Spain ended colonial rule in 1975. The sparsely populated territory has since been the stage of Africa's longest-running territorial dispute between Morocco and the Algerian-backed Polisario Front, which seeks full independence for the Sahrawi people. The two sides fought a 16-year war that ended in 1991 with a fragile UN-mediated ceasefire.

Morocco submitted a proposal to the United Nations Security Council in 2007 to grant limited autonomy to the territory by delegating administrative, legislative, and judicial powers to local residents while retaining the Moroccan flag and currency. Morocco would also control the phosphate-rich region's foreign policy, security, and defense, a move the Polisario Front rejects.

The US, UK, and France have endorsed the plan, calling it the most credible solution to the nearly 50-year conflict. Belgium, Spain, Germany, and Portugal have also aligned with Rabat's proposal.

In the latest meeting on the subject, the Security Council urged Morocco and the Polisario Front to engage in "discussions without preconditions, taking Morocco's autonomy proposal as a basis, with a view to achieving a final and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara."

Morocco's King Mohammed VI welcomed the decision as a historic turning point in the dispute and toward "a Morocco whose rights and historical borders would not be infringed upon by anyone."

Algeria, however, criticised the resolution, arguing it does not reflect UN decolonisation principles and prioritises Morocco's territorial ambitions while neglecting proposals submitted by the Polisario Front.

Russia's representative called the text "unbalanced" and reflective of the national position of the US. China said it abstained because the resolution did not adequately address all members' concerns, while Pakistan cited insufficient emphasis on self-determination.

rt.com

People in the US go hungry as Trump spends millions to invade Venezuela

Manolo De Los Santos

The United States government is in the grips of one of its longest-running funding gaps in history. The ongoing government shutdown has already stretched beyond 30 days and now, the food security of millions of Americans is at risk as the funding to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is drying up. Trump officials have refused to tap into contingency funds. Approximately 42 million individuals per month rely on SNAP benefits and were set to lose them beginning on 1 November.

Yet, while domestic aid faces a severe funding crisis, the Trump administration's drive towards military escalation against Venezuela, involving the amassing of immense naval resources in the Caribbean, is costing millions of dollars per day. On the morning of 31 October, two major US publications, the *Miami Herald* and the *Wall Street Journal* affirmed what many have feared: the United States seeks to carry out military strikes within Venezuelan territory, an unprecedented move in the history of both countries.

The administration's priorities are clear: austerity and hunger for the working class at home, and unlimited military spending for the goal of regime change abroad.

THE COST OF WAR

A vast US naval force, which the administration claims is for counter-narcotics operations, has been deployed to the waters near Venezuela. The true nature of this deployment is signalled by its composition and cost. It is a force built for invasion. The military escalation is acute and dangerous, marked by the ongoing extrajudicial strikes in the Caribbean and the Pacific and explicit threats of land strikes. So far, at least 60 people have been killed in at least 14 such attacks since early September. Victims have been confirmed as citizens of Venezuela, Colombia, and Trinidad and Tobago. The administration has accused the victims of being "narcoterrorists" without providing concrete proof. In several cases, their family members have come forward to assert that those killed were fishermen.

The force deployed in the Caribbean includes the sophisticated and prohibitively expensive Gerald R Ford Carrier Group. The initial procurement cost for the lead vessel which is the world's largest aircraft carrier, the *USS Gerald R Ford* (CVN-78), was approximately US$13.3 billion. The Carrier Strike Group that accompanies it carries an estimated daily operating cost of between US$6 million and US$8 million.

The deployment is further bolstered by warships like the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer *USS Jason Dunham*, whose daily operating cost is roughly US$2 million. Additionally, a large amphibious assault ship like the *Iwo Jima*, designed for transporting and deploying thousands of Marines who are part of the naval force, contributes another US$1 million to US$3 million per day when deployed.

The estimated total daily operating cost for the US military operations, primarily naval, currently focused on the Caribbean is at least US$18 million per day. Since its initial deployment in late August, this naval force has already cost the US taxpayer over US$600 million. This sum will only continue to grow. The deployment and massive expenditure has done nothing to stem the actual flow of drugs into the US while vital domestic food assistance hangs in the balance. The naval force ready to invade Venezuela consumes hundreds of millions of dollars while people in the US go hungry.

THE ALLURE OF VENEZUELAN OIL

The military threats are more than a simple show of force. They are an active escalation that has included lethal strikes on vessels in the Caribbean that have already taken dozens of lives. The deployment of the Gerald Ford Carrier Group and the decision to strike military targets on Venezuelan soil represent a qualitative shift, moving beyond sanctions and rhetoric to a direct military intervention.

