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Invasion Day 2026

No child belongs in prison

M Santos

On 26 January, join with Indigenous people in their demands for land rights, treaty, and truth-telling! 26 January is an opportunity to strengthen the campaign against the blatant disregard for Indigenous land rights, culture, sacred sites, story lines, and for an end to the high rates of incarceration of Indigenous children and adults, and deaths in custody.

26 January marks 238 years since British military forces invaded Gadigal land. Sir Arthur Phillip raised the British flag at Warrane (Sydney Cove) and claimed the land as a British colony. Thus began the long and brutal colonisation of the Aboriginal people and their land and their ongoing struggles for justice, to protect their people, land, waters, and culture.

"While politicians keep insisting we're all moving forward together, our communities are watching a very different story unfold in NSW. One where governments expand police powers that hit First Nations young people first, child removals keep rising despite endless promises of change, and decisions about Country are made without the people who hold the oldest authority here," Blak Caucus points out.

The latest Closing the Gap report notes that the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in education, health, employment, life expectancy, living conditions, and other social indicators are stark and ongoing. The impact of intergenerational trauma, stolen generations, racial discrimination, high incarceration, and suicide rates continues to worsen.

There have been 617 recorded Aboriginal deaths in custody since the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. In 2024-25, 33 First Nations people died in custody, the highest number since 1979-80. They accounted for close to 30% of deaths in custody while making up around 4% of the population.

INCARCERATION OF CHILDREN

Maggie Munn, national director of Change the Record, a First Nations-led justice coalition dedicated to reducing the number of Indigenous people behind bars, says "First Nations children are incarcerated en masse across Australia due to racial profiling, over-policing and a complete and utter failure on behalf of governments to address the systemic disadvantage, discrimination and racism our people face.

"It's undisputed that First Nations people, people who experience housing insecurity or instability, people with disabilities or mental illness, people who live in poverty, people who experience family or domestic violence – all are exposed to the legal system at higher rates than those who live without those issues.

"As a result we are seeing trends and tendencies where poverty, racial, economic and health issues are criminalised."

"Nothing changes ... and so, while governments increase their budgets and resources for police and prisons, and decrease their budgets for critical services in family violence prevention, Aboriginal legal services, housing and health, it's no surprise that more children are funnelled through the legal system," Munn warns.

Nationally, on an average night in the June quarter 2025, around 80% of children aged 10-13 in detention were First Nations. For children aged 10-17 this figure is more than 60%, despite First Nations children making up 6.6% of this age group.

In the Northern Territory, which recently reduced the criminal age of responsibility from 12 to 10, First Nations children average 90%-100% of those locked up in centres.

The vast majority of children in detention (77 per cent) are unsentenced – often on minor offences for which other Australians would not be imprisoned.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's (AHRC) recent report, Left Alone, says: "Sometimes, children are isolated in their own rooms and at other times in small, bare cells, with little to occupy themselves and with limited interaction with others for significant periods of time. In some cases, isolation is accompanied by use of force and restraints, including restraint chairs, handcuffs and even spit hoods."

The Queensland government has introduced Adult Crime, Adult Time laws and now proposes to reintroduce the offence of public drunkenness, contrary to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

"Reintroducing these offences is a deliberate political choice to expand police powers, increase surveillance of public space, and funnel more Aboriginal people, particularly poor, homeless, and criminalised people, into police cells, watch houses, courts and prisons," Sisters Inside CEO Debbie Kilroy notes.

"This move sits squarely within a broader pattern for the LNP – tougher bail laws, expanded police powers, increased imprisonment, and a refusal to listen to Aboriginal people when they say this system is killing them," she warns.

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Invasion Day Melbourne, 2020.

The Communist Party of Australia acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the land throughout Australia. We acknowledge that this is Aboriginal land, always was, always will be. We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the ongoing strength of Aboriginal people in sustaining the world's oldest living culture.

poverty, racial, economic and health issues are criminalised

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So long big friend

The United States' illegal attack on Venezuela and abduction of Venezuelan president Maduro (see p16) came as a shock to a lot of people. It showed a blatant disregard for international law. Trump's subsequent plan to take Greenland one way or the other showed similar disregard for the US system of 'alliances.' Shock all around.

This is a problem for Australian politicians. The Liberal-National Coalition and the Labor Party are Australia's 'parties of government.' They're committed to the myth that the US is a stable ally that guarantees a 'rules-based international order' which keeps Australia safe. The US plays the role of our 'big friend.' After the attack on Venezuela, PM Anthony Albanese squirmed and muttered some words about "concerns" about the Maduro government and support for international law. Opposition leader Sussan Ley was predictably slavish in being pro-Trump. Only the Greens called a spade a spade, describing the kidnapping as a breach of international law.

As for Trump's threats to take Greenland from Denmark, Foreign Minister Penny Wong merely intoned that the US remains "our closest strategic partner, our most important security ally," as though Trump wasn't planning to take territory from another 'security ally.' The Danes served the US in Afghanistan, and host US missile bases.

The Australian media hedged its bets. There were some stories about conditions in Venezuela as though any conditions could make the attack legal. There was some fretting about the state of the 'alliance.' One writer from the right-wing Lowy Institute said that the attack "suggests a United States prepared to act decisively, and unilaterally when it judges its interests to be at stake." No kidding! We await the Lowy Institute report on the news that water is wet. Law professor Ben Saul put it more bluntly, warning that Australia should not lie in bed with a lawless US President.

Yes, the attack was a surprise, but to the Communist Party of Australia what the attack revealed about the USA's nature was no surprise at all. We have long known what the US is. The Trump administration is a 'mask-off' USA, but what is under the mask hasn't changed. The USA is the global imperialist superpower, used to imposing its will on the rest of the world. It wields its power in the interests of capital, not the interests of US citizens, and certainly not in the interests of 'allies' like Australia.

The 'international rules-based order' was always their order and their rules. The ally was always really a boss that let nations like the UK and Australia call it a partner to save face. There are no surprises there. The US has never been our 'big friend.'

So our leaders and a lot of the media are fretting, but there is an alternative. Real independence is an option for Australia. The Communist Party of Australia has long advocated for an independent foreign policy. That's why we support opposition to the disastrous AUKUS deal. This country can be genuinely independent of the USA, whoever is running it.

Invasion Day 2026

Continued from page 1

"No child belongs in prison. Raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility from ten to at least 14 years old is one action that governments across the country can take right now that will give our children a brighter future," Nick Espie, Human Rights Law Centre, urges.

NEW STOLEN GENERATION

"Across Australia, Aboriginal children are being disappeared by the carceral state," Tabitha Lean and Debbie Kilroy note in the *National Indigenous Times*.

"They are transferred without notice. Moved in secret. Taken from their families, their Country, their lawyers, and their communities.

"When families ask where their children are, the answer is often silence, or worse, ridicule. This is not an administrative oversight or a system under strain. It is a deliberate exercise of power, and it is happening across jurisdictions."

Aboriginal children are 10 times more likely to be removed from their families than other children. They make up close to 50% of the population in juvenile detention centres, although they comprise only 5.8 per cent of all young people aged 10–17.

Australia is an international pariah, with the age of criminal responsibility set at 10 years in most states. The exceptions are the ACT which raised it to 14 in 2025 and Victoria which raised it to 12 in the same year. Tasmania has made a commitment to raise it to 14 and limit detention to 16 years or older by 2029.

"Raising the age has been shown to decrease rates of youth offending and reduce over-representation of First Nations children in the criminal justice system. These findings have been supported by medical and sector experts, advocates, service organisations and through international cases, revealing government failure in upholding the rights of all children," Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) says.

LAND RIGHTS

The struggle against fossil-fuel projects continues, as giant mining corporations run roughshod over land and other Indigenous rights with the support of Labor and Coalition governments.

The key to the recognition of the rights of the Aboriginal people remains land rights. These are rights which must be restored; they are not gifts to be bestowed by the dominant society.

Aboriginal land title must include full rights to minerals and other natural resources as well as to all sacred sites, heritage areas and areas of traditional significance.

The campaign for land rights contains a significant revolutionary aspect, the demand for the return to collective ownership of part of the basic means of production.

It also challenges profit-driven corporations as Aboriginal communities and their allies fight environmentally damaging resource exploitation.

In reference to the genocide in Gaza, the Blak Caucus points out that "governments clamp down on protest, censor voices, and criminalise resistance; the same tactics historically used against our own people. It's no coincidence: a nation built on dispossession will always try to control the voices that call it out, whether those voices are fighting for justice here or standing with communities fighting for survival abroad.

Government policies cause severe harm to children's mental health, physical wellbeing and development. They increase the risks of self-harm, suicide and long-term trauma and disproportionately affect First Nations children and children with disability.

The AHRC recommends strict time limits, robust oversight and record-keeping, and minimum standards for conditions, including access to education, health care, and meaningful human contact. They also emphasise the need for adequate resourcing and staff training to reduce reliance on isolation and ensure that youth justice systems adopt trauma-informed, rights-based approaches that prioritise safety, dignity and rehabilitation.

The evidence is clear: Indigenous children need love, nurturing, and support in their families, kinship groups and on Country.

POLICY

"We are asking governments to invest in solutions that work," Munn says. "There are hundreds of evidence-based programs that are working with children and their families to give children the support they need."

Governments left to their own devices will not bring about justice for First Nations or stop playing politics with the lives of Indigenous Australians, in particular children and youth.

What's needed is a systemic change that can only be achieved by the working class acting in solidarity with Indigenous Australians.

The Communist Party of Australia's Program states:

"The political and social struggle by the Indigenous people is centred on the issue of land rights. This campaign is not only a question of civil rights; it goes beyond this bourgeois democratic aim, for it contains a significant revolutionary aspect, the demand for the return to collective ownership of part of the basic means of production.

"The demand for communal and inalienable property challenges capitalism, for it puts forward a case for the expropriation of private property. It creates an alternative to private land property and raises the question of social ownership by all the people, black and white, of land and other resources in a people's Australia."

