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Israel 'evaporates' thousands of Palestinians

Graham Holton

An *Al Jazeera* Arabic investigation has documented that the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) used weapons that "evaporated" 2,842 Palestinians at blast sites in Gaza, their bodies so heavily damaged that there were no recoverable remains. Civil defence teams in Gaza calculated these figures by comparing the number of people known to be inside buildings before strikes with the bodies recovered afterward. Military experts attribute the lack of physical remains to the use of high-temperature thermobaric and "vacuum" weapons that generate extremely intense heat and pressure, powerful enough to reduce human bodies to ash or microscopic fragments when used in confined spaces.

The thermobaric bombs used by the Israelis use a conventional explosive designed to create an extremely high-temperature fireball with a long-duration, high-pressure blast wave that forms a powerful oxygen-consuming combustion that evaporates bodies. The weapon first releases a mist of flammable material, then a second charge ignites the fuel cloud which rapidly combusts the atmospheric oxygen. This creates temperatures that exceed 2,500°C.

Dr Munir al-Bursh, director general of the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza, explained the biological impact of the United States-made 900 kg MK-84 "Hammer" bombs, which generate extreme heat. "When a body is exposed to energy exceeding 3,000 degrees combined with massive pressure and oxidation, the fluids boil instantly. The tissues vaporise and turn to ash."

HEAT AND SHOCK

Other bombs the Israelis used include GBU-39 precision glide bombs and the BLU-109 bunker busters, which produce massive heat and shock waves. In August 2025 the GBU-39 was used on the al-Tabin school in Gaza City. Vasily Fatigarov, a Russian military expert, said it is "designed to keep the building structure relatively intact while destroying everything inside." This creates "a pressure wave that ruptures lungs and a thermal wave that incinerates soft tissue." Fatigarov told *Al Jazeera*, "To prolong the burning time, powders of aluminium, magnesium and titanium are added to the chemical mixture. This raises the temperature of the explosion to between 2,500 and 3,000 degrees Celsius."

Yasmin Mahani searched the ruins of al-Tabin school, searching for her son, Saad. There was no trace. Mahani told *Al Jazeera* that, "We found nothing of Saad. Not even a body to bury." In September 2024 the BLU-109 was used on al-Mawasi, a "safe zone" for forcibly displaced Palestinians, evaporating twenty-two people.

CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY

International law experts have raised concerns that weapons with indiscriminate effects on civilians may violate humanitarian law. In January 2024 the International Court of Justice (ICJ) had issued provisional measures against Israel, ordering it to stop acts of genocide. In November 2024 the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The killings intensified.

Tariq Shandab, a professor of international law, told *Al Jazeera* that the international justice system has "failed the test of Gaza." Shandab said, "Since the ceasefire agreement [in October], more than 600 Palestinians have been killed." Shandab added, "The blockade on medicine and food is itself a crime against humanity." He pointed to the "impunity" granted to Israel by the US veto power at the UN Security Council.

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Boorloo/Perth rally for Palestine demanding the arrest of war criminal Israeli president.

'No longer a threat': Israel moves on Jordan

Peter Farmer

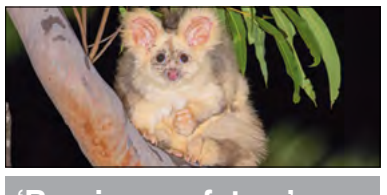
For a long time Israel has talked of the Kingdom of Jordan as the true home of Palestinians, and threatened to move Palestinians out of their homeland. Now there are signs that the apartheid state of Israel is trying to make this a reality.

Senior figures in Amman, the capital of Jordan, are worried about a "soft transfer", whereby Israel makes life in the illegally occupied West Bank unliveable in order to force Palestinians there to move to Jordan.

Israel is clearing the path for a massive expansion in settlements by legal (by Israeli law) means, erasing land registries that have long protected Palestinian property rights. Transferring the land registration authority to the Israel Justice Ministry makes this process easier.

In 1994, the Wadi Araba treaty was signed between Israel and Jordan, ending the state of war that had lasted since 1948. Now Joardanians worry that the treaty is effectively dead. One commentator, Al-Abbadi, pointed to the Israeli army's new brigade, the Gilead Brigade. "This means the Israelis are proceeding with their strategic practices from the Nile to the Euphrates," he said.

We found nothing.
Not even a body.

5 
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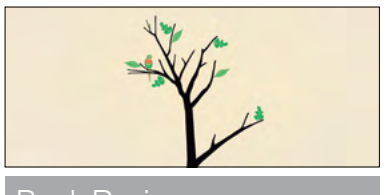
10 
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What about it?

People who support an ongoing genocide in Palestine have a problem. They want to support a campaign of dispossession and mass genocide, but still look like they care. They want to oppose demonstrators who are against Israel's murderous campaign against Palestinian people, but they still want to feel like the good guys.

It's just not a good look to come out and say that you're in favour of mass murder. You might think this would leave Israel supporters with nothing to say to those who protest the genocide, but they manage. One way the pro-Israel crowd solve the problem is to ask a question: what about Sudan? What about Iran? What about (some other country that's in the news)? Why aren't you protesting about them?

This line of argument is called 'whataboutery' or 'whataboutism.' It's also known as 'changing the subject.' In conversation it's easily answered. I'm protesting for Palestine because I'm against mass murder and dispossession there, you're changing the subject. If you really care about Sudan, why aren't *you* protesting about it? People who practice whataboutery never care about the other country. It's just a handy way to try to shut down criticism of Israel.

Another response to whataboutery is to explain our stake in the issue. Opposing genocide and dispossession is all the reason anyone needs to oppose Israel's actions in Palestine, but you could always tell the whataboutery-user that whatever's happening in other places, Australia has rolled out the red carpet for Israel's president.

"What about?" distracts a lot of people from the simple facts of the situation: Israel is carrying out a genocide. Whataboutery becomes not just a distraction, but almost a weapon when it's institutionalised. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-semitism includes a number of examples that label criticism of Israel as anti-semitic. One of them is "applying double standards by requiring of (Israel) a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation." This is an invitation to pro-Israel activists to use whataboutery as a reason for dismissing people from jobs, punishing the ABC or defunding universities. This is not exaggeration. Those are powers that the government's 'Anti-Semitism Envoy' Jillian Segal has demanded.

The IHRA definition has been adopted by Australian universities and will definitely be used as an excuse to punish protesters. The Australian government has adopted the definition, probably to keep the pro-Israel lobby happy. There is an alternative, the Jerusalem Declaration on antisemitism, which does not engage in whataboutery or rule out criticism of Israel.

One thing that the "what about?" question does is ask why Israel is treated differently. The Israel supporters want to stop people criticising Israel's genocide or Australia's support for it, but it's not a bad question. Israel gets massive support for its arms industry through generous contracts to the likes of Elbit Systems who have had $49.6 million of our money since October 2023. Australia is part of the supply chain for the F-35 jet fighters Israel uses to bomb Gaza. As everyone knows, Australia has just hosted the Israeli Head of State in the name of 'unity.' Israel is treated *very* differently and that should stop.

Next time you cop whataboutery, tell whoever's practicing it that they should go demonstrate about other places if they care, and that you'll keep turning up to protest Israel's genocide and Australia's support for it. All around the country that's what the Communist Party of Australia will be doing.

An act of war

Activists in Sydney (see photo) and Perth have picketed US consulates in both cities.
Protesters condemned Trump's most recent moves against the people of Cuba and their revolutionary government.
The Trump administration has implemented a naval blockade on oil supplies to the island. This is considered an act of war, as the population is facing genocide-ike effects due to the strengthening of the 60 year old US blockade.
Trump has used blackmail and threatened retaliatory tariffs on countries that supply oil to Cuba.
Trump is trying to force the Cuban people to their knees by attempting to break their sovereign spirit.
Cuba needs urgent solidarity and people are mobilising across the world condemning the US neocolonial aggression on the Cuban revolution that aims at inflicting so much suffering on the people.
Hospitals, schools, public transport are the first casualties from Trump's policies.
Other casualties are third countries under threat of being penalised if they exercise their sovereignty and trade with Cuba.
Cuba will overcome! Cuba is not alone! End the criminal blockade!

Israel 'evaporates' thousands of Palestinians

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Thermobaric weapons are not banned outright under international law, but they cannot be used in densely populated civilian areas, requiring a clear distinction between civilians and combatants, to minimise civilian harm. Israel's military claims its operations target armed groups and attempts to mitigate civilian harm. It has not confirmed the use of the specific munitions described by *Al Jazeera*. The term "evaporate" is descriptive, to explain the absence of recoverable remains in some strike sites, but there was no evidence of any speculative weapon beyond conventional explosives.

There have been no comments from the US, EU, or UN on the "evaporation" claim. The WHO and the UN forensic team have not released a report confirming that a special weapon was used. *Snopes*, the media fact checker, says the investigation relies on the term "evaporated" which is not a scientific or a legal classification. Israel has rejected the use of the term "evaporated," arguing it was inflammatory, and accused *Al Jazeera* of bias.