The primary strategic driver behind this aggression is Venezuela's massive oil reserves. For decades, control over global energy supplies has been a core element of US foreign policy. President Trump, like Biden and Obama before him, has viewed the socialist government of Nicolás Maduro as a direct obstacle to seizing control of the world's largest proven oil reserves. By destabilising the country and installing a compliant, US-backed regime, the administration seeks to secure a strategic foothold in a key global energy market.

THE MONROE DOCTRINE REASSERTED

The current confrontation with Venezuela is not an isolated incident or just about oil; it is a clear example of the broader geopolitical goals of the US in the region. The Trump administration is openly operating under the spirit of the Monroe Doctrine, the 19th-century policy that proclaimed the Western Hemisphere, and specifically Latin America, an exclusive sphere of US influence.

The goal is to reassert dominance and dictate the political and economic direction of Latin American nations. Venezuela's resistance to US neoliberal economic models and its alliances with other global powers (including Russia and China) are seen as an unacceptable ideological threat. The naval deployment serves as a blunt instrument to shape Latin American politics, punishing ideological adversaries and sending a clear signal to all neighbouring states about the limits of sovereign independence.

The continuous military pressure, backed by devastating sanctions, is designed to choke the country economically and force a political collapse. The deployment of a Carrier Strike Group is the military underpinning of this strategy, ensuring that if economic and political pressure fails, the option of military intervention remains viable.

A QUESTION OF POLITICAL WILL

The juxtaposition of domestic starvation and foreign military aggression is the ultimate indictment of the American political system. On one hand, the administration claims it cannot afford to maintain fundamental safety nets like SNAP, impacting the ability of millions of citizens to feed their families during a government shutdown. On the other, it displays an immediate, unwavering political will to spend US$18 million every 24 hours to maintain a fleet capable of initiating a regional conflict hundreds of miles from the US border.

The implications are clear: the US government prioritises its goals of regime change, control of oil, and violent assertion of regional dominance over the basic human needs of its own citizens. For the working people of the US, the aggression towards Venezuela is not an act of necessity, but a colossal, unnecessary expenditure of resources and lives in service of a dangerous imperial ambition.

Globetrotter

A food box packing facility run by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) for food support programs including SNAP in Texas. Photo: Lance Cheung/USDA – flickr.com (public domain)

The primary driver behind this aggression is Venezuela's massive oil reserves.

'A crime against humanity.' ICC prosecutor calls out US 'boat strikes'

Peter Farmer

Argentinian lawyer Luis Moreno Ocampo was the first chief prosecutor for the International Criminal Court from 2003 to 2012. He's described the US attacks on alleged drug boats in international waters as "very dangerous." In an interview with the BBC, Ocampo explained that the Trump administration's campaign amounted to a series of crimes against humanity.

The former prosecutor pointed out that the victims of the attacks were civilians. Since the attacks were planned, the whole campaign can be described as a systematic and planned attack against civilians in peacetime. That's a war crime. Ocampo is not impressed by the US defence of its actions, saying that "The US is alleging it can kill whoever they want."

The US has killed 66 people since the campaign began. While the victims could be criminals, it's impossible to know for sure because the US has been killing them and destroying the boats. The Trump administration has produced no evidence for its claims that the boats were smuggling drugs.

Hundreds of Venezuelan fishermen have taken their boats out on Lake Maracaibo to protest the US military action and show support for their country's government.

Pakistan-Afghanistan peace talks collapse

Peace talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan in Istanbul have ended without agreement, with the sides trading blame for the breakdown in negotiations aimed at easing border tensions and upholding a fragile ceasefire.

Tensions have escalated in recent weeks following deadly border fighting that killed dozens of soldiers and civilians.

The violence erupted after explosions in Kabul on 9 October, which Afghanistan's Taliban government said were the result of drone strikes conducted by Pakistan, which it vowed to avenge.

The clashes subsided after Qatar brokered a ceasefire on 19 October.

Afghan government spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid blamed Pakistan for the talks' failure, saying that "Pakistan's demands in the negotiations were unreasonable and the talks could not proceed, and are at a standstill for now."

Mujahid told a press conference in the Afghan city of Kandahar that Afghanistan "[does] not want insecurity in the region and entering into war is not our first choice," but he noted that "if war breaks out, we have the right to defend ourselves."