PRESS FUND

The year 2026 is shaping up to be a big one of struggle. Trump has already kicked it off with the kidnapping of Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores and the seizure of Venezuela's oil reserves for the benefit of US mining corporations. He didn't stop there, threatening Cuba, Colombia, Mexico, Greenland and Iran, and bombing Syria. Trump has withdrawn the US from 66 international organisations and continues to arm Israel's criminal genocide of Palestinians. The *Guardian* brings you the news and analysis that the corporate media buries. Mainstream silence over the atrocities being committed in Palestine is is just one example. It costs money to maintain the *Guardian – The Workers' Weekly*. We have wages, printing, postage and other costs. We try to keep the price as low as possible. The Press Fund is an important way in which you can help keep the price down and show your solidarity. Every contribution is appreciated – no matter how small or large. We express our sincerest thanks to the following who contributed during the summer break:

E Seymour $25, Digireb $25, Mark Manion $40, Peter F $1,450

Total: $1,540

Support the *Guardian* by donating to Press Fund

INVASION DAY 2026

EVENTS AROUND THE COUNTRY

(All events free unless otherwise notified. This list is as complete as we can make it, but there may be other events near you – check your council website)

NSW

Sunset Cultural Ceremony, Woronora
When: Saturday, 24 January 2026, 4:00 – 7:00 PM
Where: Burnum Burnum Sanctuary, Woronora, Dharawal Land

Vigil: Belong
When: 25 January 2026, 7:00 PM – 26 January 2026, Dawn
Where: Stargazer Lawn, Barangaroo Reserve Hickson Road Barangaroo NSW, Gadigal Land

Dawn Reflection
When: 26 January 2026, 5:20 AM – 5:40 AM
Where: Overseas Passenger Terminal – 3 Circular Quay West, The Rocks, Gadigal Land

WulgulOra Morning Ceremony
When: 26 January 2026, 7:30 AM – 8:30 AM
Where: Walumil lawns at Barangaroo Reserve, Gadigal Land

Yabun Festival
When: 26 January 2026, 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM
Where: Victoria Park, Broadway, Gadigal Land

Invasion Day 2026: Rally and March
When: 26 January 2026, 10:00 AM
Where: Hyde Park, Sydney, Gadigal Land

Survival Day 2026 – Honouring Culture, Strength, and Community – Katoomba
When: 26 January 2026, 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Where: Barton Street, Katoomba North Public School, Dharug and Gundungurra Land

Blak Powerhouse
When: 26 January 2026, from 6:00 PM – 11:00 PM
Where: Manning House, Manning Road, Camperdown NSW 2050, Gadigal Land

VICTORIA

Ballarat Survival Day Dawn Ceremony
When: 26 January 2026, 5:30AM – 7:00AM
Where: View Point, Lake Wendouree

Pilk Purriyn Truth Telling – Torquay
When: 26 January 2026, 5:30am – 7:00am
Where: Cosy Corner Beach, The Esplanade, Torquay 3228, Wadawurrung Country
Cost: Free, Registration preferred, humanitix.com

Naarm Invasion Day Protest
When: 26 January 2026, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Where: Parliament House of Victoria, Spring St Melbourne, Wurundjeri and Boon Warring Lands
Cost: Free

Our Survival Day – Her Story; Matriarchs of 2026
When: 26 January 2026, 12:00 PM – 5:00 PM
Where: The Briars, 450 Nepean Hwy, Mount Martha VIC 3934, Bunurong land
Tickets from eventbrite.com.au

QUEENSLAND

Benarrawa Survival Day
When: 26 January 2026, 7:15 AM for a 7:30 AM start
Where: Gather at the bronze canoe, near Simpson's playground, end of Graceville Ave, Graceville

Invasion Day 2026: We Have Survived! Sunshine Coast
When: 26 January 2026, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM
Where: Sunshine Coast City Hall, corner of First Ave and South Sea Islander Way, Maroochydore

Maleny Remembrance Ceremony 2026
When: 26 January 2026, 10:00AM – 2:00PM
Where: Maleny Neighbourhood Centre, 17 Bicentennial Lane, Maleny, Jinibara/Kabi Kabi Country

Survival Day Knockouts Reconciliation Carnival 2026
When: Fri 23th – Sun 25th Jan 2026
Where: Jones Park, Cairns

SA

Mourning in the Morning / Smoking Ceremony
When: 26 January 2026, 7:30 AM – 8:45 AM
Where: Elder Park / Tarntanya Wama, King William Street, Adelaide

Survival Day – North Haven
When: 26 January 2026, 8:30 AM
Where: North Haven Surf Life Saving Club, 44 Australia II Avenue, North Haven, SA

Survival Day Tandanyangga
When: 26 January 2026, 12:00 – 5:00PM
Where: Victoria Square, Tarntanyangga (Adelaide)

Aus Lights on the River
When: 26 January 2026, 5:00 PM – 11:00 PM
Where: Elder Park / Tarntanya Wama

Photo: julian meehan – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

WA

Reflect Respect Celebrate Australia Day Smoking Ceremony and Community Breakfast
When: 26 January 2026, 8:00 – 10:00 AM
Where: Victoria Gardens, 10 Royal Street, East Perth
Cost: Free / $8.00

Invasion Day Protest
When: 26 January 2026, 12:00 PM
Where: Forrest Chase, on Wellington Street in Boorloo (Perth), Whadjuk Noongar Country

Reflect and Respect Film Dome
When: 26 January 2026, 3:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Where: Langley Park, Riverside Drive

Rubibi Survival Day
When: 26 January 2026, 4:00 pm – 11:00 PM AWST
Where: Gimme Club at Goolarri Media, Blackman St, Broome
Cost: $15 online (+ small booking fee), $20 on the door and Children under 10 free. Attendees under 18 will only be admitted if accompanied by an adult.

TASMANIA

Invasion Day 2026 – Nipaluna/Hobart
When: 26 January 2026, from 11:00 AM
Where: Depart TAC 198 Elizabeth Street, Nipaluna (Hobart)

Limilinaturi Invasion Day 2026
When: 26 January 2026, 11:30 AM
Where: 106 Best St, Limilinaturi (Devonport)
What: Street March: Gather at Tulaminakali Health Service at 11:30 AM. Rally: Meet at 12:00 PM at Market Square, Paranapple Centre. Hosted by Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre.
Cost: Free

Bondi: from tragedy to political strategy

Kalé Tanner

After the tragic massacre at Bondi Beach last December, the reactionary Labor Federal and State governments have begun to twist the killings from tragedy to political strategy. The Minns NSW government announced that it aimed to introduce legislation to "protect community safety." The legislation also contained sweeping changes to the right of NSW citizens to protest.

In a not-so surprising act of blatant islamophobia the Minns government aimed to ban phrases championing the cause of the Palestinian resistance through the ongoing Israeli Genocide. With the phrase *Globalise the Intifada* set to be designated as hate speech. Minns acknowledged the historic meaning of the phrase intifada (which is generally translated into English as, resistance or to shake off) but claimed that its use in NSW was somehow unique.

"Its use in common parlance in demonstrations both here and around the world are a call to a global intifada. That is what is means [...] Not in the Middle East, not in Israel or Gaza, but here in Sydney. In our streets [...] in those circumstances, I do believe it leads to a culture and environment of heightened disunity and an invitation to violence," Minns stated.

This move has sparked widespread condemnation by a coalition of parties, from the CPA and Labor friends of Palestine to the NSW Council of Civil Liberties and climate group Rising Tide.

The proposed reforms also include unprecedented powers to restrict movement of protestors. The bill would allow the police commissioners or deputy police commissioners to designate certain areas as restricted zones, stopping citizens from protesting or gathering in public areas, with approval from the police minister's office. The bill would ensure that once a declaration is made, no public assemblies could be authorised, even with court approval. Police would also be extended more power to assault and detain people who were deemed to "cause harassment or intimidation or obstruct traffic," possibly by using phrases such as 'globalise the intifada.'

The legislation is being challenged inside the NSW parliament by the NSW Greens who, although supportive of the more stringent gun control portions of the bill, have strongly condemned the assault on freedom of expression. It is unfortunately unlikely that the NSW Greens will have any major sway through the voting process, with their poor performance in the May 2025 election resulting in only 3 and 4 seats in the Lower and Upper house respectively. Alongside the NSW Greens, NSW upper house member Stephen Lawrence (ALP) has also flagged the legislation as particularly dangerous.

"In summary, our freedom to politically communicate by way of protest will be limited by this bill," Lawrence states, "in that scenario, we could potentially be in a 1978 Mardi Gras territory, violence may occur, protests may be ended that are non-threatening and in a way fundamentally inconsistent with free speech and the right to free association and assembly."

He warned that it may "remove the pressure valve of protest," that "could go so wrong."

Although the legislation is set to pass, Minns may find the bill's greatest hurdle will be in the courts with three independent organisations: Jews Against the Occupation, Palestine Action Group, and the First Nations-led Blak Caucus, challenging the constitutional legality of the bill as soon as January. In particular the Blak Caucus, which is helmed by Indigenous Australians raised concerns over the laws' potential to be used against Invasion Day marches on the 26 January.

Nick Hanna the criminal defence lawyer representing the three groups stated that as early as January they would aim to challenge the proposed legislation on the grounds it violated the *implied freedom of political communication* in the Australian constitution, as it "has the potential to effectively ban all protests for any cause."

"There is yet to be any suggestion that the two [alleged] terrorists attended a single protest," Hanna said, "or even supported the protests. In fact, we know that they are apparently inspired by Islamic State, which is ideologically opposed to the Palestine protests. [...] I think it's for a good reason [...] the public will be deeply concerned about the laws being passed today."

Author axed, festival trashed

Randa Abdel-Fattah. Photo: Macquarie University

Palestinian Australian author Randa Abdel-Fattah has asked for an apology and "accountability" after she was axed this month from Adelaide Writers' Week. Many authors cancelled their appearances at the event and board resignations left the festival unable to function. The event, worth over $62 million to the South Australian, economy has been cancelled.

The following is Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah's statement on her cancellation from Adelaide Writers Week:

"This is a blatant and shameless act of anti-Palestinian racism and censorship and a despicable attempt to associate me with the Bondi massacre. What makes this so egregiously racist is that the Adelaide Writers Festival Board has stripped me of my humanity and agency, reducing me to an object onto which others can project their racist fears and smears.

"The Board's reasoning suggests that my mere presence is 'culturally insensitive'; that I, a Palestinian who had nothing to do with the Bondi atrocity, am somehow a trigger for those in mourning and that I should therefore be persona non grata in cultural circles because my very presence as a Palestinian is threatening and 'unsafe'.

"After two years of Israel's live-streamed genocide of Palestinians, Australian arts and cultural institutions continue to reveal their utter contempt and inhumanity towards Palestinians. The only Palestinians they will tolerate are silent and invisible ones.

"I remain confident that the writing community and the broader public will ultimately respond with principle and integrity, as they did when I was singled out in the same racist way during the Bendigo Writers Festival. In the end, the Adelaide Writers Festival will be left with panellists who demonise a Palestinian out of one side of their mouths while waxing lyrical about freedom of speech from the other."

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.

Over three days, delegates will discuss the work of the Party, make any amendments to and adopt a Political Resolution following extensive consideration by Party members around Australia and finalisation of the Central Committee. Congress will elect a new Central Committee to lead the work of the Party until the next National Congress.

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. Every contribution is greatly appreciated. Our sincerest thanks to everyone who has contributed since the last *Guardian* in 2025:

FK $165, MT Smith $100, Beloyiannis Branch CPA $850, Naarm Branch $150, G Holton $50, GCB $500, C McEwen $50, J Tredfinnick $5 Cumberland Branch CPA $380

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Send to 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010 or phone through on 02 9699 8844.

Dingo bytes

The Maritime Union of Australia and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) have firmly and unequivocally stated their opposition to the US military invasion carried out against Venezuela. The attacks by the US military "represent a grave escalation and constitute a blatant violation of national sovereignty, international law, and the fundamental principles of peace and self-determination."