There's still the matter of the bodies that can't be found and will never be found.

Congress Appeal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Direct credit details

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Include "Congress Appeal" with transaction. If you want to be acknowledged in the *Guardian* (give name as it should appear).

15th CPA Congress $10,000 Financial Appeal

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

Delegates' expectations of Congress

M Santos

Preparations for the 15th National Congress of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) to be held 27 February to 1 March are well underway. Accommodation and travel are being finalised and delegates have received the draft Political Resolution, the main document to be put before Congress. For a large number of newer and younger Party members this will be their first Congress and anticipation is high.

Delegates were asked about their expectations. One of the main themes found in responses related to building and strengthening the work of the CPA, in particular in current, difficult conditions.

STRENGTHEN CPA

Alexander (QLD): "For the Party to come together and strengthen and renew itself for the struggles ahead."

Damian's (VIC) response is typical of many: "Reflection on Party actions/successes/areas to improve since last Congress. Clear direction on how to build the Party further for next year and channel energy from current events to productive action within broader movement."

Lachlan (ACT) speaks in terms of "Growth and development. Debate and friendly discussion. Setting the foundations for growth through a difficult period in human history."

Liam (SA) also focuses on strengthening the Party's work: "Revitalise the women's collective and initiate a program to improve the recruitment and retention of women in the CPA. Initiate a program to centralise the Party's education program. Agree on a way forward for the *Guardian*. Effect a reliable and energetic Central Committee."

Alexander (NSW) has similar expectations that "the Party come out stronger and with a clear path for the next several years to build towards socialism in Australia."

Joshua (ACT) expects "Congress to be a powerful moment for Party unity and taking the next step as the Party continues to grow and develop; taking the necessary steps to consolidate gains and forge ahead; working towards the Party's proper place as the leading party of the working class."

DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES

The draft Political Resolution has been through a long, democratic process with months of discussion in branches and hundreds of amendments submitted for the Central Committee's consideration in producing the final draft.

A number of delegates reflected on the democratic processes of Congress. For example, **Rachel (VIC)** expects to "represent myself and my political beliefs to the Party and to vote according to those beliefs."

"Participate in Party decision-making. See greater unity around CC; build stronger unified and disciplined branches across the Party," **Amelia (ACT)** says, reflecting the expectations of many delegates.

Maximus (SA) looks to "follow the process of democratic centralism in the process of building a disciplined party in the hopes of building Australian Socialism. The sharing of ideas across state lines, and building relationships that benefit the Party."

"To have input and to take branch members' input to the Congress for the progress of the Party, and to share ideas and perspectives with comrades in other branches," **Alexandra (SA)** says.

SHARING IDEAS

Naruaki (NSW) sees Congress as an "opportunity to meet with comrades from around the country and have thorough, and empowering discussions; a professional and comradely event; fair and reasonable time allowances to complete all the business requires."

Michael (WA) says, "I expect that the National Congress will be productive and that we will help the Party to grow, I hope that we will discuss current events in the world and the CPA's place and position on them."

FIRST CONGRESS

For **Emily (WA)**: "This is my first Congress, so it will be great to see how they are run."

Sasha (QLD), first Congress, expressed similar expectations: "I'm not too sure what to expect. I do, however, look forward to seeing again and meeting new comrades from around the country."

For **Jim (NSW)**: "Truthfully I am not sure what to expect. I understand that Congress is a fairly serious affair, at which the Party elects the Central Committee and decides upon some of its most critical issues; but I have no idea what it will be like to actually stand and participate in these processes. As such, I expect that it will be a learning experience that will expand my understanding of Party politics, and deepen my connection to comrades from my delegation as well as the Party as a whole."

"I would like to see delegates, in particular the new delegates, to be inspired and be more effective in their Party work and work towards a world of peace in this chaotic world," **Romina (VIC)** said.

Michael from WA hopes to "get a better understanding of how decisions are made, priorities set, etc."

LEARN & DEVELOP

"To learn and contribute to discussions as well as ideas for future directions of the Party," **Kristina (QLD)** said, as well as networking and meeting other Party members.

Alyssa (ACT) summed up many delegates' sentiments: "To participate in shaping the Party for years to come. To have fun. To meet comrades from around Australia."

There will be plenty of time for delegates to share experiences, discuss and debate ideas and socialise at two planned social functions. ✪

Darwin: 'horrifying treatment' of cruise ship crew

Federal government investigators from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) have boarded the Carnival cruise ship *Carnival Encounter* at the Port of Darwin to investigate whistleblower reports of skin disease, unsafe drinking water, and crew being forced to work while sick.

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) received the whistleblower reports from a crew member who cannot be publicly named for fear of retribution.

The MUA's NT Branch Secretary, Andy Burford, said the inspection was the direct result of crew members coming forward to the union, and that the branch is working closely with International Transport Workers Federation inspectors and AMSA to coordinate sweeping interventions throughout Australia aimed at rectifying the horrifying treatment of crew aboard Carnival Cruises' ships marketed as 'Australian home-ported' vessels.

The *Carnival Encounter* is one of three Carnival Cruise Line vessels "home ported" in Australia which operate almost exclusively in Australian waters but use loopholes in maritime laws to employ vulnerable foreign crew members who are excluded from Australia's employment laws.

"This this is exactly what happens when you allow foreign-owned and controlled companies to sail the Australian coast, using Australian ports, carrying Australian passengers paying Australian fares, but completely immune from Australian law."

"Carnival is bringing in workers from some of the poorest economies on earth, paying them as little as $2.50 an hour and subjecting them to horrifying conditions that no worker should accept, all while Carnival continues to generate billions of dollars in profit worldwide, and many tens of millions of dollars here in Australia," Burford said.

The inspection is targeting extremely serious reports from crew, including cramped living conditions leading to high incidence of skin infections, very poor quality, potentially harmful drinking water, and crew being forced to work while suffering from serious illnesses, including gastro.

The Union said the matters under investigation by AMSA point to broader, systemic problems across the cruise industry. Workers from some of the world's poorest nations are the backbone of these cruise vessels' operations but while guests enjoy a lavish party upstairs, these workers are frequently housed below decks, out of sight in overcrowded cabins, provided with inadequate amenities, and are forced to work even while sick.

"These are the real conditions behind the scenes," MUA Assistant National Secretary Jamie Newlyn said. "This is the daily living and working environment of the people who keep these ships operating, serve passengers around the clock, and generate enormous profits for cruise company owners."

The MUA welcomed AMSA's intervention and said it underscored the importance of whistleblower protections and effective regulatory enforcement.

"We welcome AMSA acting on this information," Newlyn said. "However, inspections alone will not address the underlying power imbalance onboard these vessels."

The MUA reiterated its call for Carnival Cruises to recognise the right of crew members to organise and bargain collectively in line with international labour standards.

"Carnival's business model is built on complete domination of a workforce from some of the worlds poorest economies, literally trapped at sea subject to the complete authority of managers and corporate structures which answer to American billionaires " MUA Organiser Shane Reside said.

"When workers are prohibited from having a union, this is exactly what happens. Lasting improvements in safety, accountability and living conditions only occur when workers have enforceable rights and a collective voice," Reside said.

"Until that happens, the MUA will continue to escalate this fight. Our union simply will not allow this to continue under our watch"

Maritime Union of Australia ✪

Capital Gains Tax discount 'deepening inequality and the housing crisis'

With debate re-emerging about changes to the capital gains tax discount, a new paper from Anglicare Australia shows Australia's housing and inequality crisis is being made worse by the tax system.

The paper finds that the capital gains tax discount has helped turn housing into an investment game – benefiting people who already own property while locking others out of secure, affordable homes.

"Right now, we're spending billions of dollars subsidising property investors, while people who need a place to live are being left behind," said Kasy Chambers, Executive Director of Anglicare Australia.

"These tax settings aren't abstract. They shape who gets a home and who doesn't."

Anglicare Australia says the return of public debate about the capital gains tax discount creates an opportunity to change course.

"We are encouraged to hear that the government is looking at tax changes in the next Budget.

"For too long, governments have spent big on tax breaks for investors, instead of building public and community homes people can actually afford," Chambers said.

"The result is higher rents, higher house prices, and growing inequality."

The paper calls for reform of the capital gains tax discount, alongside changes to other housing tax settings, with revenue redirected into public and community housing.

"Housing should be treated as essential infrastructure, not a tax-advantaged asset," Chambers said. "If we're serious about fixing the housing crisis, this is where reform has to start."

Anglicare

Congress Appeal

With the CPA's 15th National Congress just days away the Congress Appeal is so close to its target of $10,000. The Congress will be held in Melbourne with delegates travelling from around Australia. The expenses are considerable: subsidising travel, catering, printing of documents, hire of venue, etc. It is important that we reach our target so we make one final appeal in the *Guardian* for contributions. All contributions are appreciated no matter how small or large. A very deep and profound thank you to everyone who has supported the Appeal.