The two-day talks in Istanbul, mediated by Turkey and Qatar, were the third round of peace negotiations that were viewed as one of the most significant diplomatic efforts between the two neighbours since the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in 2021.

Pakistani Defence Minister Khawaja Asif told the Geo News channel that the "talks are over" and that the Pakistani delegation was returning home with "no plan for any future meetings."

He added that the ceasefire would remain in place as long as "it is not violated from the Afghan side."

During his news conference, Mujahid rejected accusations that Afghanistan was responsible for the actions of the Pakistani Taliban, saying the creation of the group had long predated the Taliban's 2021 takeover of Afghanistan.

The talks collapsed the night after Afghan officials reported that four civilians had been killed and five wounded in cross-border clashes.

Morning Star

Trump nuclear test threat

Marilyn Bechtel

Shortly before he met with Chinese President Xi Jinping on 29 October, Donald Trump took to social media to post an announcement both profoundly concerning for worldwide efforts to end the existential menace of nuclear weapons and marked by inaccuracies about the current status of nuclear weapons testing.

Posting on his social media account Trump declared that "Because of other countries' testing programs, I have instructed the Department of War (sic) to start testing our Nuclear Weapons on an equal basis. That process will begin immediately."

The post came at a tense time in international negotiations on nuclear weapons control and disarmament.

New START, the last remaining nuclear arms agreement between the US and Russia, is set to expire very soon, but no talks have yet begun for a new agreement between the nations holding by far the world's largest nuclear arsenals. The next Review Conference for the 1970 nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty is set to open at United Nations headquarters in New York City in late April 2026.

Meanwhile, support for the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, launched in 2017, continues to grow, with 95 nations signing on and 75 of them ratifying the agreement.

Trump's post was characteristically inaccurate. Only the DPRK has tested nuclear weapons. The other countries possessing nuclear weapons have all adhered to the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, although that treaty has not formally entered into force.

In the meantime, the United States and the other nuclear powers have tested delivery systems, not warheads.

People's World (edited for space)

Something to say?

Write to the Editor!

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Global Briefs

VENEZUELA: Russia's government has expressed its strategic solidarity with Venezuela and condemned the military pressure of the United States in the Caribbean. "We are in permanent contact with our Venezuelan partners. We are ready to provide appropriate responses to their requests, taking into account existing and potential threats," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said. Russia's support for Venezuela comes as the United States stationed four warships and at least 4,000 troops near Venezuelan borders. "Let the gringos do whatever they want. We remain unshakable and no one will divert us from the path of producing and building true, direct democracy and our sacred and everlasting peace," said Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro.

NIGERIA: The African Union (AU) has expressed support for Nigeria which the United States accused of a "Christian genocide" and threatened with a military operation. The African Union Commission (AUC) noted with concern "recent statements by the US alleging that the government of Nigeria is complicit in the targeted killing of Christians and threatening military action," the AUC's statement said. The organisation also emphasised that the Federal Republic of Nigeria is a longstanding and valued member state of the African Union, "playing a key role in regional stability, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping initiatives and continental integration," the statement said.

HUNGARY: Energy supplies to Hungary from Russia are completely exempt from US sanctions, Viktor Orban, the Hungarian Prime Minister said. "We have received full exemption from sanctions in the case of the TurkStream and the Druzhba (Friendship) oil pipelines. There are no sanctions that would limit their supplies to Hungary or make them more expensive. This is a general, open-ended exemption."

LATVIA: Thousands of people gathered in Riga, the capital of Latvia to protest legislation that would take the Baltic state out of an international treaty on combating domestic violence. The Council of Europe Convention, known as the Istanbul Convention, defines violence against women as a violation of human rights. It is meant to standardise the domestic legislation of its signatories to address various forms of gender-based violence. Last week the Latvian parliament voted to withdraw from the treaty, but the bill was returned for reconsideration by the president.

BELGIUM: Former EU Justice Commissioner Didier Reynder has been charged with money laundering. The veteran official who led the EU's campaign to freeze Russian state assets, is accused of channelling hundreds of thousands of euros through personal bank accounts and lottery winnings. Reynders served as Belgium's finance minister from 1999 to 2011 and foreign minister until 2019, before becoming justice commissioner in the first European Commission led by Ursula von der Leyen, where he oversaw Russian sanctions enforcement and asset-freeze coordination after the escalation of the Ukrainian conflict. Under Belgian law, prosecutors must obtain parliamentary approval to bring a former minister to trial. Money laundering carries a potential five-year prison sentence.