The MUA and the ITF "stand together in solidarity with their Venezuelan affiliated union, the Federación Bolivariana de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras del sector Transporte, Afines y Conexos, backing its calls for an immediate halt to hostilities, the activation of International Labor Organisation protections for affected workers, and the immediate release of President Nicolás Maduro and Cilia Flores."

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA) have issued an absolute and unequivocal rejection of the US military attack on Venezuela condemning it as a violation of international law, rejecting any attempt at regime change by force or foreign interference, demanding full guarantees for the life and immediate release of President Maduro and Cilia Flores, and calling for an urgent return to dialogue so that peace, sovereignty, and self-determination are upheld in the region.

Echoing these calls, ITF Latin America Vice President Pablo Moyano expressed solidarity with the Venezuelan people. "We express our deepest solidarity with the Venezuelan people and their workers, who are today facing moments of uncertainty and pain, and we demand the release of President Maduro. We join their legitimate aspiration to live in peace, with respect for their sovereignty and fundamental rights. We reaffirm our commitment to accompany them in this struggle for justice and self-determination.

"Sovereignty is not negotiable; peace is not imposed with weapons. Today we raise our voices for Venezuela and for the right of peoples to decide their own destiny, because every invasion threatens not only one nation, but our entire region and its democratic stability," Moyano concluded.

PARASITE(S) OF THE WEEK: health service privateers. When nurse Robyne Brown heard the state government was taking over Northern Beaches Hospital (NBH), "I ran into the stockroom and said, I told you so!" she said.

As NSW Nurses and Midwives Association (NSWNMA) branch secretary at Mona Vale Hospital, Robyne was an early and prominent opponent of the Baird Coalition government's 2013 decision to establish NBH as a so-called public-private partnership.

She feared the consequences for patients and nurses if services delivered at Mona Vale and Manly public hospitals were handed to a profit-driven private operator such as Healthscope.

"Soon after the government announcement, a community meeting was held to sell the concept of the new hospital to the public. We had NSWNMA members dotted around the floor to try and ask questions," Robyne said.

"I think our campaign against the privatisation after that meeting did really well. However, NSW Health was adamant that the privatisation was happening and they weren't going to budge.

"Our campaign got a lot of support, but as much as we tried, many people failed to realise what impact a private hospital delivering public services would have on the community. People believed the government line that everything would be 'the same but better' because NBH would be a bigger and fancier hospital.

"A lot of people got a shock after it opened, when suddenly patients were asked to pay for all sorts of things that they would never have paid for in a public hospital."

Staffing went downhill fast.

"Staffing levels at NBH were not as good as the public system and the poor communication and lack of transparency made life difficult – especially for branch officials seeking information," she said.

"There was a lot of frustration with changing management; we had three directors of nursing in the first few months. The staffing profile got progressively worse as senior staff left because they were not prepared to put up with inferior conditions."

Hands off Venezuela!

The Communist Party of Australia unequivocally condemns the Trump administration's illegal military attack against Venezuela, including the forcible kidnapping of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores, carried out in blatant violation of international law.

We send our condolences to the families of the people killed during the US illegal operation among them 32 Cuban patriots who shed their blood in combat while serving an international mission in the sister Republic of Venezuela.

The implications extend far beyond Venezuela. This assault reasserts the United States as a destabilising force not only in Latin America and the Caribbean but across the globe.

What distinguishes this moment is not novelty, but brazenness: Trump's willingness to discard even the pretence of legality and speak the imperial logic out loud. Israel's genocide against the Palestinians marked the start of an unprecedented imperialist offensive.

In the same breath that Trump threatens Mexico, Colombia, Greenland, Cuba, Canada, and others, he has demonstrated a willingness to trample borders, normalise abductions of foreign leaders, and substitute diplomacy with force.

The nations of Latin America are in the crosshairs of this new strategy. Dominating this region is seen by the ruling class in the US as the key to holding onto global supremacy.

Building maximum resistance to US aggression requires strengthening international solidarity campaigns with Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, Colombia, and all countries facing the brunt of this offensive.

US imperialism asserts its own sovereignty as absolute while explicitly planning to violate that of nations in its declared "sphere of influence." Venezuela is first in line.

It is also a grab for Venezuela's oil resources.

Venezuela nationalised the projects of several companies, including ExxonMobil and Conoco-Phillips, nearly two decades ago under president Hugo Chavez.

Conoco-Phillips has been seeking billions for the take-over of three projects.

Exxon was involved in lengthy arbitration cases against Venezuela after it exited the country in 2007.

The people of Australia and other countries face a crucial test. EITHER the rule of law, collective decisions by the UN and the various covenants of the UN are to be abided by OR its replacement by US unilateralism backed up by its military power, war, occupation, bribery, threats, assassinations and the whole armoury of US coercion in the sole interests of the US imperialism. We condemn Albanese's comments about a "democratic transition" which means he virtually condoned the US terrorist attack on Venezuela.

We call on the Albanese government to condemn the US illegal attacks on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Hands off Venezuela
Return President Nicolas Maduro and Cilia Flores
No blood for oil

Communist Party of Australia
Central Committee
International Department

6th January 2026

Pirates of the Caribbean, welcome to 2026

Vinnie Molina

We welcomed 2026 with the news the US had bombed Venezuela on 3 January and kidnapped its President Nicolas Maduro and his wife who is also an elected member of the Venezuelan Parliament.

Trump farewelled 2025 with bombs over Nigeria on Christmas day and sinking fishing boats in the Caribbean. The excuses used were lies about narco-terrorism and the alleged killing of Christians in Nigera, used to justify the largest military build-up ever seen in the Caribbean.

Those actions of the self-appointed 'world cop' Trump have been condemned by people around the world. The Trump regime has shown total disregard for international law and is willing to use its military might.

Organisations around the world including in Australia mobilised in condemnation of the attacks on Venezuela and the lies used to justify the attacks. It was obvious that the real reason for the state terrorism was oil and regime change.

Venezuela has the largest reserves of oil in the world. It has been a sanctioned country for several years, including being prevented from trading its biggest resource – oil. This has hit the economy and severely hampered the Venezuelan government's ability to deliver for the people. As happens in tight sanctioned economies, many people decided to migrate and up to 8 million Venezuelans relocated to other countries.

Venezuela responded to the hardship the sanctions caused by diversifying its economy and in 2025 its economy experienced the highest growth in Latin America. Food production and other supplies were more accessible in the internal markets. Despite all the government efforts the illegal coercive measures and the limitations imposed by the financial system (SWIFT) still meant trading was hard.

New trading partners were engaged and ties developed with China, Russia, Iran and the BRICS member countries. They were ready to start bypassing the petrodollar as an alternative to the SWIFT system in 2026. Despite the threats and coercive measures, the new year looked promising.

The petrodollar system is the cornerstone of the US empire. It was the same trigger for US reactionary behaviour when Iraq and Libya decided to trade their oil in other currencies than the US dollar. They faced the same military attacks leaving chaos and millions dead.

The Trump Administration saw this threat and launched its attack, killing over 100 people among civilians and military. Among them were 32 Cubans who formed part of Maduro's security team.

Despite the rhetoric about the US being in charge in Venezuela the reality is that the government continues to function. People have taken to the streets demanding the end of the attacks and the return of President Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores.

March in support of Venezuela, Naarm/Melbourne, 4 January.

The mass media has reported that Venezuelans were celebrating the kidnapping of President Maduro based on the small demonstrations abroad. Inside Venezuela, people are united, both pro and anti Chavismo Venezuelans have condemned the attacks and demand respect for their country's right to self-determination and to decide their destiny by themselves.

In Australia emergency rallies were organised for Sunday 4 and Monday 5 January under the banner Hands off Venezuela. Several organisations signed onto a national statement, among them the Communist Party of Australia.

The CPA is mobilising around the international campaign for the return of President Nicolas Maduro and his Parliamentarian wife Cilia Flores.

So *Guardian* readers, 2026 is with us. The struggle continues!

Israel and Bondi

Tom Pearson

The mass shooting in which 15 people were killed during a Hanukkah celebration at Sydney's Bondi Beach was "a terrorist attack inspired by Islamic State," according to the Australian Federal Police commissioner.

The alleged shooters were father and son. The older man, who state officials named as Sajid Akram, was shot dead. His son, Naveed, is in custody.

This was the first mass shooting in Australia since 35 people were killed in 1996.

These are the raw statistics of a tragic event which is being opportunistically exploited by both major parties and the corporate media in concert with the genocidal Israeli government. It will be the subject of a federal royal commission, set to conclude on 14 December.

At the forefront in this exploitation is the NSW Minns government, with Minns looking to deploy troops in the streets and announcing that police would be armed with military weapons on New Year's Eve and beyond. NSW is imposing a ban on all protests, preparing the ground on behalf of the Albanese government.

The mass shooting came soon after the same police force stood by and watched neo-Nazi thugs pose for publicity photos in front of state parliament, followed by what turned out to be a week-long recruitment drive dressed up as reportage, in Nine Media's *Sydney Morning Herald*.

At the vigil for the victims at Bondi Beach there were cheers from some attendees at the arrival of Pauline Hanson and her new One Nation recruit Barnaby Joyce, followed by more cheers when the Coalition literally wheeled out war criminal John Howard, to try and score some points.

When it comes to conflating criticism of Israel with antisemitism, Howard and Hanson are on the same page.

ENVOY

Then there's the Albanese government-appointed envoy on antisemitism, Jillian Segal. Segal's husband, John Roth is a director of a trust which made a $50,000 donation to the reactionary lobby group Advance Australia.

Perth/Boorloo rally for Palestine 24 August 2025, as part of the national day of action.

the tragedy of the Bondi Beach massacre will be used to further the agenda of stamping out criticism of Israel

A front for racist elements connected to the Liberal/National Coalition, Advance Australia, formed in 2018, is anti-immigration and calls Palestinians in Australia a "risk to security." It also derides the Indigenous ceremony of Welcome to Country which led to the booing of Aboriginal elders last Anzac Day; and claims that incarcerated asylum seekers are "rapists, paedophiles and murderers."

The envoy cites the 300,000-strong march across the Sydney Harbour Bridge last year in support of the Palestinians, as akin to the Bondi Beach massacre, because the protesters were calling on Israel to stop killing innocent Palestinian children, women and men in the Gaza Strip.

Also riding the racist bandwagon out of Bondi is Liberal MP and former SAS member Andrew Hastie, who will launch an "advertising blitz" against immigration via Advance Australia. Hastie's unit in Afghanistan was investigated for violating the rules of war, in particular for cutting off the hands of dead enemy combatants.

Advance Australia also ran racist propaganda in pushing for the No campaign during the Indigenous Voice to Parliament referendum, claiming it would "divide" Australia by putting members of one community above others. Now they want legislation specifically designed for one community.

NOT TENABLE

The Lebanese Muslim Association said Segal's position as Australia's antisemitism envoy was "no longer tenable." The Association said Segal could not credibly lead efforts against antisemitism while "remaining silent about – or benefiting from – the funding of organisations that fuel other forms of racism and bigotry."

The Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) also called for Segal's removal, saying Segal's attempts to distance herself from the donation were disingenuous, and that her household's political donations were a matter of legitimate public concern.