FK $520, Peter Farmer $35, Sainath Chenepalle $50, Naarm Branch $85, Lachlan Curran $50, Melbourne comrades $100, Floyd $930, Cumberland Branch $380, Beloyiannis Branch $850, Maritime Branch $500.

Total: $3,500

Cumulative total: $8,460

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) looks forward to welcoming 3,200 new graduate nurses and midwives into the state's public health system this year, as it continues to face staffing shortages.

NSWNMA General Secretary, Michael Whaites, said the union was keen to see greater investment in clinical support for new nurses and midwives.

"We welcome new graduates entering the public health system after completing their university studies. They are more important than ever to enhancing the nursing and midwifery workforce here in NSW," said Whaites.

"With this influx of new clinicians comes a greater responsibility from the state government to ensure our next generation of nurses and midwives are well supported, as they transition into fast-paced and challenging environments."

The union campaigned strongly and won protected extra time for one-on-one intensive learning for new graduates during their first year of practice.

The union emphasises that new graduates rely on a dynamic ecosystem to learn and grow their capabilities. This includes experienced nurses and midwives with the knowledge and skills to guide them, as well as clinical nurse and midwife educators who provide vital training and support.

"Without improvements to pay and conditions, we won't be able to retain our skilled workforce, which will have significant flow on effects to our junior staff who rely on that expertise and mentorship.

"It's imperative our hospitals and health facilities have the appropriate resourcing to help new grads integrate into the workforce and give them the best start to build the foundations for a long and successful career.

"The rollout of nurse-to-patient ratios is continuing which will benefit new graduates, ensuring they are working in safely staffed environments so they can provide quality patient care."

NSWNMA Assistant General Secretary, Katrina Bough, said the Association was eagerly awaiting the upcoming wage decision in the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) which new graduates would benefit from.

"Our ongoing fight for improved pay and conditions for public sector nurses, midwives and carers continues through our historic legal case, with the outcome expected in the first quarter of this year," said Bough.

"In order to have a sustainable and robust nursing and midwifery workforce in NSW, we must see fair and respectful remuneration for our members and the vital work they do.

"We hope the decision will address the historical gendered undervaluation of nurses and midwives, and lead to improved recruitment and retention of the workforce.

"We look forward to meeting and working with our new graduate nurses and midwives throughout their career in the public health system."

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: is the Minns NSW government. In response to the violent attacks by NSW Police on peaceful protesters gathering in Sydney, Dr Susie Byers, Head of Advocacy at Greenpeace Australia Pacific, said: "The right to peaceful assembly is a fundamental pillar of a healthy democracy and a basic right of all Australians.

"The violent actions of NSW Police officers in Sydney (9 February) are a significant escalation in the suppression of the right to protest in NSW, and part of a larger national trend of targeting and criminalising protesters. These actions have a chilling effect on democracy and peaceful protest in Australia, and are designed to curtail peaceful public dissent.

"These events can not be separated from what's happening globally, with the erosion of civil liberties and rise of authoritarianism threatening democracy and human rights. Australia must not follow countries like the United States down this path.

"Many of the freedoms and rights we cherish were won and defended when Australians stood up for what mattered – women's right to vote, workers' rights, and protecting the places we love from exploitation, from the Franklin River to the Great Barrier Reef.

"The NSW government must commit to protecting the right to protest and halt the introduction of further protest restrictions."

‘Burning our future’

As Queensland communities begin to recover from devastating flood events, environment groups have slammed the Albanese government for approving another open cut coal mine expansion in central Queensland this month.

Yancoal and Peabody’s Middlemount coal mine expansion has been given the green light by Environment Minister Murray Watt to clear over 183 hectares of koala habitat and 82ha of greater glider habitat. The project will extend an open cut pit and divert a section of Roper Creek that provides an important corridor for koalas, greater gliders and other native animals.

The project extends the life of the mine for an additional 7 years, from 2037 until 2044 and will extract an additional 112 million tonnes of mostly PCI coal that can be sold into thermal or metallurgical coal markets.

The project will produce 236 million tonnes of climate pollution, equivalent to more than half of Australia’s annual domestic emissions from all sources in 2024-25 (440.2 million tonnes) and 1,200 times more than the annual emissions of Vanuatu (197.079 tonnes).

This is the second coal mining project to be approved by the Albanese government this year, after an extension to the Meandu Mine, that supplies coal to the Tarong power station, was granted in January this year. The Albanese government has approved 33 new coal and gas projects since they were elected in 2022.

Central Queensland coordinator for Lock The Gate, Dr Claire Gronow says: “The Albanese government is in climate denial. You cannot take meaningful action on climate change while approving new sources of climate pollution. With every new or expanded coal mine they approve, the Albanese government is burning our future and burning their own credibility. Now is the time to be implementing an orderly transition away from coal, not approving massive expansions.

“Environment Minister Murray Watt likes to talk about cracking down on land clearing and environmental laws that will protect endangered wildlife habitat, but then he uses those same laws to approve a coal mine to destroy koala and greater glider habitat. The hypocrisy is staggering.”

Queensland Conservation Council Campaigner, Charlie Cox says: “This is the second coal project in Queensland that the Albanese government has approved this year, all while much of our state is in the midst of yet another flood clean up. The science is unwavering – digging and burning coal is fundamentally changing our climate, driving more frequent rain events and flooding. Allowing Yancoal to extract and export another 236 million tonnes of climate pollution tells Queenslanders the Albanese government does not care about our safety, our health, or our cost of living.”

Mackay Conservation Group Campaigner, Imogen Lindenberg warns: “The Albanese government is hammering another nail in the coffin of regional Queensland by approving yet another coal mine. We are on the frontline of climate-induced extreme weather, which is caused by the mining and burning of fossil fuels and is wreaking havoc on communities and ecosystems. Regional Queenslanders deserve a plan for a sustainable economy that protects both people and nature, not more destructive coal mines.”

CLIMATE ‘LEGACY’

Just one week before Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was elected in 2022, he said he wanted his legacy to be climate action. Since he became Prime Minister Albanese’s government has approved 33 new coal and gas projects.

The Climate Council estimates that lifetime pollution from these coal and gas projects is expected to exceed 6.5 billion tonnes of CO2-e. That’s equivalent to about one-eighth of global annual emissions, about 15 years of Australia’s current emissions, or 159 years of the emissions from all of Australia’s cars and utes.

Greater Glider, Queensland. Photo: Samrhorton – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Australia recently signed the Belem declaration, at the COP 30 UN Climate talks in Brazil. The declaration commits countries to a “just, orderly and equitable” transition away from coal and gas, consistent with limiting average global heating to 1.5C. However, just days after Climate Change Minister Chris Bowen signed Australia up to the declaration, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese doubled down on his government’s support for new fossil fuel projects.

Despite the Albanese government’s rhetoric on climate action and commitment to join with hundreds of other countries who have agreed to phase out fossil fuels, the Labor government is continuing to approve coal mine expansions.

Climate Council

Bank jobs threatened

The Finance Sector Union (FSU) says Commonwealth Bank’s multi-billion-dollar profit result makes its decision to dismantle the Bankwest brand in Western Australia even harder to justify.

The profit result shows CBA can afford to maintain Bankwest as a distinct Western Australian institution, the union says.

The FSU says CBA has effectively called time on Bankwest as an employing entity, moving to combine its operations and its workers under the one CBA banner.

As part of this process, CBA is seeking to merge the Bankwest enterprise agreement with the Commonwealth Bank agreement – a move that places the hard-fought conditions of approximately 1,400 Bankwest workers at risk.

More than 500 Bankwest workers have signed a petition calling on CBA CEO Matt Comyn to maintain Bankwest as a separate entity and respect the rights and conditions of its workforce.

The FSU says it will continue campaigning to protect Bankwest jobs and conditions in Western Australia.

FSU National Secretary Julia Angrisano said: “Workers are deeply concerned about what could be lost if the agreements are combined. Bankwest jobs in WA, rostered days off, annual leave loadings and overtime loadings are all potentially on the chopping block – and that’s just the tip of the iceberg.

“Bankwest workers have negotiated and secured strong conditions over many years. They should not be forced to surrender those rights because CBA wants to streamline its operations.

“Instead, it is dismantling a local institution while announcing billions in profit. That decision sends a very clear message to Western Australians that the bank is putting profits before people once again.”

The union also points to the Commonwealth Bank’s latest half-year profit results that highlight a stark disconnect between corporate success and growing insecurity among the workers delivering those profits.

A new FSU survey of more that 1,700 current CBA workers shows they are under significant strain.

The survey shows 72 per cent of workers are worried about their ongoing job security, with offshoring and the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence cited as the primary drivers of uncertainty.