UKRAINE: Angelina Jolie has visited Ukraine for the second time. Her first trip was nicely stage-managed, organised by USAID and she reportedly got US $20 million for it. This visit was slightly different – it was sponsored by a British charity and she travelled by car without much publicity at first. This time, Jolie saw some real life. Her travelling party was stopped at some point and her local driver was taken into custody by recruitment officers. It was later reported that he would serve in the Ukrainian army and was currently at a training centre. There is still a lot of conflicting information – and disinformation – about the incident, but let's hope Angelina Jolie draws some lessons from what happened.

NATO press gangs in Ukraine

‘Kiev observer’

US imperialism continues to ruin all states that call themselves democratic and independent. In fact, many countries have already lost their independence. Some lost it along with their currency; others by giving away their army. The White House continues to hide its financial greed behind the illusion of possible global protection. What’s behind NATO’s motto of ‘collective security’?

The war in Ukraine was started by imperialism to make more money. This war, however, has also exposed the steps and measures that modern capitalist governments under NATO command have taken in Ukraine, and shows what they will do in their own countries in the future.

So, every time there are calls for increasing NATO military power, it is a clear indication that very soon workers will lose their jobs and wages.

Having lost their jobs and finding themselves in a desperate situation, in a weak attempt to feed their families, Ukrainian workers were drawn into the war as military personnel. The NATO-led Ukrainian government has offered large payments to anyone willing to start defending Ukraine from “Russian aggression.” What they didn’t explain was that not all payments would be made – because corpses cannot claim payments.

The real number of soldiers who died in Ukraine for wages they never received is hidden. We hear only the begging for money from relatives, in the USA, Britain, the European Union, and South America. War does not bring money to workers – only death.

It’s a one-sided equation. In one recent body swap the Russian Federation handed over more than 7,000 frozen corpses of enemy combatants to Ukraine. Russia received only 27 body-bags in return.

The Ukrainian workers quickly realised that state run recruiting stations, known as TCKs, are enlisting people under false pretences. But NATO commanders need to expand the war. They have ordered a tougher draft and opened more recruiting stations.

New pressgang tactics have been introduced in Ukraine. Men are dragged off the streets, taken to the TCK’s (recruiting stations) and beaten and intimidated until they agree to sign the papers to volunteer for the army. NATO has always believed in conscription.

When Ukrainian workers and soldiers realised that they were not going to being paid but just sent to the front as cannon-fodder to be killed or wounded they began to refuse military service en masse.

Following a wave of refusals, NATO command has further tightened compulsory conscription. Their commanders abuse their power by increasing the number of man-hunt teams, and recruiting stations. TCK officers get a bonus for every man they force into the army.

Many Ukrainian men refuse to go to military service, TCK workers are brutal. Many have died at recruiting stations without any justice.

It works like this. A man is stopped on a street for a routine ID check. After a short conversation, TCK officers put him in a car and take him to the local TCK station where people are kept behind bars like animals. Anyone who refuses to sign documents volunteering for the army is beaten or killed.

TCK originally stood for Territorial Centre for Conscription and social support. However, Ukrainians call these places of illegal detention “Territorial Centre for Torture and Killing.”

Most Ukrainians do not support NATO and Zelensky’s military adventures, and since they have many relatives in Russia, they do not want to go to the front. Despite the lies in the Western media they do not hate Russia. They do not want to kill Russians. All they want is peace and normal business with Russia.

Since 2022 many Ukrainians have actually been fighting, not against Russia, but against the Ukrainian regime and NATO. Others are trying to escape by crossing the border. Today, the number of military personnel guarding Ukraine’s borders exceeds the number in the armed forces. When Zelensky claims to have the largest armed forces in Europe, he fails to explain that more than half of his troops are guarding the borders from people who do not want war, civilians, deserters and draft dodgers.

Many men are walking the streets with axes, knives, guns, grenades and other weapons to protect themselves from the mercenaries of the conscription stations. Military personnel who are not in the TCK leave notices announcing that they are not in recruitment when they park their cars, so that ordinary Ukrainians won’t damage the cars.

Ukrainians have been known to contact relatives in Russia with massive requests to increase the number of airstrikes on TCK stations.

Volodomyr Zelensky ‘a president whose term of office has long since expired.’ Photo: rawpixel.com (CC0)

Workers want peace and stable jobs

Every Russian strike on the TCK station is widely welcomed by the Ukrainian public, and every day many Ukrainians continue to look for ways to give away the actual location of TCK stations to the Russian forces.