APAN president Nasser Mashni said Segal's appointment to the position, and the role's existence itself, had always been "profound insults to Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims, anti-Zionist Jews, and First Nations people," and that the new revelations "heighten the problem we are dealing with."

"Segal must be stood down, and this government must seriously reconsider its anti-racism work," Mashni said.

The Jewish Council of Australia (JCA), a progressive group formed to represent non-Zionist Jews in Australia made similar comments. Max Kaiser, JCA's executive officer, said reports linking Segal's household to Advance Australia "further erode any credibility the special envoy might claim to have on matters of racism."

In Australia there has been a continuous wave of protest opposing Israel's crimes against the Palestinians – a pattern replicated worldwide. There are now attempts to ban these actions altogether in laws dressed up as opposing antisemitism and terrorism.

The Albanese government's stated support for a Palestinian state is shown to be a cynical act from a government overseeing the supply of Australian-manufactured weapons parts to the Israeli military.

The tragedy of the Bondi Beach massacre will be used to further the agenda of stamping out criticism of Israel, despite its mass commission of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

CLASS

In Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu does not represent only an extremist fringe. The Israeli Jewish public presents (with exceptions) a united front in favour of a racist, violent ultra-nationalism fuelled by religious fanaticism. There's nothing more democratic than a lynch mob.

In Australia a small minority of Jews, who are members of the Australian ruling class support Israel's genocide and are given the loudest voice through the corporate media.

Jillian Segal is a South African-born Australian lawyer and business executive and ardent Zionist. She has been chair of the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce since 2015; is the immediate past president of the extremist pro-Israel Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ); and was deputy chancellor of the University of New South Wales from 2010-2019.

Last year a rich-list of business and finance moneybags rallied around former Coalition government federal treasurer, Josh Frydenberg, to "raise millions to fight antisemitism." (Frydenbergis chairman of Goldman Sachs.) Frydenberg is the face of a foundation to be set up to spread the word about Israel into schools and universities: presumably how its "right to exist" allows it to murder 80,000 defenceless Palestinians, its most heinous crime to date.

Members of the board of the foundation include such corporate types as former Optus chief executive Kelly Bayer Rosmarin and Reserve Bank Board member Elana Rubin. Venture capitalist Paul Bassat – whose mother is on the board – has created a $US20 million fund named Iron Nation to support Israeli start-ups during its offensive on Gaza. Similar foundations in the US have raised hundreds of millions.

One purpose for the creation of this foundation is to put an official stamp on the propaganda line being run that makes out that Jews are a persecuted minority in Australia. This is simply not true.

Though most members of the Israel lobby are Jewish, it is not their religion that forms the strongest ties between them; for them it is their elevated positions of wealth and power as members of the ruling class. That's where their entitlement and arrogance comes from.

Luminaries from the same parasitic class as the above list of moneybags put their names to an open letter calling for a federal royal commission into the Bondi Beach killings. CEOs from some of the most predatory and ruthlessly exploitative corporations – Macquarie Group, Westfield, Coca Cola, Westpac, Rio Tinto et al – have essentially expressed their support of Israel's genocide dressed up in patriotic language about Australia's future.

Let's not forget that Israel's genocide continues. On 1 January Israel ordered 37 aid organisations out of Gaza. The organisations or their divisions facing suspension or loss of licences to operate in Gaza include Action Against Hunger, Danish Refugee Council, Doctors Without Borders, Oxfam, Relief International, Medical Aid for Palestinians UK and Caritas Internationalis.

Israel is deepening the genocide and eliminating eyewitnesses.

Health migration harms

Unmanaged labour migration from Pacific Island nations to Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand is undermining the already fragile sustainability of Pacific health care systems. Nurses and other skilled health workers are leaving underfunded public systems at home in the Pacific, only to face de-skilling, underpayment, and exploitation abroad.

A new report from Public Services International (PSI) and the Centre for Future Work at the Australia Institute warns this trend is accelerating toward a serious workforce crisis.

Consultations with health unions across Pacific Island countries – the first of its kind to use Talanoa-style consultations – unrooted these serious concerns.

Talanoa-style consultations use open, relational conversations grounded in Pacific traditions, allowing workers to speak freely about their lives, fears, and hopes. Through this, many reaffirmed their commitment to serving their communities through public health care but described mounting pressures as labour migration continues to deplete the health workforce.

The report identified poor pay, lack of career progression, unsafe working conditions, and weak staffing in Pacific health systems as the main driving forces to migrate overseas; however. However once in Australia or New Zealand, many end up in underpaid positions well below their skill level.

Dr Paul Popora Bosawai, Minister for Health and Medical Services from the Solomon Islands, underscored the seriousness of the situation, noting that health unions and stakeholders across the Pacific are increasingly alarmed by the loss of healthcare workers to Australia and New Zealand.

"This trend poses a threat to sustainability and resilience of our national health systems, which are already under significant pressure."

Michael Whaites, Assistant General Secretary of the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association, expressed strong support for addressing unmanaged labour migration and has urged the government to step in and intervene.

"Workers have a right to cross borders in the pursuit of better wages, working conditions and career progression, and they must be able to do so free from exploitation. As demonstrated by this report, exploitation is occurring through Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) and skilled migrant pathways, and we're seeing it on a massive scale, hidden in plain sight.

"The federal government must take stronger action to stop the exploitation of workers arriving in Australia and must act in reciprocity towards the Pacific Islands through greater funding for healthcare and worker training."

The report calls for urgent regional reforms, including developing and reinforcing labour and migration agreements, tighter regulation of labour hire agencies, developing safe and secure methods for workers to report concerning behaviour and treatment without risking their visas, and removing barriers to union membership.

The Lamp

Midwives training at Pacific Adventist University PAU, outskirts of Port Moresby, PNG. Photo: Ness Kerson/madNESS Photography for AusAID – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

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

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

Something to say?

Write to the Editor!

editor@cpa.org.au

PEACE NOTES

Denis Doherty

The recent attack on Venezuela was obviously done with overwhelming force and superior technology. Many of the Chavista were expecting a conventional war which would have meant fighting on streets, in jungles and in the mountains. Instead, the US attacked with its superior fire power and technological advantages. This is not to admire the US tactics but to further condemn their complete lack of morality.

Years ago, we were calling the US a 'military giant and a moral pygmy.' The Trump administration used gangster tactics and have no regard for international law. They believe might is right and that Venezuela is in their 'backyard' and they have the right to manipulate and steal in any way there see fit. The mystery of how the attack took place and that there did not seem to be any response has started off many rumours of a 5th column and CIA bribery. While there were some injuries among the Delta Force and one helicopter was badly shot up and only just made it back to the US Navy ship, there were around 100 Cubans and Venezuelans murdered. More information will come out in the following weeks but now let's just look at two aspects of the US attack. What we do know is that the US military used the Growler aircraft and Delta Force.

Growlers

Boeing EA-18G Growler aircraft were sent alongside jet fighters and bombers so that electronic warfare could be used to overwhelm Venezuela's air defence and radar mechanisms. The Growler aircraft can fly at Mach 1.8 and is equipped with jamming equipment to turn off air defence batteries, communications and radar. At the twinkling of an eye, the Growlers turned off all systems that would have been used to defend Caracas and President Maduro. Communications were cut and a follow-up bomber hit the electricity system in key suburbs making the city dark. Caracas was blind and dumb without light, communications or weapons to shoot back at the US gangster raiders.

Australia has 24 Growlers stationed at Amberley RAAF Base near Ipswich Queensland.

Delta Force

The US has numerous 'special forces'; Green Berets, Navy Seals and so on, but the apex of these special forces is Delta Force. Delta Force is based in and around the towns surrounding Fort Bragg California USA. The book *Fort Bragg Cartel* by Seth Harp described Delta Force as functioning as "a high-tech death squad dedicated to covertly liquidating the male population base of recalcitrant ethnic and tribal groups that resist US military occupation." According to Harp, people from Delta Force come back traumatised and with a skill set of killing and drug addiction that requires drug pushing and drug importation. The many accounts of Delta Force involvement with drugs make Trump's accusations of Venezuelan involvement in the drug trade very ironic.

Slavish Danish lesson for Australia

Denmark has behaved slavishly towards the US since World War II. The Danes were the first to sign the NATO treaty. They deployed soldiers to both Iraq and Afghanistan when the US launched the 'Global War on Terrorism.' Fifty of their soldiers never came home. The Danes were the first to recognise Kosovo during the war against Serbia. This devotion has not been reciprocated by the US when it comes to Greenland.

The basis of Australia's devotion to the US alliance is based on a similar misconception about the role of the US in the world. The US acts in its imperialist interests and is not constrained by any feelings of loyalty to allies. The lessons of the slavish Danish should not be lost on Australian policy makers, and it would be wise if Australia distanced itself from the US.

COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

YOU'RE ON

PAY THE

STOLEN LAND
RENT
SOVEREIGNTY NEVER CEDED
COMMUNIST.PARTY.AUSTRALIA
CPAUSTRALIA
COMMUNIST_AU

Worth Streaming:
Pluribus (Apple TV)

P Farmer

Pluribus is nine episodes of very involving and often moving entertainment, from the mind that bought us 'Breaking Bad.' _Pluribus_ is not as novel as its publicity suggests. The show is supposed to ask the question "what if alien invaders were nice?", but in a lot of ways it's just another alien invasion story, albeit with some good black comic touches.

I'm not sure how many readers remember the 1990s alien invasion horror movie *Species*, but this show certainly does. An alien radio signal is detected, and turns out to be a set of instructions for an RNA sequence. US scientists promptly set about making the sequence into a virus so they can test it in a lab. Unsurprisingly, the lab's safety precautions aren't what they should be, and the virus gets out.

In *Species*, this devil-may-care approach, common among movie scientists led to the creation of a sexually voracious Natasha Henstridge who wants to give birth to hideous digitally created monsters (CGIs). In *Pluribus*, the virus gets around the globe in no time flat, turning almost all of humanity into a single organism. People still walk around and do things, but they all share the same mind. An advantage of this is that no CGI is needed, just actors prepared to do things in unison. They're the Others, and the event that put them all together is called The Joining.

Almost all. About 100 million people are killed by the virus, and a small group of 11 people are immune. That group includes writer Carol (Rita Seehorn). She doesn't like the change and is upset that her wife didn't survive the 'joining,' as the others call it. The rest of the show is about her efforts to undo the virus and the Others' efforts to be friendly with her and make her see the bright side of sharing a planet with one other person who happens to inhabit seven billion bodies.

The upside of the Joining is mostly implied rather than spelled out – there are no solemn speeches about the Joining meaning the end of war, ethnic tensions and poverty, although the Others reassure Carole that being a part of a hive mind is really good fun, and are willing to do anything to make her and the other immune people happy. Carole is treated to nice meals and holidays and her favourite bougie health-food supermarket is restocked when she complains. None of this makes the situation any more acceptable to Carole who continues to wonder how she can change things back.

Some of the other immune humans are fine with things as they are, and just enjoy being pampered while the Others get on with finding ways of infecting them.