More than half said they had considered leaving the bank in the past 12 months because of the pressure and insecurity.

Workloads are also intensifying, with 74 per cent of workers reporting their workload had increased over the past year.

An overwhelming 84 per cent believed CBA needed to do more to maintain and provide genuine job security. A staggering 85 per cent said CBA was a worse employer than it was 12 months ago.

The union says these figures reveal a growing gap between headline profits and the lived experience of workers.

Matt Comyn received a total pay packet of $7 million last year, a 14 per cent increase on the previous year, even as concerns about workforce conditions grow.

The FSU will soon commence negotiations with CBA for a new enterprise agreement and says addressing the issues raised by workers must be central to those discussions.

“While CBA is announcing another massive profit, workers inside the bank are telling us a very different story. Too many workers are worried about what the future holds for their jobs”, Julia Angrisano said.

“When 72 per cent of workers fear for their job security and more than half have considered leaving, that’s not a healthy workplace.

“Record profits should not coincide with rising workloads and growing anxiety about offshoring and automation. With billions in profit and executives’ pay increasing, CBA can absolutely afford to invest in its workforce.

“These profits are delivered by the people who work there. They deserve job security, manageable workloads and genuine consultation about the future of their work.

“We will be campaigning to ensure workers receive the respect, security and conditions they deserve. Profits are up – now it is the time for CBA to show that its workforce matters too.”

Finance Sector Union

3CR RADICAL RADIO

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

Southern Cross Brigade 2025-2026

Communist Party of Australia comrades have long been active in support of Cuba, both as members of the Australia Cuba Friendship Society and as members of the Southern Cross Brigade, which visits Cuba every year. Here is a report from Victorian comrade **Jamie Ion** who went on a very special brigade on the 65th anniversary of ICAP (Institute Cubano Amitie Pueblos or Cuban Institute for Friendship with People).

The brigade in Cuba started in late December of 2025, with 10 members from the Southern Cross brigade in attendance, over half of which, were CPA members. All up there were over 100 brigadistas from Australia and Europe.

We got to visit, work and see Cuba at an incredibly interesting and dynamic time. Cuba has faced harsh economic conditions before. Although now things have gotten better, the intensification of the embargo only continued to increase during our stay and is intensifying every day.

Part of our time on the brigade featured lectures from intellectuals in Cuba focusing on sports, society, art and economics. The economics lecture in particular was very enlightening to the extent the embargo affects Cuba and how it has changed over time. The primary constraint on the Cuban economy is the electricity capacity limiting industrial, commercial and social growth in the country as well as agriculture and food availability.

A lot of the work we did was on farms or serving food in kitchens. Most of the farms the brigade worked on were in the Artemisa province a short drive in the areas around the town of Caimito where the Julio Antonio Mella Camp is located. The furthest location from Havana we went for work was in Playa Giron, better known as 'The Bay of Pigs,' the site of an unsuccessful US invasion attempt. We worked on a farm called AgroVivo. The brigade was not all work, and though no one was there under the belief this was a vacation, there was still time for us to visit tourist locations, attend celebrations and even participate in some cultural exchange.

A important part of each annual brigade is the cultural exchange where each represented nation provides various foods, drinks, displays, items and performances to represent their culture. The Australian performance was a rendition of the union song "From Little Things, Big Things Grow" with the chorus sung by nearly all members of the delegation in between the verses. The night of the cultural exchange featured performances from the brigadista countries as well as a late night filled with Cuban music and dancing, making it the most vibrant celebration during our time in Cuba.

29 December, 2025 marked the 25th anniversary of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) featuring a guest appearance from President Manuel Diaz Canel, who gave a brief speech and handed out awards to the most notable members of the organisation. The rest of the anniversary featured anti-imperialist speeches reinforcing the people of Cuba's commitment to the construction of socialism in the face of American aggression.

During the later parts of the brigade, once the Southern Cross delegation had split off from the international delegation, the United States bombed Caracas and kidnapped president Maduro. The following day the entire nation of Cuba held a day of mourning for the 32 Cubans who died because of the attack. There was fear, anger and disbelief among brigade members and Cuba in general.

During this time, we saw the progressive decline of the energy situation in Cuba as sporadic and short power outages became longer and more consistent. There's still hope for conditions to get better with oil deliveries from Mexico potentially helping out in the short term, and Cuba taking up solar power at a rapid rate with Chinese help.

The future for Cuba depends on many things, but if Cuba can weather the storm there's no end to the possibilities for Cuba and its people.

Communists in Cumberland say: No rates money for Genocide!

Arthur Martin

Activists from the Communist Party of Australia's Cumberland Branch in NSW have begun carrying out a campaign to gather local support to bring a motion to the local council to adopt BDS (boycott, sanction and divest) principles, end existing contracts with companies that support or profit from the genocide and ban all future procurement from companies that violate ethical principles and human rights.

The branch is determined to demonstrate that the community overwhelmingly supports BDS principles and is unwilling to allow their council rates to be used to fund genocide. The start of the campaign was a simple stall in Auburn, where members gathered signatures for a petition in support of the motion and spoke with the locals. They were warmly received, with some locals even offering tea and sweets to thank them for the work they were undertaking. The branch looks forward to continuing their work in this space and is prepared for this campaign to take a sustained period of time if is to succeed.

These actions are not done for the sake of vanity. A successful motion at council could have a material impact on the broader world, disrupting (even if in a small way) the cashflow to companies that support the genocidal actions of Israel. There is also potential to set a precedent that sparks a chain reaction that could be much more disruptive. This would also demonstrate to the local community that they do in fact have the power to change things. The working class must understand that they are not helpless and that if they have the ability to change something small, then they also have the ability to change something big.

This campaign is beginning just days after the brutality of 9 February in Sydney, when unarmed protesters were assaulted and beaten by a heavily militarised police force who came with the explicit goal of inflicting violence on the general public. The state, including its protectors in the class-collaborationist Australian Labor Party, has reared its ugly head to try and dissuade the Australian working class from protesting and standing up against genocide. The message to us is clear – and our message back should be equally clear:

We will NOT back down, we will NOT stop and we WILL succeed. Palestine will be free!

Lovers' tiff ruins Valentine's Day

Many might think jumping out of a plane with your sweetheart is the last thing you would do to show your love but for Skydive Australia it's a selling point.

A lot of Australian couples signed up to fall head over heels this Valentine's Day.

But a lovers' tiff threatened to ruin their special day.

Experience Co, which operates as Skydive Australia at jump sites up and down the east coast, from Cairns to St Kilda, walked away from pay negotiations with their instructors.

On Valentine's Day no less!

As a consequence of the lovers' quarrel Skydive Australia instructors were grounded on the day as they took strike action in support of better pay and conditions.

The Australian Workers' Union (AWU) says its members at Experience Co would not accept an offer from their bosses that does not include fair pay and conditions.

"Our skydiving instructors want to 'love the one they're with' but Experience Co just won't respect their relationship," said Jonathan Cook, AWU National Organiser.

"Our members have been offered $58,000 a year, that's a 2.33% pay cut during a cost-of-living crisis.

"These negotiations have been tempestuous from day one with skydivers who've been with the company for decades even being told they would be better off quitting and becoming contractors.

"Well this Valentine's Day skydivers are saying they won't be falling for the same old sweet platitudes and empty promises.

"Our members aren't asking for anything extreme – just a secure job that recognises the high-risk work they perform."

Australian Workers Union

DKP
Deutsche Kommunistische Partei

Parteivorstand
Hoffnungstraße 18
45127 Essen

Internationale Beziehungen
International Relations
Relaciones Internacionales
Международные отношения
Essen, February 15, 2026

To the delegates of the 15th National Congress of the Communist Party of Australia

Dear comrade Vinnie Molina, dear comrades!

On behalf of the members of the German Communist Party, I greet the delegates of the 15th National Congress of the Communist Party of Australia.

In the preparation of your Party Congress, you are discussing many questions that are also important for us. How can communists best conduct the struggle for the social and democratic rights of working people, against imperialist war policies, for peace and socialism?

How do we strengthen the communist party as a precondition to wage these struggles successfully.

Our parties are both fighting in countries whose governments and ruling classes support the aggressive economic and war policies of imperialism, of NATO, AUCUS and EU, against socialist China, against the Russian Federation, against countries liberating themselves from neo-colonial dependency, currently especially against the Palestinian people, Venezuela and Cuba. At the same time, this policy is also aggressive within, social and democratic rights of working people are being dismantled, prices for all the necessities of life are rising, poverty and misery are increasing.

At the same time, there is hope. Imperialism is obviously reaching its limits. Many countries are no longer going along with imperialism's neo-colonial oppression. The successful development of socialist China opens up new room for progressive changes.

We are waging the same struggle in different countries.

We wish your National Congress fruitful discussions and good decisions and your party a successful implementation of these decisions.

Long live international solidarity!