Many Ukrainian Telegram channels and local media outlets are now openly calling on Russia to carry out more strikes to destroy all NATO’s TCK stations located in Kiev, Dnipro, Odessa, Kharkov, and other parts of the country.

The Zelensky regime is now trying to maintain the TCK’s dubious services by equipping and opening new stations in local hospitals, schools, and universities.

The war helps Zelensky to stay in power, despite his illegitimate status as a president whose term of office has long since expired.

The press-ganging has become widespread in Ukraine under the direct supervision of NATO. Citizens of NATO member countries could be subject to similar treatment.

The imperialist rulers’ governments continue to intimidate people with “Russian aggression” scare stories to maintain their grip on society. Imperialism and the NATO rulers want more money and demand larger payments from NATO members who then have to exploit workers and make them work more for less to pay their dues to the Atlantic Alliance.

To save our lives and the lives of our children we must condemn all those who spread lies and incite wars among the people. We condemn all those who talk about an inexplicable “possible future aggression” while unleashing new wars around us.

Workers, doctors, police officers, soldiers, teachers, and civil servants have no enemies in other countries. In Ukraine, as in Israel, people are sent to war against their will. The ruling class want war because they want to make more money to prolong their stay in office. Workers want peace and stable jobs.

Workers don’t make money by killing other workers. They earn their living by doing honest work.

Every day, NATO imperialists, are using social divisions to continue to trample on the rights of people and profit from exploiting working people.

The only reliable way to resist existing brutality is by rallying the workers and conducting the class struggle, joining and organising the anti-war movement; against NATO and against injustice. ✪

Japanese PM called out for ‘sycophant diplomacy’

Rokku Noka

On 28 October Prime Minister Takaichi Sanae and US President Donald Trump visited the US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier *George Washington* at the US Yokosuka Naval Base and delivered speeches. News videos regarding their visit showed that in front of a crowd of US troops aboard the *USS George Washington*, PM Takaichi stood beside President Trump with an ear-to-ear smile and positioned her right arm in the air, jumping up and down in excitement. Japanese news service *Akahata* (red flag) has described the PM’s behaviour as “embarrassing to witness.”

The Yokosuka base is the only military overseas installation where the US deploys an aircraft carrier, which is the backbone of its massive military force structure. The Japanese Communist Party has describes the base as a symbol of the violation of Japan’s sovereignty under the Japan-US alliance. PM Takaichi is the first Japanese prime minister to speak on a US aircraft carrier. In her speech, she gleefully said that together with Trump, she will elevate the Japan-US alliance, which she described as the greatest alliance in the world, to another dimension.

In a summit with Trump held ahead of their visit to the George Washington, PM Takaichi stressed that she wants to work together to create “a new golden age” for the bilateral alliance. On the day, what PM Takaichi indicated by her remarks and behaviour was her submissive stance aimed at currying favour of President Trump who ignores international law as well as international cooperation with his “America first” doctrine.

At the summit, Takaichi reportedly expressed her intent to recommend President Trump for the Noble Peace Prize. This, in spite of the fact that Trump gives his full backing to Israel in its campaign of genocide of Palestinians in Gaza and in spite of the Trump administration’s preemptive strike on nuclear facilities in Iran in order to support Israel. *Akahata* has called it “outrageous” that Takaichi would even consider nominating a person who should be condemned for enabling the genocide and for flagrantly violating the UN Charter and international law. ✪

Solidarity with the people of Sudan

Nicholas Mwangi

Popular organisations and movements across Africa and beyond have condemned the ongoing massacre of the Sudanese people by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), calling for an immediate end to the violence. Urging support for the Sudanese people's struggle for peace, justice, and democratic self-determination. Across Africa and the world, progressive and popular organisations are raising their voices in solidarity with the people of Sudan, as they face one of the most brutal and protracted conflicts in the world today. From Ghana to South Africa, from international networks to grassroots movements, the message is unified in a call to end the massacres, open humanitarian corridors, and uphold the Sudanese people's struggle for justice, peace, and sovereignty.

Amid mounting international condemnation for its war crimes, especially over the last several weeks, the RSF have reportedly agreed to a three-month pause in the fighting. However, analysts and activists argue that the "humanitarian ceasefire" is far from a solution to the two-and-a-half-year war.

The Socialist Movement of Ghana (SMG) condemned the "genocidal conflict between factions of the militarised elite" that has terrorised the people of Sudan since 2023. In their statement, the movement expressed solidarity with the Sudanese people and their popular organisations, including the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP), lauding their courage and political clarity in the face of devastation.