There's a race against time element however, as it becomes obvious that the Others are working on getting Carole and the other hangouts into the hive mind whether they like it or not. On Carole's side is the dogged Manousos, played by the talented Columbian actor Carlos Manuel Vesga Sánchez. Manousos endures all manner of hardships rather than cooperate with the Others. He also introduces an element of class and race into the show, probably unintentionally. Where the US characters are all pretty prosperous, it's Manousos who eats dog food and struggles through jungles. Presumably the virus has affected poor as well as middle-class people in the US but there's no sign of them.

The show doesn't make grand announcements, instead focussing on Carole's quirks and personal struggle with the situation. She doesn't respect the 'romantasy' novels she produces (the creators have a lot of fun with what seems to be terrible soft-core porn tales of pirates who visit magical caves on other planets). She prospers from the books, but her heart isn't in them. She drinks too much. She's easily distracted by comfort, unlike the driven and focussed Manousos, so there's some suspense in wondering if the Others will find a way of seducing her in all senses of the word.

One of the best moments comes when Carole shares her experience of being sent to a 'conversion therapy' camp as a young woman by a conservative family who wanted to 'cure' her of lesbianism. She tells the Other she's talking to "they were all always smiling, just like you."

Also (this is a communist review after all) is there some kind of point being made about individuality versus collectivity? We get to see the Others quietly working on projects together – they're just one hive mind, so there's no need to talk. Everyone apart from Carol and the other survivors gives up on private property, but there's no sort of grand point made here, just a very entertaining yarn, certainly much more interesting than the ones Carol writes.

Seven out of ten red stars.

Book Review: *Deadwood: Gold, Guns and Greed in the American West*
by Peter Cozzens

Reviewer: Alex Hall

The HBO series _Deadwood_ masterfully dramatised the birth of a lawless gold-rush town, blending real historical figures with writer David Milch's creative licence.

In his new history, Peter Cozzens returns to the original newspaper archives to separate myth from reality. The result is an account that does more than fact-check a television show; it adds additional contexts and viewpoints.

What neither Milch, nor Cozzens explicitly draw out is that the history of Deadwood is the history of capitalism, in a furiously fast microcosm. But read this book, or indeed watch the TV series, in this light and it readily becomes apparent.

The development of the United States was of deep interest to Marx. The US was a crucial arena where the contradictions and possibilities of capitalism were playing out in real time, and Deadwood would go through key economic stages in three years.

The story begins with a profound illegality. Following George Armstrong Custer's 1874 expedition, which declared gold in the Black Hills, a rush began on land guaranteed "in perpetuity" to the Lakota by treaty. The miners' invasion was a pure act of settler-colonialism, what Marx might have termed "primitive accumulation": the seizure of land and resources that provided the initial fuel for capitalist expansion. The Lakota, as leader Black Elk noted, saw little value in the "yellow metal," but its promise to the early US rendered treaties meaningless.

What Cozzens charts next is the rapid, violent evolution of a full economic ecosystem. The initial prospectors were quickly surrounded by those who would profit from their labour and dreams: merchants, gamblers, saloon keepers, prostitutes and con-men. Establishments like Al Swearingen's Gem Theatre would take on average $5,000 a night, a staggering sum. These early capitalists however still required some trappings of protection, ie justice. Cozzens shows how rudimentary "miners' courts" provided a semblance of order where formal law was absent, and how later "legitimate" order was provided.

This chaotic, entrepreneurial phase was intensely brief. Once viable claims were proven, industrial capital arrived personified by George Hearst. Hearst systematically monopolised the major claims, introducing hydraulic mining technology that increased yield but also ravaged the environment. This shift from individual diggers to corporate extraction marks a classic capitalist transition, consolidating wealth and power while displacing the original risk-takers.

Cozzens' work is particularly commendable for expanding the narrative beyond the iconic gunfighters and tycoons. He documents Deadwood's sizeable Chinese community, which formed a distinct Chinatown which was to some extent integrated with the European settler town. He notes that for many Black Americans, the frontier offered a precarious but preferable alternative to the oppressive South. Most significantly, he provides a clear-eyed account of the Lakota's devastation, framing their displacement not as a backdrop but as the central injustice that enabled the entire enterprise.

The town's physical decay mirrored its economic consolidation. The devastating fire of 1879, which destroyed much of Deadwood, served as a symbolic end point. With the easy gold gone and controlled by large interests, the small miners, their entertainers, parasites and suppliers moved on to the next boom town: Leadville, Colorado. The intense capitalist "heyday," as Cozzens observes, lasted barely three years.

Cozzens does not entirely dispel the potent mythology of the rugged, entrepreneurial West that Deadwood helped forge. Instead, he elucidates the true cost of that mythology. By examining the town from the perspectives of the Lakota, Chinese labourers, prostitutes and displaced prospectors, he provides an essential multi-sided view.

This history reveals Deadwood not merely as a lawless adventure, but as a stark, rapid and instructive parable of how US capitalism was built: through appropriation, violence, fleeting opportunity, parasitism and the ultimate triumph of concentrated capital.

Deadwood is now a tourist town, its raw history polished into a commodity for sale.

Morning Star

Solutions to Crossword
Guardian 8 December 2025 #2174

Across

1 **IWD** – Socialist pro-women event 8 March

3 **BAIL** – Victorian ALP backflip on this endangers Aboriginal people

5 **INVASION** – Day for solidarity with Indigenous people

7 **BLOCKADE** – 64 years and counting injustice towards Cuba

9 **UNION** – Thing you should join if working

10 **TARIFFS** – US President's favourite word

11 **SABRE** – War game name comes after Talisman

13 **CFMEU** – Effective union attacked, demonised, and administered

14 **TEMU** – This plus Trump was a nickname for Peter Dutton pre-election

15 **JVP** – Sri Lankan communist party, turned 60 in 2025

DOWN

2 **DIVISION** – Weasel word for pro-Indigenous measures racists don't like

4 **UNILATERAL** – Kind of military action Penny Wong didn't like in 2003, but approved in 2025

8 **FREEDOM** – Ride against racial discrimination in Australia 60 years ago

12 **AUKUS** – Terrible underwater idea, cost Australia billions in 2025

14 **TRUMP** – Criminal, President, Australian ally

29th Anniversary of Guatemala Peace Accords

Graham Holton

Guatemala Peace Agreements, 1996.

Guatemala still suffers from profound inequality and extreme poverty

29 December 2025 marked the 29th anniversary of the Guatemala Peace Accords, in which the government of Guatemala and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) signed the "Firm and Lasting Peace Accord," formally ending thirty-six years of civil war (1960–1996). It was one of the longest and most devastating wars in Latin America during the 20th century. The conflict left 200,000 people dead, or "disappeared," including Protestant ministers, Catholic sisters, priests, and seminarians, and displaced two million people. The vast majority of atrocities were committed against Indigenous Maya communities.

The Accords committed the state to demilitarisation and civilian control of security forces. It recognised Indigenous rights and cultural identity, human rights protections and judicial reform, with land, social, and economic reforms addressing structural inequality. A later UN-backed Truth Commission concluded that acts of genocide had been committed against the Maya peoples.

Wealthy Guatemalans and foreign companies controlled much of the land. The struggle that followed was based on demands for land redistribution by the Indigenous peasants who worked the land. The United Fruit Company, which had control over much of Guatemala's arable land, asked the United States government to overthrow the left-wing government. In 1954 a US-backed *coup d'état* installed the military regime of Carlos Castillo Armas and overthrew President Arbenz. Che Guevara, who was in Guatemala City, left for Mexico where he joined up with Fidel Castro to fight US imperialism. The Armas government was followed by a series of right-wing military dictators.

Civil war began on 13 November 1960, when a group of left-wing junior military officers led a failed revolt against the government of General Ydígoras Fuentes. The surviving officers created a rebel movement, the MR-13, which joined the outlawed PGT (Guatemalan Labour Party), led by middle-class intellectuals and students, and a student organisation called the Movimiento 12 de Abril (12 April Movement). In December 1962, these groups merged into the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR). The MR-13, PGT, and FGEI (Edgar Ibarra Guerrilla Front) operated in different parts of Guatemala as three separate frentes (fronts), led by former members of the 1960 army revolt who has been trained in US counterinsurgency warfare.

In 1962, US Special Forces set up a secret military training base in Guatemala. The following year, a US-backed coup ousted President Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes. US advisors worked with Colonel Carlos Manuel Arana Osorio to defeat the guerrillas, using counter-insurgency strategies employed in Vietnam. After 1977 the Israeli government cooperated closely with the US providing supplementary military and intelligence support.

During the 1980s, the Guatemalan military assumed absolute power for five years, eliminating its enemies amongst the political, social, and intellectual classes. The military intelligence services coordinated killings and "disappearances" of opponents of the state.

Since the Accords progress has been made in recognising the rights of Indigenous peoples and women, yet its implementation is uneven on land reform, social justice, and Indigenous autonomy. Since 2017, Guatemala has experienced political regression led by a Judicial Dictatorship, under the 'Pact of the Corrupt.'

While the revolutionary movement was genuinely committed to building a different country, with real democracy and social justice, the ruling classes ended the conflict because it interfered with their neoliberal plans. While there is a great national awareness of structural injustice and racism, Guatemala still suffers from profound structural inequality and extreme poverty for the majority of the population. Yet the Peace Accords remain a political platform that provides a national agenda constituting a foundation for the formation of a broad national front for democracy.

100th anniversary of the Communist Party of India (CPI)

Graham Holton

The Communist Party of India (CPI), founded on 26 December 1925 in Kanpur under British colonial rule, is the longest continuous communist party in South Asia.

Like many communist parties in postcolonial societies, the CPI developed within the context of an anti-imperial struggle, embedding Marxist ideas within nationalist, labour and peasant movements.

The party played a historical role in India's post-independence parliamentary democracy, and broader Marxism in the Global South. The CPI's ideological and institutional legacy continues to shape significant debates around secularism, class, and social justice in India.

Its hundred-year history reflects the complexities of adapting Marxism to a diverse, postcolonial society. The centenary saw an enduring tension between revolutionary ideals and parliamentary practice, playing a major role in anti-colonial resistance. Colonial repression played a formative role in shaping the CPI. The British state criminalised communist activity through conspiracy cases such as the Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929–1933), which targeted trade unionists and intellectuals. These trials popularised Marxist ideas and introduced communist critiques of capitalism and imperialism into the public discourse.

Early Marxist networks emerged among Indian revolutionaries in exile, positioning Indian communism within a global revolutionary framework while exposing it to ideological tensions between nationalism and internationalism. After independence its ideological and organisational evolution continued amid neoliberal economic restructuring and the right-wing nationalism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, the electoral arm of a Hindu nationalist movement. As India confronts deepening economic inequality and political polarisation, the CPI's legacy continues to inform popular debates on justice, democracy, and social transformation.

Unlike the Indian National Congress, which pursued a broad-based nationalist strategy, the CPI emphasised class struggle as central to liberation. Its involvement in trade unions, particularly the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), and peasant movements in Bengal, Andhra, and Kerala, distinguished it from other anti-colonial organisations.