With communist greetings

Renate Koppe
International secretary

中共中央对外联络部
International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China

Central Committee of the
Communist Party of Australia
Sydney

6 February 2026, Beijing

Re: Message of Congratulations

Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia,
On the occasion of the 15th National Congress of the Communist Party of Australia, we wish to extend our warm congratulations to all the comrades of your party.

Last October, the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China convened its fourth plenary session which deliberated over and adopted the recommendations for the 15th Five-Year Plan, formulating a top-level design and strategic plan for China's economic and social development over the next five years. This will create new opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation between China and the rest of the world, Australia included.

Under the new circumstances, the Communist Party of China is ready to deepen exchange of ideas with the Communist Party of Australia and enhance our camaraderie in the spirit of seeking common ground while reserving differences and enhancing mutual respect and mutual learning, so that together we make positive contributions to the friendship between our two peoples and the global cause of peace, development and progress.

We wish the National Congress a great success!

International Department
Central Committee
Communist Party of China

Place	Details
Sydney	Organised by the Sydney Anti-AUKUS Coalition (SAAC) 'No to AUKUS No to war against China Sat Feb 21 1pm, at Cnr Cowper Wharf Rd and Wylde St Woolloomooloo. For more info: Denis 0418 290 663
Newcastle	Feb 21, Time ?, No submarine Base for Newcastle? Civic Park, time ?, contact: hunterpeacegroup2016@gmail.com
Wollongong	22nd Feb to plan a year of action opposing the east coast nuclear-powered submarine bases at Pt Kembla-all day; contact wollongongagainstwarandnukes@gmail.com
Adelaide	21 Feb Day of Action, at Edinburgh Air Force Base, Meet: 11 am, Car Park at McDonalds, Elizabeth Train Station, Contact: batswing@protonmail.com
Melbourne	Cancel AUKUS - No US military bases, *Saturday, February 21, 2026 • 02:00 PM*, State Library of Victoria, Swanston street, CBD,Melbourne, 3001
Perth	CUT TIES WITH THE US WAR MACHINE - CANCEL AUKUS - CLOSE US BASES - CANCEL THE FPA, *Sunday, February 22, 2026 • 09:00 AM*, ROCKINGHAM LOOKOUT • HMAS STIRLING, Peron Road, PERON, ROCKINGHAM, 6160

Something to say?

Write to the Editor!

editor@cpa.org.au

cpa.org.au

GREEN NOTES

Climate change, fire, and Indigenous knowledge

Graham Holton

This year's fire season in southern South America is affecting large parts of Argentinian Patagonia and Chile, along both sides of the Andes. Heat, drought, and strong winds have contributed to the rapid spreading of more than thirty wildfires which have burnt tens of thousands of hectares and destroyed hundreds of homes in southern Chile. In Patagonia, large wildfires burned forests, threatened towns, encroaching on Los Alerces National Park and other natural areas. Officials declared a national fire emergency as high winds and extreme heat made containment difficult.

Miguel Castillo, director of the Forest Fire Laboratory at the University of Chile, said "Climate change, humidity conditions, strong winds, or a large number of consecutive days with temperatures above 30°C," have contributed to the increasing frequency of large, deadly wildfires in the region. The shared climate drivers and connected ecosystems mean the whole Patagonian landscape is experiencing an intense wildfire period. Patagonia's fire seasons could become more frequent and more severe. Environmental groups and scientists link extreme weather to broader climate change trends especially increased temperatures and drier conditions.

Andrés Nápoli, director of the Environment and Natural Resources Foundation (FARN), said, "There was a confluence of many climatic factors," and since "This year has not had enough snowfall; there are low humidity levels and a high accumulation of combustible elements in the forest." The situation has greatly worsened in recent years. In 2023, drought-ravaged eucalyptus and pine plantations acted as "powder kegs," fuelling huge fires that killed more than twenty Chileans, and destroyed thousands of homes. The following year, forest fires in the Valparaíso region killed more than 130, making them the deadliest fires in Chile's history.

In Argentina the environmental hazard was worsened by right-wing President Javier Milei, who said climate change was a "socialist hoax." In the 2026 budget the funds for National Fire Management Service have been halved leaving the Argentine national park office understaffed. National Security Minister, Alejandra Monteoliva, blamed the wildfires on "terrorist groups called Mapuches." These Patagonian Indigenous communities had fought with the government over land rights and the presence of mining industries on their land.

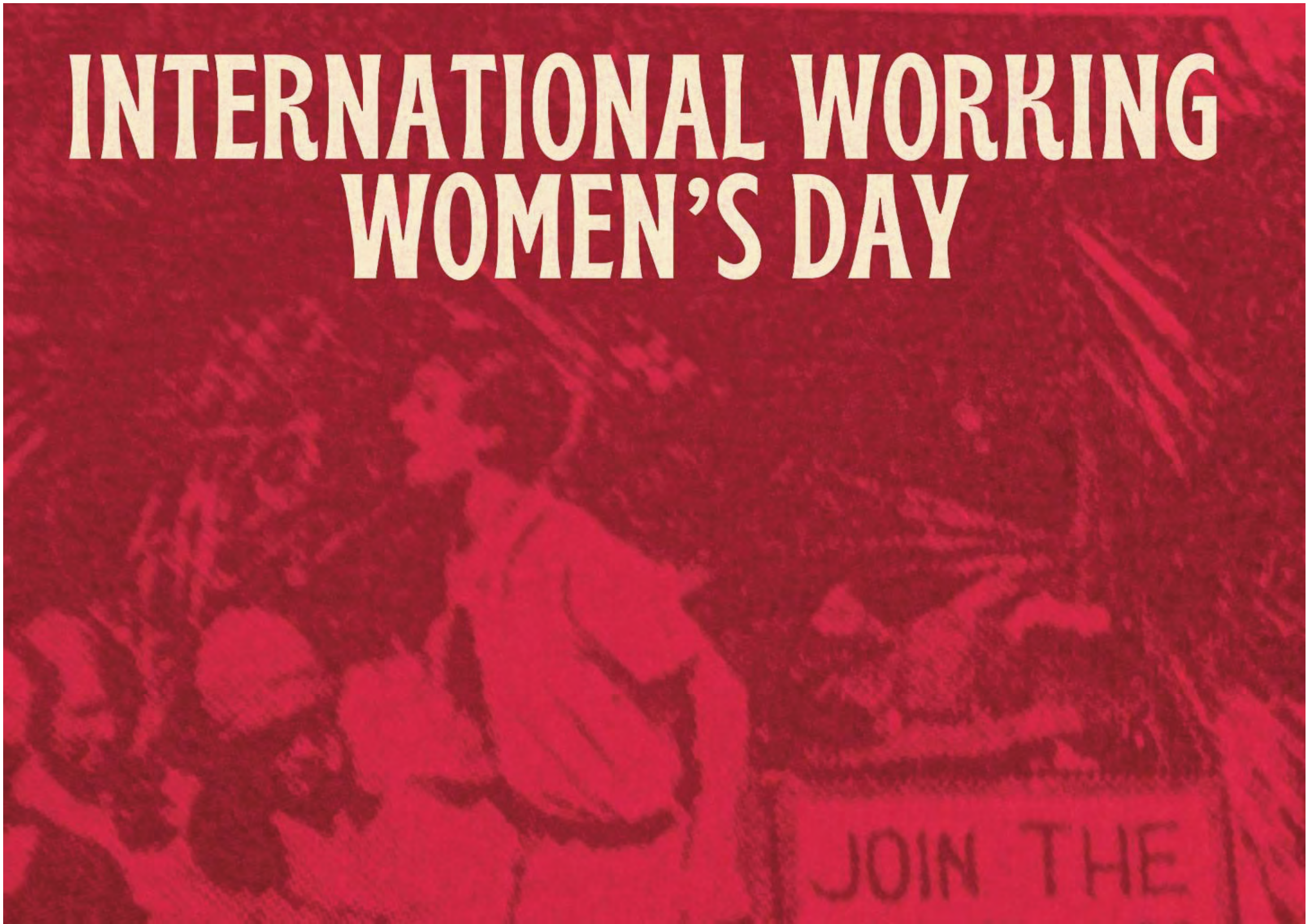
The severe environmental problem is due to rising regional temperatures, linked to global greenhouse gas emissions. This has extended dry seasons and intensified heatwaves in Patagonia. Longer droughts reduce soil and vegetation moisture, making forests more susceptible to ignition and the rapid spread of fire.

In some areas, non-native pine plantations dominate the landscape. These burn more intensely and regenerate quickly after fire, creating a cycle that fuels further fires. These wildfires effect unique Patagonian ecosystems, including Andean forests and endemic wildlife. Recovery can take decades or longer, as soils erode and native species struggle to return.