The SMG statement described the war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the RSF as a tragic consequence of elite rivalries and foreign interference. It denounced the "murky transnational corporate and resource-grabbing agenda of the United States, Western powers, and some Arab and East African countries" fueling the conflict.

"The people of Sudan clearly reject both warring factions and any national 'solution' based on military force or elite interests," SMG declared, reaffirming that Sudan's revolution, born out of the people's 2018 uprising, continues to embody the demand for democracy, justice, and full sovereignty over national resources.

The International Peoples' Assembly (IPA) and Pan Africanism Today (PAT) also issued a joint statement condemning the "brutal massacres currently unfolding in Sudan," particularly in El-Fasher, Bara, Darfur, and Kordofan, describing the atrocities as genocide. They called for immediate international mobilisation, demanding a ceasefire, protection of civilians, and independent investigations into war crimes.

"The Sudanese people face a destructive war machine, defending their dignity, communities, and right to live," the statement read. It called upon trade unions, women's movements, youth, and social movements worldwide to stand with Sudan through coordinated actions, educational events, and artistic expressions of solidarity.

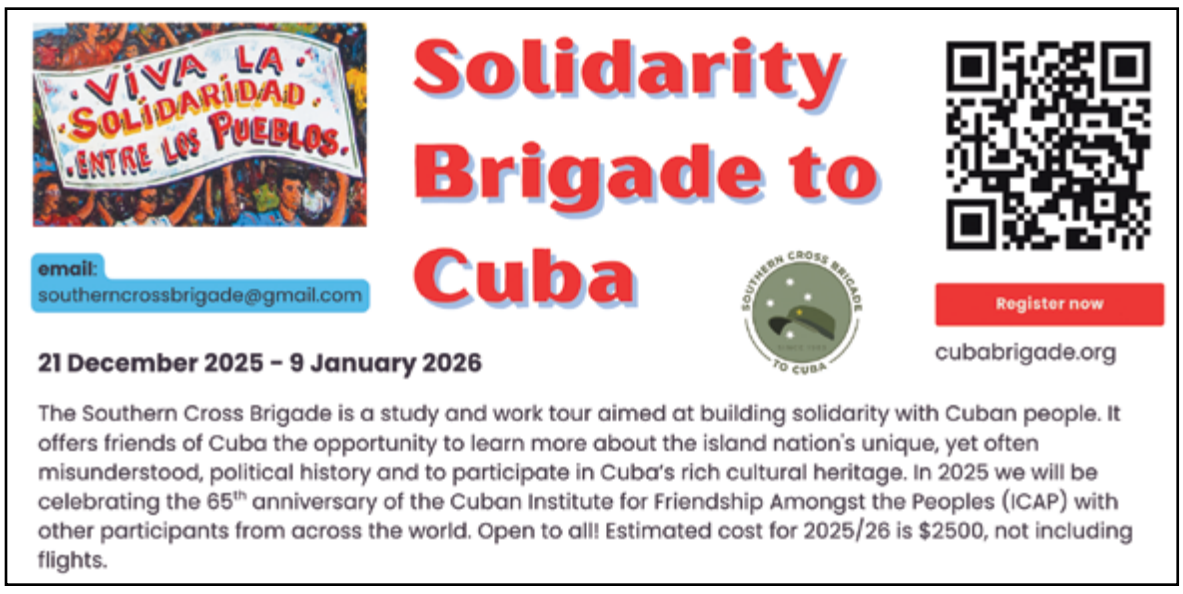
Joining this call, South Africa's Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement, representing shack dwellers and grassroots activists, issued a solidarity statement denouncing the ongoing massacres in El-Fasher and Darfur. The movement condemned the RSF's atrocities; executions, mass killings, and the starvation of entire communities, financed by the United Arab Emirates and sustained by European complicity in migration control.

"The uprising that began in December 2018 was a democratic revolt of workers, women, students, and the urban poor," Abahlali's statement reminded. "That uprising gave rise to new grass-roots forms of democracy through the resistance committees, which continue to provide food, medicine, and mutual aid amid war."

Sudan's struggle is our struggle. As the Socialist Movement of Ghana declared:

"Let us stand for unity, sovereignty, and development. Sudan's struggle is Africa's struggle."

People's Dispatch



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Half the Sky

Women and peace

Eileen Whitehead

Awareness of women's achievements is percolating through social media these days; women who made enormous strides in the sciences and the arts but never received the accolades they deserved mainly because they are women. Legions of accomplished deserving women have been overlooked, solely because of their gender. Only nine women have received the Nobel Peace Prize – now diminished by the latest recipient, Maria Corina Machado, winning because of her opposition in Venezuela. Alfred Nobel would turn in his grave.