After independence in 1947, the CPI faced the challenge of operating within a constitutional democracy. Following the Sino-Soviet split, the party oscillated between parliamentary participation and revolutionary rhetoric, reflecting broader debates within global communism. These tensions culminated in the 1964 split, leading to the formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). The CPI adopted a comparatively moderate line, emphasising parliamentary democracy and alliances with other secular forces, which encouraged participation in electoral politics.

The CPI and CPI (M) achieved their greatest successes at the state level. In Kerala, communist-led governments implemented landmark reforms in land redistribution, education, and healthcare, providing a model of "democratic socialism" within a capitalist framework. These experiences challenged Cold War assumptions that socialism was incompatible with electoral democracy.

By the late 20th century, structural changes in India's economy, such as liberalisation, casualisation of labour, and the decline of organised industrial work, had eroded the social base of communist politics. Even so, the CPI remains influential through trade unions, farmers' organisations, and civil society activism. The party remains a defender of secularism, constitutionalism, and minority rights in the face of rising Hindu nationalism. The Party's relevance lies in its role as a custodian of a historical tradition of Left politics and anti-fascism. The centenary reflects the party's future of Marxist thought in India.

Trump expected to name Gaza 'Board of Peace' amid Israel's ceasefire violations

US President Donald Trump is expected to name world leaders who will form part of a "Board of Peace" to administer the Gaza Strip amid a fragile ceasefire implemented last October, according to reports.

"The Board of Peace is being formed," Trump told the press aboard Air Force One the Anadolu news agency reported. "Essentially, it's the most important leaders of the most important nations ... You take the most important leaders and nations, that's who the Board of Peace is going to be."

The board, which is expected to be chaired by Trump and include around 15 world leaders, will supervise a yet-to-be-formed Palestinian technocratic government and oversee the reconstruction process in Gaza outlined in the US president's 20-point plan.

Bloomberg reported that the aim of the board "is to help form an interim government to replace Hamas and to attract a foreign security force as well as funds."

It is unclear who will be named as members of the board. However Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has announced that Nickolay Mladenov, a Bulgarian politician and diplomat "is set to become the Director of the Gaza Strip Board of Peace." He made the statement following a meeting with Mladenov in Jerusalem.

Countries expected to join the board include the UK, Germany, France, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, and Türkiye, according to Anadolu.

US-Palestinian academic Dr Bisharah Bahbah, who reportedly served as a mediator between Hamas and US officials, issued a statement addressed to the "people of Gaza," on the latest developments.

Bahbah said it is expected that the Gaza Peace Council will be announced "within the next week, with its first official meeting to be held on the sidelines of the Davos meetings in the third week of this month."

Palestinian factions, he added, are also expected to meet in Cairo, following the announcement of the Peace Council's members.

"During the Cairo meeting, the names of an independent technocratic committee to manage Gaza's affairs are expected to be announced. The committee is expected to consist of twelve members," he said.

Bahbah noted that "the main entities" responsible for managing the reconstruction process were expected to be formed within about a month.

He stated that Israel "is currently seeking to withdraw recognition from most international institutions providing aid to the Gaza Strip, arguing that these institutions are hostile to Israel."

In the future, he noted, aid is expected to be distributed through mechanisms supervised by privately-owned companies. After the last Israeli body was handed over, Israel "will no longer have a pretext to close the Rafah crossing," he said, adding that he expects the crossing to be reopened immediately thereafter.

Bahbah emphasised that he is "fully aware" of the extent of the suffering of the Palestinian population "due to the lack of adequate food, healthcare, shelter, and other basic necessities of a dignified life." He believed "this year will mark a fundamental turning point for the better."

aid is expected to be distributed through mechanisms supervised by privately-owned companies

STAGGERING DEATH TOLL

Trump unveiled a 20-point plan on 29 September 2025, aimed at ending Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza.

Despite the ceasefire that took effect in October last year, Israel has since killed 442 Palestinians and injured 1,240 more, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

The total death toll since it launched its genocidal assault on Gaza two years ago has risen to 71,419, with 171,318 injured.

Palestine Chronicle

Chile: Pinochetism returns to power

Atilio A Borón

José A Kast's resounding victory in the Chilean presidential election is bound to have a profound effect. A solid, neo-fascist, extreme right-wing force consolidated as a result of the convergence of two radical variants of Pinochetism – one led by Kast and the other, even more extreme, by Johannes Kaiser – joined hastily by the standard-bearer of a political fiction called the "democratic right," embodied by the former mayor of Providencia, Evelyn Matthei, the supposed heir to Sebastián Piñera's legacy.

What can we expect from a government headed by a fascist like Kast? Brutal cuts in social spending, a re-evaluation of the progress made in relation to women's rights, and a redefinition of Chile's international alliances. He will surely attempt to deepen the economic model developed during the Pinochet dictatorship, the foundations of which remained untouched by Chile's long and unfinished democratic transition.

Unfinished because the power relations and concentration of wealth that emerged after the fateful 11 September 1973, far from being reversed by the exercise of democracy, were consolidated and reinforced by successive governing coalitions. But in the context of the new US National Security Doctrine, Kast will be pressured by Washington to undertake the arduous task of cooling his country's warm relations with China. The Asiatic giant is Chile's largest trading partner and the one with which a key Free Trade Agreement was signed in 2005.

On the other hand, the composition of the Chilean parliament could be a significant obstacle able to curb Kast's foreseeable excesses. The Senate is divided equally in two halves and it would be extremely difficult for Kast to obtain the 4/7 of the votes (57 per cent) needed to reform the Constitution in the Chamber of Deputies. In any case, the formation of a government of this type represents an enormous challenge for the ruling – and almost defunct – Frente Amplio (Broad Front) and the extremely heterogenous progressive camp in general.

As in Argentina after Milei's victory, these forces face a fundamental challenge: redefining a global project for the country, devising a new narrative, designing a concrete agenda for government, revitalising grassroots organisations, mobilising their members, and resolving the always thorny issue of political direction and leadership.

These are urgent tasks that cannot be postponed, because any delay will result in the creation of a set of historical and structural conditions for the relaunch of a long-lasting neo-fascist political cycle that will cause serious harm. Yet it would be a crucial mistake to give in to pessimism and believe that the defeat is definitive. Such a resounding setback requires an effort of self-criticism that, among other things, realises that the formula of "light progressivism" that invite our peoples to politically advance along an illusory "wide middle avenue" equidistant from the left and right only serves to produce further frustrations and throw open the doors of the democratic state to the advent of the extreme right or colonial neo-fascism.

In times as immoderate as these, marked by a profound capitalist crisis and the imperialist offensive and a brutal Trump administration hanging over the heads of our peoples, moderation, far from being a virtue, becomes an unforgivable vice.

Pagina 12

Joint international statement from communist and workers' parties on Venezuela and Latin America

In response to the criminal bombings carried out by the United States against the city of Caracas and other areas of Venezuela on 3 January, communist and workers' parties throughout the world have issued this joint statement condemning the attack and calling on working people around the world to mobilise in solidarity with Venezuela.

This military imperialist attack constitutes a serious violation of the sovereignty of an independent state and is directed against the interests of the people of Venezuela and other peoples of the region.

The operation included the illegal and violent arrest, transfer, and imprisonment in the US of Nicolás Maduro and Cilia Flores, an unacceptable and reprehensible act that violates every concept of international law, effectively rendering it meaningless. Consequently, we demand his immediate release.

This attack is not an isolated incident, but rather the culmination of years of sanctions, threats, blockades and destabilisation efforts. The real objective was never the defence of human rights, nor the supposed fight against drug trafficking, nor the rhetoric of "democracy," all of which serve merely as pretexts.

The true aim has been the direct imposition of the geopolitical and economic interests of US imperialism in Venezuela and the region, within the context of the struggle among capitalist powers for control over energy resources, strategic raw materials, trade routes, and markets.

In a cynical and shameless manner, Donald Trump declared that the United States would "run" Venezuela until a so-called "transition" was completed. This statement exposes the imperialist nature of his plan and confirms the real motives behind this aggression: the control of Venezuela's oil and natural resources and the imposition of his plan for economic, political, and military control over the entire continent. We categorically reject this plan of imposition and this so-called democracy enforced through the use of armed force.

We warn that Venezuela is being used as an example, and that a strong response is required to confront imperialist aggression, which has been carried out in such a brutal manner and with barbaric military means against the people of Venezuela and all the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean.

We demand an immediate end to the military aggression against Venezuela, the withdrawal of US troops from the Caribbean, and full respect for the sovereignty, self-determination and territorial integrity of the Venezuelan people.

We call upon the revolutionary, working-class and popular forces of the world to mobilise and express active solidarity with Venezuela against this new bellicose escalation of attacks by US imperialism.

We condemn the direct threats issued by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio against Cuba following the intervention in Venezuela, and we express our solidarity with the people and the Communist Party of Cuba.

Unity of the peoples against imperialist barbarity!

Proletarians of all countries, unite!

New Caledonia

Liam Ellis

The New Caledonian riots in May 2024 made a few headlines in Australia, but media coverage primarily focused on the shock of violence in the streets and the impact on Australians in the country. The causes and political significance of the riots was barely mentioned in mainstream media coverage.

The indigenous Kanak people have a long history of struggling against French colonisation. As it did in Algeria, France refers to earlier acts of resistance as "The Events." The stage for last year's "events" was set by the three referenda in 2018, 2020 and 2021. These referenda were established by the Nouméa accords in 1998, giving the people three chances to vote for independence. The Independentistes were narrowly defeated in the 2018 and 2020 referenda. In 2021, COVID-19 struck Kanak communities and caused many deaths. Kanak culture requires a year-long period of mourning. As the independence movement is predominantly composed of Kanak people, the impact of COVID-19 hamstrung their ability to campaign for the third referendum. The Independentistes called for the 2021 referendum to be postponed, but the French government refused.

The Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS), which leads the independence movement, responded to this refusal by calling for a boycott of the final referendum, and declared that it would not recognise the result. The referendum went ahead despite over half the population boycotting the vote. The remainder of the constituency voted overwhelmingly against independence.

In the aftermath of these referenda, the French government attempted to repeal the Corps Électorale Gelé. This policy restricts the franchise to people who lived in New Caledonia uninterrupted from 1988 to 1998 and their descendants. The policy is a concession designed to ensure that despite the significant migration of (primarily French) Europeans to New Caledonia, Kanaks would not become an electoral minority in their own country.

In 2024, after New Caledonian officials commenced talks with China, but before any agreements were reached, the French government initiated reforms to repeal the Corps Électorale Gelé. French Analyst Bastien Vandendyck said in 2021 that the "French Safeguard" is necessary to prevent China from establishing a presence in New Caledonia. "All China needs now to complete its pearl necklace on Australia's doorstep is New Caledonia," Vandendyck said. Vandendyck is now Chief of Staff to the President of New Caledonia's Southern province, which is home to 75% of the archipelago's population. The proposal to open the Corps Électorale Gelé caused a tremendous backlash which led to the May 2024 riots.