Wildfires in Patagonia are also having significant complex impacts on Indigenous peoples, especially Mapuche communities in Argentina. The fires destroyed forest resources, homes, and livelihoods, which are essential to their ways of life. Ecological displacement impacts political, cultural, economic, and health dimensions. As well as health risks and environmental insecurity, they face land rights struggles, and political tensions with raids on Indigenous leaders.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) clearly states that a government must protect, not criminalise Indigenous communities for fires without evidence. Raids, mass arrests, or labelling Indigenous groups as "terrorists" violate the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) protections of dignity, due process, and collective rights. Governments must respect Indigenous fire knowledge which has long used controlled, cultural burning to reduce fuel loads and prevent catastrophic fires. Ignoring or banning these practices, while allowing monoculture plantations, conflicts with UNDRIP's recognition of Indigenous knowledge systems.

INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY



THE FIGHT CONTINUES

COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

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

Resistance to Trump

You can't get red wool in Minnesota at the moment – it's all sold out. Why? Because people are busy knitting red hats, similar to those worn as a symbol of resistance in Nazi-occupied Norway during the war. Now it has become a visible symbol of resistance to Trump's brutal immigration policy which is being played out in the streets. Ordinary people want ICE thugs off their streets and out of their towns.

Minnesota has become a focal point of resistance but there is a wave of support for them. Bruce Springsteen was one of many who expressed his feelings by writing a song "Streets of Minneapolis," days after the killing of Alex Pretti. He dedicated the song to Renee Good – another victim of ICE. the song has become a protest anthem and is being performed around the world. It is in the best traditions of protest songs and you can hear it on YouTube – and see the massive protests in the background.

Elizabeth Cartwright
Sydney

Something to say?

Write to the Editor!

editor@cpa.org.au

Book Review:

Living Democracy by Tim Hollo

Reviewer: E N Whitehead

The clear message from this book is that our system of government is failing us. The crises we're currently facing are being caused by our system of government, which is clearly not up to the job. They're creating the crises we're facing and, under the influence of the fossil fuel industry, are unable to find a solution. "The demands of activists, our school kids, First Nations people, scientists and doctors – in fact the great mass of humanity – are being ignored and deliberately shut out, while anti-democratic and anti-ecological structures are put in place for the maintenance of their power".

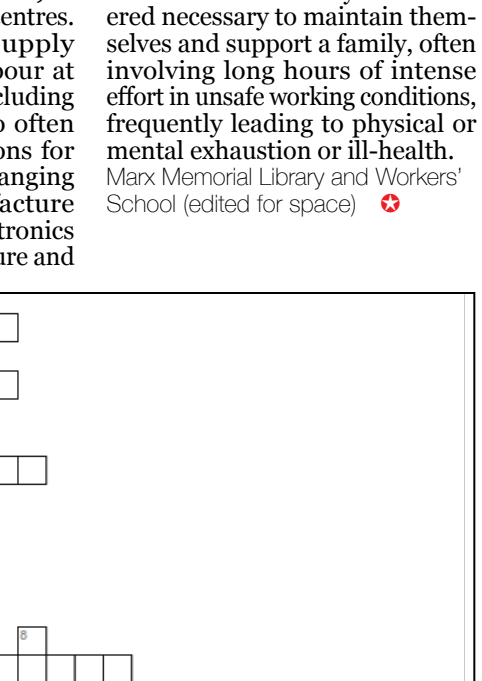
The continual crises this system of capitalism has created – worsening extreme weather events, pandemics, and food and water shortages – are all the result of disconnection and domination. What we need to realise is this system was invented only some 250 years ago and can be changed yet again. Unless we change the present system of production, we shall become extinct. We need to organise the world in a different way by turning around ecological collapse, and generating the resilience needed to survive and thrive. This will need more networks of support, more social cohesion and co-operation but the capitalist system, in place for two centuries, has obliterated man's basic nature of living for the betterment of the community.

In his book, *Living Democracy*, Hollo optimistically believes a transformation, though difficult, is possible if we "pull together and work co-operatively and creatively for the common good." Adding that although "it's the end of the world as we know it. It doesn't have to be the end of the world."

After living under capitalism for so long we seem to have forgotten that "we're part of the natural world" and the importance of ecology as the total system of interactions between lifeforms and habitats, and that a network of relations between beings is an entity in its own right. Hollo emphasises the importance of interdependence, diversity and impermanence. In ecological terms, *Interdependence* means everything connects and supports everything else; *Diversity* means coexistence at a group level, working "constructively and creatively towards consensus." *Impermanence* is the natural state of the world where change is reality.

Hollo says that in seeking to control the world, humans have brought us to its present toxic state – what Marx called a "metabolic rift." In Hollo's account "in the battle between capitalism, communism and fascism, capitalism came out on top because it bolted itself onto liberal democracy" which "allowed it to successfully cloak its coercive nature in the garb of a cultural idea of freedom."

I loved Hollo's dark humour. At the end of the book when summing up possible actions, he talks of weeding the ground and removing invasive species that make it hard for the ecosystem to flourish, "like political donations, advertising, violent policing and extreme wealth. We'll have to build one of those predator-proof fences, with anti-corruption bodies and truth and reconciliation commissions." Finally, "How we live influences how we believe we can live, which influences how we live. So let's do it. Let's live democracy."



Theory: Superexploitation

The term "exploitation" – colloquially used to mean taking unfair advantage of someone, emotionally or physically – is used by Marxists in a very specific, technical sense, relating to the way in which goods and services are produced and traded under capitalism and who benefits.

A unique feature of humans is labour – the production of "use-value," the basis for survival. Its products, and the way they are produced has changed through history, and in class societies involves power relations and the appropriation of part of that product by a ruling class.

Under capitalism this typically takes the form of waged labour, where workers are paid only a part of the value of what they produce – generally enough to feed, clothe, and house themselves and their families and to produce the next generation of workers. The rest – "surplus value" – is taken by the owners of capital as interest, rent or profit, invested in more capital to make more profit. That's "exploitation."

So – what about "superexploitation" – a term increasingly used as people realise the complex ways in which capital exploits people, individually and collectively? The concept goes beyond the basic Marxist understanding of exploitation by suggesting an intensified and oppressive form of exploitation that systematically limits or threatens a worker's health, happiness, and sometimes life expectancy.

Neither Marx nor Engels used the term "superexploitation." However its features were clearly identified in Capital as the "forcible reduction of wages below their value" and as one of the factors which capitalists could use to offset the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. In his discussion on primitive accumulation Marx documented instances of non-salaried labour, such as colonial slavery and coercive indentured or bonded servitude, where labour power is depredated, disposable and devalued.

Later Marxists coined the term "superexploitation" in recognition of the fact that this "depressed consumption" is by no means an exceptional case but rather a permanent and structural feature of capitalism. This is particularly the case in the global South whose ruling classes compensate for their unfavourable position in unequal international trade by remunerating labour power below what would otherwise be deemed necessary to support their workers and their families. Much of the extra surplus value is then realised in the capitalist nations, helping to sustain their financial and military superiority.

Superexploitation is central to the relationship between the imperial capitalist "core" and its neocolonial "periphery" – a key element of "dependency theory." It is a structural feature of the global economy, where it helps maintain higher profits (and concessions to labour like a "welfare state") in the imperial metropolitan centres.

It relies on global supply chains and sweatshop labour at the expense of workers (including women and children who often endure appalling conditions for minimal pay) in sectors ranging from mining and manufacture (especially of and for electronics and technology) to agriculture and food processing in the "periphery" of the global South.

Key features include paying workers less than a "living wage" – what would "normally" be considered necessary to maintain themselves and support a family, often involving long hours of intense effort in unsafe working conditions, frequently leading to physical or mental exhaustion or ill-health.

Marx Memorial Library and Workers' School (edited for space)

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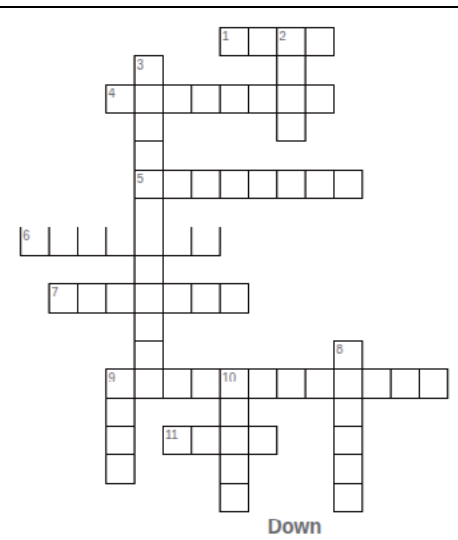

Across

1 scheme for employing, exploiting Pacific Islanders (4)
4 bringing Israel's president here was supposed to improve this (8)
5 fearless rapporteur or craven PM (8)
6 famous ship, resembles Liberal Party (7)
7 Australian currency became this 60 years ago (7)
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Down

2 most bombed country on earth (4)
3 mine that started a civil war (13)
8 Liberals love to talk about them, don't have good ones (6)
9 direction Coles prices are NOT heading in (4)
10 Chinese new year animal (5)

Australian Marxist Review issue 81 out now

The latest edition of the *Australian Marxist Review*, issue 81 is out now. The *AMR* is the Communist Party of Australia's long-form journal, combining history and theory in a way that's always interesting to Marxists.