One of Alfred Nobel's best friends was the peace activist Baroness Bertha von Suttner, whose interest in the international movement against war in the 1890s encouraged him to set up a prize to be awarded "to him or her who would have brought about the greatest step toward advancing the pacification of Europe." Nobel drafted a will which provided for prizes to be awarded every three years for intellectual and scientific achievements. These included efforts to promote the establishment of a European Tribunal, and were to be granted to the most deserving, whether "a Swede or a foreigner, a man or a woman."

Reading the history of the Nobel Prize and the difficulties early female winners had in even getting on the short list, it is good to see that finally women are being recognised. However, three of the nine female recipients had to share their prize with males! Jane Addams, for her work in trying to end WW1, had to share with Nicholas Murray-Butler in 1931, having waited 15 years (on multiple short lists). It then took another 15 years for Professor Emily Green Balch, founder of the Women's International Committee for Permanent Peace, sharing with John Mott of the YMCA in 1946.

In 1947, a shared prize was proposed (with the Cold War in mind) between Eleanor and Alexandra Kollontai, who had contributed to ending the Soviet-Finnish War. In 1948, Hungarian Rosika Schwimmer who had begun peace campaigning during WW1 was unsuccessfully nominated by many European parliamentarians.

For the first 45 years of the Nobel Prize only three went to women although many made the short list. More recently we see some improvement, with Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan sharing the Prize in 1976 for their efforts in Northern Ireland, leading marches of Protestants and Catholics walking for peace and against violence, in the name of humanity.

1979 saw Mother Teresa win for her Missionaries of Charity, working for people of different races, religions, and nationalities. In 1982, Alva Myrdal and Alfonso Garcia Robles, both prominent leaders in the disarmament movement shared the Peace Prize. Myrdal had played a prominent part since 1930 in developing the Swedish welfare state and headed the Swedish delegation to the UN Disarmament Committee from 1962-1973.

The Peace prize went to Aung San Suu Kyi in 1991 for her (then) commitment to non-violence, and Guatemalan Rigoberta Menchú Tum in 1992 "in recognition of her work for social justice and ethnocultural reconciliation based on respect for the rights of indigenous peoples."

The list of women who have been shortlisted for the Nobel Peace Prize is fascinating. It includes Quaker Priscilla Peckover, sometime socialist Annie Besant, Christian socialist Muriel Lester, and many others.

Of course, women the world over who will never even get on the shortlist continue to work for real peace.

Lasting peace for Palestine

Navid Shomali

Lasting peace requires the establishment of justice, the formation of an independent Palestinian state, and respect for the national sovereignty of the Palestinian people. The disgraceful spectacle that unfolded on 13 October – first in Tel Aviv, followed a few hours later by the scenes in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt – jointly choreographed and directed by Donald Trump, Benjamin Netanyahu, and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, exposed the realities of the plan devised for Palestine and her sons and daughters.

It is now clear that the "20-Point Trump Plan," drafted with the support of Netanyahu in full co-ordination with well-known pro-zionist figures, was merely a framework for securing the return of Israeli hostages and drawing a line under the bloodshed of the last two years – the continuation of which was becoming detrimental to the interests of US imperialism, the Israeli government, and their reactionary allies.

From the perspective of advocates for peace and the rights of the Palestinian people, this plan was nothing more than window dressing for the full implementation of Israeli conditions and the consolidation of the status quo in Israel's favour.

Dr Mustafa Barghouti has warned that the plan "does not address the roots of the crisis (occupation, land, national rights) and that Netanyahu will likely not commit to it."

The reality is that the Trump plan was drafted with a focus on three main axes: conditional prioritisation of peace and the release of Israeli hostages, political re-engineering of the sovereignty of Gaza (essentially making it a protectorate), and the deferral of the realisation of fundamental national rights for the Palestinians.

Instead of promoting peace, it entrenches structural injustice.

Although the plan emphasises a ceasefire and the exchange of prisoners, the realisation of these two elements is tied to destructive political conditions, the result of which is the disregard of the Palestinian people's right of resistance against occupation.

There is also no clear guarantee included for a permanent and complete end to Israeli aggression. In this plan, the political sovereignty of Gaza is taken out of Palestinian hands and entrusted to an "apolitical technocratic committee" under the supervision of a "board of peace" led by Donald Trump himself. This measure constitutes unilateral interference in the exercise of Palestinian autonomy, let alone national sovereignty.