The FLNKS continues to make representations to the UN that the French government has betrayed the Nouméa Accord. New Caledonia remains on the list of non-self-governing territories maintained by the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation. Despite the troops that France sent to put down the unrest in May 2024, and the waves of reinforcements it has sent since, the issue of independence for New Caledonia has not been put to rest, and the struggle of the Independentistes continues.

Syria: Aleppo fighting leaves civilians dead, displaces thousands

Vibhu Mishra

At least five civilians have been killed and some 30,000 people displaced following renewed fighting in Aleppo, Syria, prompting calls from the UN for immediate de-escalation and a return to political talks.

Clashes recently resumed between the General Security Forces of the transition government and the mainly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), following a brief pause after the ceasefire announced in late December 2025.

Initial fighting near the Alleramoon roundabout – on the historic city's western outskirts – spread to the predominantly Kurdish neighbourhoods of Ash-Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyeh, with shelling also affecting surrounding government-controlled areas.

Significant damage has been reported to homes and public infrastructure, including healthcare. At least three major hospitals have ceased operations, while flights in and out of Aleppo International Airport were suspended.

The UN Secretary-General is alarmed by reports of civilian deaths and injuries after hostilities re-escalated earlier this week in the city's northeastern neighbourhoods, UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric told reporters in New York.

"The United Nations reiterates that all parties have a clear obligation, under international humanitarian law, to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure," he said, urging all actors to "immediately de-escalate, exercise maximum restraint, and take all measures to prevent further harm to civilians."

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that approximately 30,000 people have been displaced, with more than 2,000 families relocating to Afrin district and around 1,100 people sheltering in nine collective centres inside Aleppo.

Thousands more fled Ashrafiyeh and Ash-Sheikh Maqsoud seeking refuge with host communities.

Local authorities have designated some places of worship as temporary shelters, opened humanitarian corridors to allow civilians to evacuate, and mobilised public buses to transport displaced families.

The Secretary-General called on all parties to demonstrate flexibility and goodwill on both the military and political tracks and to resume negotiations to fully implement the 10 March agreement between the two sides.

Asked what concrete steps were needed, Dujarric said an agreement between the government and the SDF on placing security forces under a unified national command would be a key measure, stressing the need for a state in which "all Syrians ... would feel safe and protected."

The latest violence comes amid an uneasy transition following the fall of the Assad government in December 2024.

Since then, flare-ups of violence in several parts of the country – including renewed sectarian attacks targeting predominantly Alawite coastal areas and Druze communities in Sweida and other governorates – have triggered new displacement and deepened fears among Syrians still recovering from nearly 14 years of war.

UNGENEVA

3CR RADICAL RADIO

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Global Briefs

DENMARK: Denmark called on the United States to stop "threatening" Greenland as President Donald Trump told US media that he "absolutely needed" the territory, a day after Washington kidnapped the leader of Venezuela. Over the past year, Trump repeatedly claimed that the United States "needs" Greenland and suggested options to place it under US control. Former Trump communication director, Katie Miller shared an image on social media showing Greenland covered by a US flag and the word "soon." Denmark's Prime Minister said in a statement "I urge the American side to stop the threats against a historically close ally and against another country and another people, who have clearly said that they are not for sale."

GUINEA: Guinea Supreme Court certified General Mamady Doumbouya as the winner of the presidential election with 86.72% of the vote. The runner-up received 6.59% of the vote. A new constitution approved in the last September referendum extended the presidential term from five to seven years and removed a ban on military leaders running for office. Speaking after the election victory, Doumbouya said: "Today there are neither winners or losers. There is only one Guinea, united and indivisible." He also called on citizens to "build a new Guinea, a Guinea of peace, justice, shared prosperity and fully assumed political and economic sovereignty."

EUROPEAN UNION: Italy gave critical support to plans by the European Union to seal a huge free-trade deal with five South American nations that has been negotiated for 25 years. Italy's Prime Minister Meloni was long seen as the key vote in the campaign by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to rally support for the trade deal with the Mercosur nations of Brazil, Argentina, Biolivia, Paraguay, and Uruguay. French farmers have already protested against the deal claiming that their livelihoods will be hurt.

UNITED STATES: The United States Senate has passed a resolution demanding an end to US hostilities against Venezuela by a vote of 52-47. All Democrats voted for the measure, as did five Republicans.

SOUTH AFRICA: Chinese, Russian and Iranian warships arrived in South African waters for a week of naval drills off the coast of Cape Town. The Chinese-led drills were organised last year under the BRICS bloc of developing nations. South Africa's armed forces said the drills will bring members of the bloc together to practice maritime safety and anti-piracy operations and "deepen cooperation."

MYANMAR: A second round of voting took place in Myanmar's first general elections since a takeover by the military five years ago. The election is being held in three phases, due to armed conflicts. The first round took place on 28 December in 102 of the country's total 330 townships. A final round is scheduled for 25 January.

CHINA: The honorary rector of China's biggest university slammed the European Union for adopting an increasingly reckless and conflict-provoking stance towards other nations. Yan Xuetong made the remarks at an event organised by the Beijing World Peace Forum. "If Europe does not alter its course, it risks embroiling itself in conflicts with even more nations," he warned.

GREECE: Thousands of active and retired military personnel, non-commissioned officers and officers, along with trade unions, student unions and women's associations, held a large rally outside the Greek Parliament on 8 January, to protest a bill proposed by the Ministry of Defence. As many speakers at the rally stressed, the bill is essentially aimed at supporting the war economy of the 'NATO 2030' agenda.

GAZA: Here are the latest figures from the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza, tracking the casualties from 7 October 2023, through 6 January 2026:

- Confirmed killed: at least 71,391 people, including 20,179 children. That's one out of every 33 people in Gaza.
- Injured: at least 171,279 people. That's one out of every 14 people in Gaza. Since the ceasefire: 424 Palestinian have been killed; 1,199 Palestinians have been injured.

Vietnam moves ahead

Sebastian Peady

Photo: rawpixel.com (CC0)

Major reforms have been passed by the National Assembly of Vietnam, set to bring about the greatest changes to the nation's government since its victory over the United States in 1975.

At that time Vietnam was establishing a new government, after being devastated by the war waged on it by the United States. Much of the country's infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, had been destroyed. Vietnam had to rebuild its entire transportation and communication networks from scratch. Landmines, bombs, and hazardous chemical littered, and still litter, the country. Vietnam lacked the technology, education, and infrastructure for a coordinated centralised government.

In order to make the government more flexible under these conditions, the country was divided into 63 provinces, covering smaller geographic areas and containing smaller populations. 63 provinces is a considerable number of divisions for a country with the area and population of Vietnam. For comparison, the United States, with over three times the population and almost thirty times the area, has only fifty states.

The government was designed with four administrative levels; commune and ward (these are the same level, the difference being the former is rural while the latter is urban), district, province, and national.

Communes deal with basic tasks such as conducting background checks for local citizens, and implementing new policies and laws received from higher levels of administration. While communes can make suggestions concerning policies to higher levels, they have had no real authority over policies. The tasks communes carry out are of immediate, local concern to the citizens. In this way, perhaps the best comparison to Australia would be that of a local council.

The next level up from commune is district. The district level handles more important tasks, such as managing the budget distributed to them by the national government, providing ID cards, and managing land rights.

Next up from the district level is the provincial level. The provincial level suggests policies and laws to the National Assembly to discuss and vote on, and then ensuring such laws and policies are implemented at the lower levels.

The district level functions as a middle manager between the local commune level and the higher provincial level. Once necessary, it has now long outlived its usefulness, and has caused unnecessary and counterproductive bureaucracy.

That's how the Vietnamese government has run since the victory over the US. But the district level layer has caused much frustration for the Vietnamese people.

RESPONSIVE

Now, the district level is being entirely eliminated, and local government is being transformed into a more decentralised two-tier model. The provincial and commune levels are being empowered, as embodied by the slogan "what the local level manages, the local level decides." Commune levels and their leaders will have authority over relevant local matters, such as land reform, finance, education, and environmental policies, and the authority to plan and allocate resources. Commune levels will see a doubling of staff size.

The commune-level People's Councils, locally elected legislative bodies, are also seeing positive reforms. They will have expanded responsibility and authority over local budgets, public infrastructure, law enforcement, administrative services, social welfare services, and economic initiatives. Without needing approval from higher levels, this gives communes significantly more flexibility with how they manage local concerns.

By granting communes more power and authority, these changes will allow for more transparency with the Vietnamese people. Previously, communes were often unable to explain decisions, as they were not the ones making those decisions. Now they are. Furthermore, communes must now hold regular public dialogues, disclose public budgets, and respond to complaints.

These changes will arguable make the commune level arguably the most important level of government.

Land administration is changing too. Land is collectively owned in Vietnam, and land usage is strongly supervised and managed by the government. With the new reforms, local governments, provincial and commune, will have the authority to issue land use rights certificates themselves, and decide how land is used and managed locally.

The 64 provinces will be merged into a more reasonable and effective 34.

These changes will eliminate unnecessary and counterproductive bureaucracy, while simultaneously empowering people by granting them greater control over local matters.

These changes come after a great deal of self-criticism by the Vietnamese National Assembly.

Hands off Venezuela, Perth action

NO blood for oil

Elly Hulm

On Monday 5 January, people in Boorloo/Perth took to the streets as part of the national emergency rallies called by the Hands-off Venezuela Coalition. The Coalition had formed late in 2025 as a result of the US military attacks on small boats in the Caribbean that left more than 100 people dead.

Threats issued by Trump in late December 2025 were so dangerous that the Coalition held its first rally outside the US consulate in Perth on Friday 19 December. Rumours were getting louder that Trump was ready to launch an attack.

Many people expected the attacks on Venezuela before the end of the year but there was an attack on Nigeria instead.

The 3 January attack shocked the world; an act of state terrorism with the elected head of state and his wife kidnapped and his security team killed among several civilians. The US Delta force who carried out the attack couldn't establish a base there to keep boots on the ground. Contrary to reports there was resistance.

The hit and run US action kidnapped President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, both now facing trumped up charges of narco-trafficking and other related charges in New York.

Meanwhile the government continues to operate and people inside the country are mobilising to demand the return of president Maduro.

The UN security council condemned the attacks and the US congress is preventing Trump from launching further military attacks on Venezuela via executive orders.

Speakers from the Greens WA, CPA, Red Spark, Socialist Alliance & Stop Aukus-WA and IPAN (Independent and Peaceful Australia Network) addressed the more than 200 people who had gathered outside the US consulate. As well as the immediate concern for Venezuela with the chant ringing out of 'No blood for Oil,' the implications for the world were also raised as Trump freely violates international law.

Soon after the attack the US withdrew from a large numbrt og international forums indicating we are entering a very dangerous period. Trump in one gasp threatened Colombia, Mexico, Cuba, Iran, and said that he will take over Greenland by any means.

Hands off Venezuela
Hands off the World!

Members of the Sunshine Coast Branch attended the "Hands Off Venezuela" rally on Sunday 4 January, to voice their anger at the US attack on Venezuela

67th Anniversary of Cuban Revolution – ¡Viva la Revolución!