This edition's editorial ends by hoping readers find the material both thought-provoking and action-provoking, reminding us of the Karl Marx quotation, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it," and Stalin's "theory becomes purposeless if it is not connected with revolutionary practice, just as practice gropes in the dark if its path is not illumined by revolutionary theory."

The Fracturing of Socialist Thought in Australia and Khrushchev's so-called Secret Speech by David Matters, puts Stalin, Trotskyism, the Cold War and the famous but not very 'secret' speech in context. Matters argues that the famous speech was an act of treachery, but one that came from the circumstances of the early Cold War, and led to a vilification of Stalin that we still live with today.

Quotes:

"Opportunism does not arise in a vacuum and has material causes."

"We have reached a period in history where the bourgeoisie is again toying with the reintroduction of extreme right parties."

A Time of Qualitative Change: The Importance of the Model of China's New Political Party System by Roland Boer.

Roland Boer, a scholar of Marxism particularly in China, where he teaches on the subject, explains the "8-point regulation." The regulation was an important founding document of the Communist Party of China. Boer explains the document's application to the CPC's role in running the country, it's evolution and the document's spirit. He also explains the regulation's implications for the question of culture in Australia as we move towards socialism here.

Quote:

"the key is that the people own any decision made, from the grassroots level to the country-wide level."

In **Workers and Oppressed People of the World, Unite! The Leninist Party and the Question of Cadre,** Christian Goopy begins with a whirlwind tour of the October Revolution's effects on world history, connecting it to positive developments in Australia and elsewhere that might well never have happened without the actions of the Russian Bolsheviks.

He goes on to explain the application of Leninism to the needs of the working class now, and finishes by explaining the role of cadre in the communist party today.

Quotes:

"It is no accident that the trend towards improving living standards among the working class throughout the capitalist west stalled and went into reverse with the development of the counter-revolution within the Soviet Union."

"Lenin, in arguing for a party of professional revolutionaries, was arguing for a party centred on a tightly organised cadre force that embarks on struggle wherever the people are."

In **Multipolarity and Chinese Modernisation – A synopsis of Nation, State and Class,** David Matters goes from the Marxist understanding of history in general to China's modern history leading to the present. Matters explains the connection between China as it is today and 'multipolarity,' a term often quoted, but less often explained.

Quote:

"Capitalism has through its characteristics ceased to be a modern form of human development. The planet has become smaller and the problems of humanity can only be solved by the common actions of humanity."

Finally, there's a review of **Jenny Clegg's *Storming the Heavens: Peasant rebellion in China, 1926-1949 viewed through a Marxist Lens.*** Lachlan Varley explains how Clegg skillfully uses both Chinese and English language sources to look at the class structure of pre-revolutionary China and how the CPC worked in this context to defeat both the Japanese and the Nationalists.

Quote:

"Clegg's work is also a response to other theories held in the field of 'peasant studies' in contemporary academia. As such, it is a useful work that both offers readers insights into the Chinese revolution and re-establishes the relevance of Marxist analysis."

Book Review:

The Once and Future Riot by Joe Sacco

Reviewer: Henry Bell

When the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power in India in 2014, riding a wave of far-right and anti-Muslim rhetoric, backed by a corporate media, it seemed like a shocking step backwards. The coronation of the stokers and instigators of communal violence and misinformation in a long-standing democracy was surely an aberration.

As it transpired, however, the Indian result was a bellwether for the world. In the more than a decade that has followed, the election of far-right populists and the use of street violence as a part of their political toolkit has been proven to be the norm, not the exception for the 21st century.

The BJP remains in power in India.

In his new book *The Once and Future Riot*, Joe Sacco, the Maltese-American comics-journalist, takes us into the heart of communal violence and anti-Muslim pogroms in India. He does not begin with their inception amidst the devastating violence and displacement of the 1947 British Partition of India; or the starting point of the BJP ascension, the mob demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992; nor does he focus on the defining violence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's career, the Gujarat riot of 2002 which left more than 1,000 Muslims dead.

Instead Sacco takes us to 2013 and a relatively little known riot in Muzaffarnagar that killed between 60 and 100 people. Set in northern India on the brink of the Hindutva movement taking power, the book paints a complex and nuanced portrait of the overlapping economic, caste and political concerns that led to the violence, and how that violence was used by politicians.

The combination of graphic novel and investigative journalism has been proven by Sacco to be devastatingly effective when invoking and explaining atrocities – his books on Palestine and Bosnia amply demonstrate this.

Similarly in *The Once and Future Riot*, the combination of personal testimony with the deeply absorbing and meticulously detailed depiction of life in Uttar Pradesh powerfully locate the reader inside the story and repeatedly humanise and de-exoticise both the victims and perpetrators of communal violence. The medium here allows for shocking and contradictory things to be said by the protagonists without their humanity or their material situation ever receding from view.

One of the astonishing strengths of comics journalism as a form, and Sacco's own style as an artist, is the ability to depict – with equal weight – differing accounts of the same incident. Sacco shows memories that cannot be corroborated, or established, but that nevertheless become crucial to feeding the escalating tensions – tensions that always have class dimensions at their centre.

The detailed drawings of each contradictory account of how the violence started are layered in such a way that narrative and media become the key protagonists in the spread of communal violence. Rumours, lies, Whatsapp messages and fake videos on social media are the driving force in the story.

Whilst we might depict communal violence in India as essentially anti-Muslim, Sacco demonstrates how India's minorities are used more widely by the ruling class, and how caste as well as religion is used to divide and rule – without ever losing site of the essentially Hindu-nationalist nature of the violence.

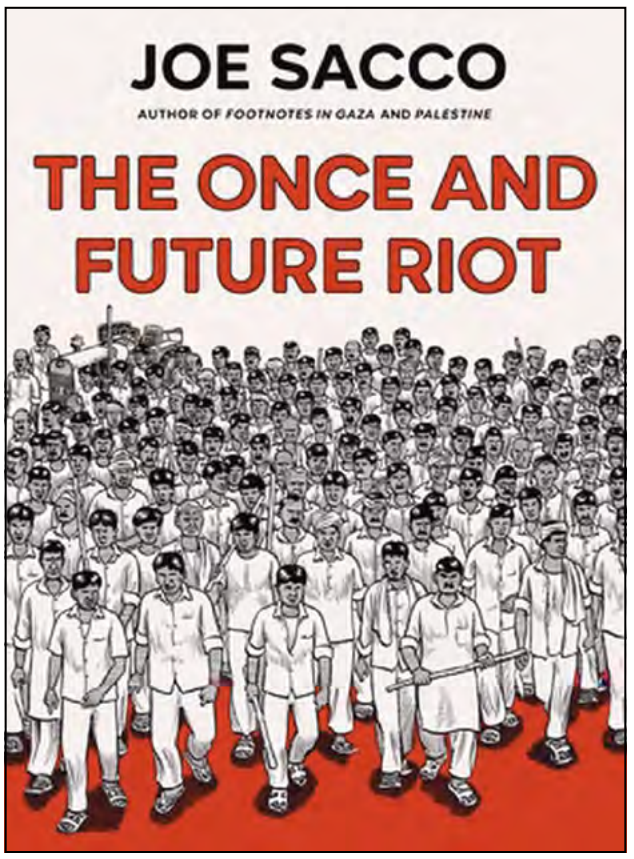
In Muzaffarnagar it is the Samajwadi (Socialist) Party (SP) courting of the Muslim vote that lights the touch-paper for the mob violence of Hindu Jats – a land-owning peasant caste. Sacco depicts the corrupt ruling elites of the SP and BJP as well as the contradictory communal sympathies of different layers of the police force and judiciary with great clarity, and gives due credit to his local colleague Piyush Srivastava.

Joe Sacco has built his reputation on the scrupulous investigation of societal conflict. His work in India is a departure in that it takes him away from war, but its themes are the same. How do humans come to destroy each other, what are the layers of dehumanisation, corruption and violence that allow massacres to happen and how should we respond to them?

The Once and Future Riot concludes with a look at the corrupt compensation systems and discrediting of victims led by local politicians – a notable exception being the resettlement village built in Shamli district for displaced victims of the riot by the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Though it is deeply rooted in Muzaffarnagar District, it is India and the world's political use of communal violence that is the central subject of the book. As Sacco puts it "bloodshed is a political building block." And in India, as in the USA and the UK, politics that relies on communal violence and bigotry, is inevitably consumed by it.

Morning Star



Laos scores fresh advances in drive for socialism

Duncan McFarland and
Michael Christopher

Luang Prabang City in Northern Laos. Photo: pxhere.com (CC0)

Onlookers wishing to get an inside look into the world's least-known socialist country are unlikely to find a better starting point than the proceedings of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP), which recently concluded in the capital city, Vientiane.