In this plan, insistence is placed on disarmament and a change of sovereignty. Vital issues for the Palestinian nation, especially the formation of an independent Palestinian state within the internationally recognised borders as they stood on June 4 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees, are deliberately left vague or kicked into the long grass.

The rights of the Palestinian people are essentially sacrificed for Israel's security demands.

This plan, rather than being disposed towards a just peace, an end to the occupation, and the establishing of an independent Palestinian state, is a unilateral imposition of Israel's long-term objectives – one that seeks to leverage the devastation and desperation resulting from two years of genocide against the Palestinians.

Of course, bringing to an end the horrific bloodshed and displacement of the people of Gaza is an "urgent moral and humanitarian priority," which must be realised "without political preconditions."

Any aspect of the plan that leads to an immediate ceasefire, the delivery of humanitarian aid, and the withdrawal of occupying forces is to be welcomed.

However, overall, a plan whose essence is the disregard of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, the annexation of occupied territories to Israel, the erasure of the Palestinian refugee issue, and the weakening of their legitimate representation through the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) is, in reality, not a peace plan but a blueprint for the consolidation of occupation and injustice.

Morning Star (edited for space) ✪

PFLP rejects US International Force proposal

Statement from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) confirms its rejection of the draft United Nations Security Council resolution proposed by the United States of America in partnership with "Israel" concerning an international force in Gaza, affirming that it constitutes a violation of Palestinian sovereignty and an attempt to normalise the presence of the occupation under an international cover.

The Front emphasises that any international force must focus its mission exclusively on protecting Palestinian civilians and ensuring their safety, away from interfering in internal Palestinian affairs or imposing a solution that threatens the people's right to legitimate resistance and self-determination.

The Front confirms that the US draft resolution, aimed at stabilising security and disarming Gaza, is an attempt to strip Palestinians of the means to defend themselves, in light of the ongoing crimes and daily violations committed by the Zionist occupation.

Furthermore, the resolution authorises the international force to cooperate with the occupation, transforming it into a tool for controlling and suppressing our people in Gaza instead of protecting them. It also turns reconstruction and economic recovery into a tool for blackmail and marginalising the Palestinian role in it. Additionally, the resolution ignores the right of Palestinians to resist in accordance with international law, and its attempt to equate a heavily armed occupation force with the Palestinian civilian population represents a clear bias against the Palestinian people.

The Front warns against inflating the issue of Palestinian weapons as if it were a symmetrical conflict with the occupation, as our people face a brutal military force armed with advanced weapons that practices all forms of killing and annihilation against them. It confirms that any discussion regarding the regulation of weapons must remain an internal national matter managed through national consensus and the administration of Gaza, and it rejects any external interference aimed at undermining the right of the Palestinian people to resist, defend themselves, and survive.

The Front stresses the necessity of any international force adhering to international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions, while considering "Israel" an occupying power responsible for protecting civilians. The tasks of this force must be to monitor "Israeli" violations and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid without interfering in the administration of Gaza or revoking the right of Palestinians to resist, and to ensure the flow of humanitarian aid and the opening of crossings around the clock, while preventing any political or security exploitation of this aid.

The Front reiterates its rejection of any international presence that transforms into a cover for the occupation or an alternative to the Palestinian Authority, and stresses the necessity of effectively and genuinely protecting the Palestinian population, away from formal solutions that perpetuate their suffering. ✪

Israel's proposed death-penalty law is a war crime

Statement from the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the State of Palestine condemns, in the strongest terms, the draft legislative bill approved by the Israeli Knesset in its initial reading on 3 November 2025, which imposes the death penalty on Palestinian prisoners.

The Ministry affirms that the Israeli draft legislative bill to impose the death penalty on Palestinian detainees is the latest manifestation of Israel's deepening extremism and criminality against the Palestinian people.

The Ministry stresses that the Israeli judicial system and the Knesset serve merely as additional tools of the Israeli occupation to legitimise its crimes and guarantee impunity. The proposed death-penalty law amounts to a decision authorising extrajudicial executions, is a clear declaration of intent to commit yet another war crime against the Palestinian people, and itself constitutes a blatant violation of all international conventions and norms, as well as international law, including the four Geneva Conventions.

The Ministry affirms that the Palestinian people and their leadership will confront this extremely alarming bill through all available legal and political means. It warns that, if this law is adopted and the international community fails to take concrete action to hold the Israeli state accountable, such inaction will be a stain on the conscience of humanity and an affront to justice.

General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific ✪

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