Graham Holton

Cuba celebrated its 67th anniversary on 1 January this year. The CPA congratulates the Cuban people and its government, led by the Communist Party of Cuba, and we stand in solidarity with their just demands for the end of the criminal US blockade and Cuba's self-determination. The blockade affects every single Cuban family who have resisted for decades the illegal sanctions and blockade of the sovereign country. This year is also the centennial year of Commander Fidel Castro Ruz, and the CPA joins the international commemoration defending Fidel's teachings of internationalism and social justice.

After the US military kidnapped Venezuela's elected President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, President Donald Trump told reporters he believes Cuba's communist government is "ready to fall" because it has lost its main economic support from Venezuela. Trump thinks Cuba will now collapse on its own. The US attack on Caracas on 3 January killed eighty people, including thirty-two Cubans.

Trump's threats shouldn't be taken lightly. The Trump administration has tightened sanctions on Cuba, re-listed it as a State Sponsor of Terrorism, and intensified the longstanding embargo, intending to weaken Havana's economic base and political authority. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has not ruled out making Cuba's communist government the Trump administration's next target.

Cuba has survived a long history of US political, military and economic pressure. In 1959 Fidel Castro's revolution overthrew the violent and corrupt US-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. The following year the government nationalised US-owned property. The US responded by cutting Cuba's sugar quota and imposing export restrictions. In 1962 President John F. Kennedy imposed a full trade embargo to isolate Cuba economically and to encourage regime change.

After the Bay of Pigs invasion failed, the Cuban Missile Crisis followed, with the USSR and the US almost going to war. The Crisis ended, but sanctions became a central tool of US cold war strategy. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba entered the "Special Period," suffering extreme economic hardship. The US continued to ratchet up the pressure: the Cuban Democracy Act (Torricelli Act) of 1992 prohibited foreign subsidiaries of US companies from trading with Cuba. The Helms–Burton Act (1996) codified the embargo into US law. The first Trump Administration (2017–2021) re-listed Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism and fully activated Helms-Burton III, enabling lawsuits against foreign firms trading with Cuba, tightened rules on remittances, and shutting off migration programs that allowed Cubans to work in the US legally.

The top US diplomat in Havana, Mike Hammer, has interfered in Cuban politics in a way the US would never permit at home, meeting with political activists and raising the ire of the Cuban government, which accuses him of fomenting unrest.

Johana Tablada, deputy director for US affairs in Cuba's foreign ministry, accused the Trump administration of ratcheting up tensions, trying to provoke a military confrontation. Tablada said that the Cuban government was trying to ease the situation but that the US appears determined to encourage conflict. The Trump administration is targeting Cuba intending to "create conditions, in my opinion, for, if necessary, a military confrontation."

Cuban officials have condemned US actions in Venezuela, accusing Washington of advocating "violent overthrow" of governments. This reflects Havana's concerns about the US's regional intentions for the Panama Canal, Colombia, Nicaragua, Mexico and even Greenland. Despite the renewed military and economic threats by the Trump administration, the Cuban government and the Cuban people are standing firm against any future US onslaught, as they have since 1959. With one voice: ¡Viva la Revolución!

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Half the Sky

Self-determination not prison

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are the fastest-growing prison population, imprisoned at more than 20 times the rate of non-Indigenous women. In addition, they are five times more likely to be locked up for minor, non-violent offences such as driving an unregistered vehicle or without a licence, public disorder, offensive language, or shoplifting, and consistently receive harsher sentences than non-Indigenous women.

Indigenous women are almost 16 times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be held in custody while awaiting trial. This is also higher than the rate experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. "Ongoing contact with the justice system drives cycles of re-incarceration," the Australian Human Rights Commission reports. While they represent 3.8% of women in Australia, Indigenous women make up 30%-40% of incarcerated women. A large percentage have been denied bail or are incarcerated for short terms for offences that non-Indigenous people might receive a fine or community service for.

The 'justice system' is racist and patriarchal, and uncaring of First Nations women. From the judiciary through to police and prisons, the women are treated as cold, hard statistics with little if any consideration of the consequences when the state brutally locks them up for minor offences. The state is also guilty of ignoring the role of women in their communities, and their need to be connected with family, culture, community, and Country. Nor are the needs of their children recognised. Instead the colonial-settler state continues to cruelly remove children from their families causing untold trauma for extended families, mothers and children. The 1997 Stolen Generations Report, *Bringing Them Home*, shocked the nation but despite its many excellent recommendations, the theft of First Nations children continues to this day.

First Nations women play a central role as mothers, aunties, daughters, sisters, and grandmothers, not only as primary caregivers, but in holding families together and passing on culture. Prisons have a serious impact on women's health as they fear loss of children, their homes and belongings as well as the trauma of being taken off Country, taken from their kin and locked in a cell.

The system continues to perpetuate intergenerational trauma which has its roots in colonisation. There is more than ample evidence that the wellbeing of women and their extended families and kinship groups is served best by avoiding incarceration. The impact on children of locking up mothers is devastating. Indigenous children, deprived of their mothers and the important role that they play in maintaining culture in their families are being set up as the next generation to be locked up.

Racist, patriarchal courts and prisons should not be the first port of call. Projects in NSW and Victoria have shown how Koori courts result in far better outcomes. They are culturally sensitive and assist in keeping families and kinship groups together. Such courts understand the social issues and needs of women and communities.

First Nations organisations should be funded and given the opportunity to provide programs for First Nations women who are experiencing trauma, homelessness, or require healing programs. Most importantly, until the punitive justice system, poverty, housing, health issues, unemployment, and lack of opportunities are addressed, the intergenerational cycle of trauma will continue. Likewise, Indigenous communities must be provided with the wherewithal to manage and control their own affairs.

Mothers are the solution, not the problem, in promoting the wellbeing of their families and communities. They are providers of the cultural, social, and emotional needs of their children and their wellbeing.

Chavismo survives US attacks on Venezuela

Graham Holton

On 3 January the US military attacked Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, kidnapping President Nicolás Maduro, and his wife Cilia Flores. More than 100 Venezuelans and thirty-two Cubans died defending the president. US President Donald Trump declared the United States was now "in charge," and that "We are going to run the country until such time as we can do a safe, proper and judicious transition." Elliott Abrams, special envoy to Venezuela during the first Trump administration, said, "No one is talking about elections." The US government accused President Maduro of being a narco-terrorist. Yet Trump's response to Maduro's capture was to claim Venezuelan oil and that US oil companies would take over the nation's oil production. The sanctioned oil would be sold in the US, and the money would pay for imported US goods, such as medicines and food. The state-owned oil company, PDVSA, announced it was holding trade negotiations with the US.

Trump's "Donroe Doctrine," a corollary to the 1828 Monroe Doctrine, regards Latin America and the Caribbean as within the US sphere of political, economic and military influence. The State Department countered criticism of Trump's actions by posting on social media a photo of Trump, headed, "This is OUR Hemisphere, and President Trump will not allow our security to be threatened." None of the countries in the region are a threat to the US.

The Venezuelan government survived the US attacks, and the kidnap of its president, through its Chavista political structure. *Chavismo* is a political ideology/movement that promotes anti-imperialism, economic sovereignty, social welfare and participatory democracy. The Bolivarian Revolution, begun by President Hugo Chávez in 1999 and named after the South American liberator, Simón Bolívar, aims to undertake socialist transformation and empower the nation's poor. Chávez paid for the health and education policies by utilising the country's oil wealth.

The *Chavismo* structure consists of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), the armed forces high command, the security and intelligence services, and symbolic ties to Chávez's policies. The new government consists of Delcy Eloína Rodríguez as Interim president, Jorge Rodríguez, president of the National Assembly of Venezuela, Calixto Ortega Sánchez, Vice President for Economic Affairs, Vladimir Padrino López, Minister of Defense & Vice President Sectorial of Sovereignty, Security and Peace, and Gustavo Enrique González López, head of Presidential Honor Guard & Director of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM).

In official statements Delcy Rodríguez expressed her willingness to work "jointly" with the US, while insisting that the opposition's extremism has led the country to "kneel" before foreign governments. "A parliament at the service of foreign governments cannot be tolerated, nor can fascist social expressions be allowed, as they have been extremely dangerous for the Republic." These extremists brought Venezuela "to its knees and compromise our resources." Jorge Rodríguez said, that as an act "intended to seek peace," he would release a "significant number" of prisoners. In response Trump cancelled a second round of strikes on Venezuela.

Delcy Rodríguez said: "Drug trafficking and human rights were the excuse; the real motive was oil." Venezuela has the world's largest oil reserves of 303 billion barrels, most of which are heavy, sour crude oil high in sulphur and mostly suitable for asphalt (tar) production. At its peak in 1998, Venezuela had 5 per cent of total global production, but this was severely curtailed following international oil sanctions.

Venezuela's heavy crudes can only be refined in US Gulf Coast refineries. Citgo a subsidiary of PDVSA, and its refineries in Texas, Illinois, and Louisiana have the complex processing cokers and hydrocrackers needed to refine this type of crude, but are already operating at 95 per cent capacity. They cannot process a flood of new oil.

US oil companies have little interest in investing billions of dollars to increase Venezuelan oil production. At a recent meeting with US oil company CEOs, Trump asked them to invest US$100 billion. The CEO of ExxonMobil, Darren Woods, called Venezuela "uninvestable," warning that companies would need "significant changes" to the commercial frameworks and the legal system to make their investments viable. Billions would be needed for wells which have been capped for years, and to upgrade the network of corroded pipelines and infrastructure. Much of the oil reserves lie in environmentally sensitive areas, making drilling difficult. The privatisation of these Venezuela's oil fields is unlikely; an indication of how little Trump understands the economics of the international petroleum industry.

Nor has he grasped the strength of the Bolivarian Revolution to survive US onslaughts. Whatever happens in Venezuela in the near future will depend on how strong the people are on the streets. They have been demanding the return of the kidnapped president and his wife who is also a member of Parliament.

As stated above Chavismo has survived the US attacks which have been condemned by a large number of countries for a breach of international law that makes every one a target. ✪

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Statement from the Cuban government regarding Cubans killed in Venezuela

As a result of the criminal attack perpetrated by the United States government against the sister Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, carried out in the early morning of 3 January 2026, 32 Cubans lost their lives in combat. They were serving on missions representing the Revolutionary Armed Forces and the Ministry of the Interior, at the request of their counterparts in the South American country.

Faithful to their responsibilities for security and defence, our compatriots fulfilled their duty with dignity and heroism, falling after fierce resistance in direct combat against the attackers or as a result of the bombing of facilities.

Once their identities were verified, the families of our fallen comrades were informed and received heartfelt condolences and support from Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, leader of the Cuban Revolution, and from the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party and President of the Republic, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, as well as from the heads of both ministries.

Victims of yet another criminal act of aggression and state terrorism, these combatants, through their heroic actions, demonstrated the solidarity of millions of compatriots. The Revolutionary government will organise the appropriate actions to pay them the tribute they deserve. ✪

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