Since its founding in 1955, the LPRP has routinely held congresses to review the party's work, adopt new policies, and to elect new leadership. It is one of the most important events in the political life of the country. The most recent national congress, the 12th, concluded on 8 January, marking a historic waypoint in the country's continued development.

The First National Congress of the LPRP, then known as the Lao People's Party, was convened in 1955 in the mountains of Laos' remote northeastern Houaphanh province. Attended by 20 delegates, representing some 400 members, it marked the official birth of the party as the legitimate successor of the Free Laos (Lao Issara) movement that had formally begun in 1945, as well as the broader legacy of national struggle reaching back into the 18th century.

That initial congress successfully united the progressive and patriotic cause of Lao independence represented by the Lao Issara with the struggle for revolutionary socialism and the birth of people's democracy represented by the Indochinese Communist Party that had been officially dissolved in 1945. The ensuing movement, and its democratic-revolutionary heroes, came to be known as the Pathet Lao (literally "Lao Nation").

Modern Laos looks quite different from the embattled semi-colony that was subjected to indiscriminate US bombing from 1964 to 1973. As the most heavily bombed country in history, the Lao People's Democratic Republic bears the scars of its past, but it refuses to be defined by them.

Just as the First National Congress raised the call for national democratic revolution from the forces of French colonialism and US imperialism, each subsequent congress has played a pivotal role in shaping the development of the nation and the peoples' long march toward socialist development.

The 4th National Congress of November 1986 marked a key moment in the country's development, with the adoption of the "New Economic Mechanism," corresponding generally with neighbouring Vietnam's Đổi Mới reform process, launched one month later in December 1986, and China's reform and opening up, initiated in 1978.

Under the leadership of the LPRP, Laos has pursued a policy of "building socialism without going through a period of capitalism," whereby the country attempts to forgo the capitalist stage of socioeconomic development altogether and instead transition directly from colonialism to a socialist market economy.

12TH CONGRESS

The 12th National Congress convened on 6 January with an opening speech delivered by Thongloun Sisoulith, general secretary of the party and president of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Thoungloun said that world history is at a decisive moment, with profound changes occurring in all areas, particularly science and technology.

"These changes bring major advances that open new horizons for global development while also presenting unprecedented challenges that directly impact our country," he said. "At the same time, our party continuously seeks development paths that align with the nation's unique conditions and adapts to the changing circumstances of the era."

That principled pragmatism, according to Thongloun, is aimed at consolidating "independence, ensuring the people's democracy, and advancing toward socialism." In line with that goal, the congress reviewed the third edition of the LPRP's political program. The document establishes broad goals for national development from now to 2055, setting a path toward what it calls a "firm, independent, and socially advanced nation."

It was solidly endorsed by the congress delegates. There were 835 of them, including 123 women, representing some 421,865 party members from all ethnic groups across the country. They also chose a new Central Committee of 73 members to lead the party and re-elected Thongloun to new five-year term as general secretary.

The main political report delivered by Thongloun reviewed the previous five years of Laos' development, citing the country's overall political stability and economic progress despite major challenges, with inflation and the COVID-19 pandemic at the top of the list. Laos persevered through the crisis, and GDP grew roughly 4% in 2025.

The new five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2026-30) adopted by the Congress plans to accelerate growth to 6% in the coming period and aims for a total GDP growth of around 25% by the end of the new term. Reducing debt and increasing government revenue are identified among the nation's top priorities, as well the continuation of the party's ongoing strides in maintaining strong anti-corruption measures.

FRESH ADVANCES

The "socialist-oriented market economy," as the LPRP calls Laos' economy, will strive for "industrialisation, modernisation, and digital transformation along with strengthening education and social welfare."

With its strategic regional location, the plan envisions Laos becoming the "battery of Southeast Asia," supplying green energy throughout the region, while simultaneously seeking to transform its position from a landlocked country into a "land-linked" one, through joint-development projects with neighbouring China, Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia.

This includes work on the long-awaited Laos-Vietnam Railway, which is expected to enter operation in 2030, providing Laos direct access to oversea logistics via joint development of Vietnam's Vung Ang seaport in Ha Tinh province.

Another important marker of ongoing development progress is the nation's anticipated 2026 graduation from "Least Developed Country" (LDC) status as defined by the United Nations. This highly anticipated step into middle-income status is based on advancements made in national income per capita, human development, and economic and environmental indexes.

In light of the country's rapid development, the LPRP's assessment is that the decision to pursue the New Economic Mechanism for socialist-oriented development in 1986 is bearing fruit. The rise to lower middle-income status will likewise entail a transition from foreign aid and towards greater national self-reliance, as well as co-financing with regional and international partners.

Succeeding the Vision 2030 goals set by the Ministry of Planning and Investment in 2016, the party's newly ratified third political program sets an ambitious vision for the country by 2055: becoming an upper middle-income economy with elevated living standards and environmental protection. This likewise coincides with an anticipated baby boom that will see the young country's population continue to rise in the coming years from 7.9 million today to likely over 10 million by 2045.

The congress also affirmed the party's leading foreign policy orientation of independence, peace, and multilateralism. Socialist neighbours Vietnam and China were among the countries sending warm congratulations, as well as fraternal parties from around the world.

LAOS WELCOMES THE WORLD

The congress also celebrated the 50th anniversary of the peaceful transfer of power that marked the birth of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on 2 December 1975, and noted that it was a perfect time for those who've never seen the country to start planning a visit.

With the success of the "Visit Laos 2024" campaign, tourism is emerging as a new strategic industry for the country. The Lao PDR was named one of the top five most attractive countries for tourism by Lonely Planet in 2025, and the Lao people are eager to welcome more foreign friends and guests to visit and enjoy the country's abundant natural beauty.

Concluding the congress, Thongloun thanked participants for their hard work and dedication and charged the incoming Central Committee with upholding the lofty aspirations of the whole Lao nation.

"Our Party still has a long way to go," he said. "The socialist ideology and aspiration cannot be realised in practice without Party members who are pure, strong, and steadfast, serving as the core and the vanguard."

He urged the party's leaders to "forge and discipline themselves comprehensively" and to improve their leadership style and working methods.

Thongloun said that the lessons of practical experience gained during the reform process "have been tested and have yielded good results." Looking ahead, he predicted that the LPRP, "fully aligned with the aspirations of the Lao people of all ethnic groups, will lead the nation forward to its destination" of socialism.

People's World

Laos bears the scars of its past, but refuses to be defined by them.

UN defends Albanese

The United Nations has stepped up its support for the world body's special rapporteur on Palestine who is facing calls to resign.

UN Human Rights Office spokesperson Marta Hurtado has hit back at condemnations of Francesca Albanese by Germany, France, and Italy over remarks they allege she made about Israel.

The controversy centres on comments that Albanese made to the recent Doha Forum .

Albanese criticised what she described as the complicity of the international community in Israel's war on the Palestinians in Gaza during which she referred to a "common enemy of humanity."

She told the forum that "the fact [is] that instead of stopping Israel, most of the world has armed, given Israel political excuses, political sheltering, economic and financial support," as she accused those governments and Western media of enabling "genocide in Gaza."

In an interview with French TV, Albanese rejected the accusation that she described Israel as that "common enemy" and blasted what she called "completely false accusations" and "manipulation."

Earlier Albanese posted a video clip of her comments on social media, saying: "The common enemy of humanity is the system that has enabled the genocide in Palestine, including the financial capital that

Francesca Albanese. Photo: Rafael Medeiros – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

funds it, the algorithms that obscure it and the weapons that enable it."

Germany's foreign minister called for her resignation. Italy followed suit. This followed a similar call from France's Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot.

Barrot accused Albanese of making "outrageous and reprehensible remarks," against Israel.

Albanese posted to social media saying, "Three European governments accuse me — based on statements I never made — with a virulence and conviction that they have never used against those who have slaughtered 20,000 plus children in 858 days."

The UN's Hurtado told a news briefing: "We are very worried. We are concerned that UN officials, independent experts and judicial officials are increasingly subjected to personal attacks, threats and misinformation that distracts from the serious human rights issues."

Meanwhile, in the occupied West Bank, Israeli settlers attacked and injured at least 54 Palestinians on 13 February.

Morning Star (edited for space)

Sudan war: UAE, Ethiopia get involved

Maximus M

The civil War in Sudan has surpassed 1,000 days of war and is one of the most deadly and tragic wars of this century. The worsening conditions are brutal, despite recent victories by Sudanese government against the paramilitary group known as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). In its retreat the RSF has committed massacres against the local populations, where the blood can seen from space.

The war has been able to drag on so long because of financial and military support the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is providing the RSF in exchange for Sudanese gold reserves. Recently the UAE has faced supply line issues in its aid towards Sudan, with the defeat of UAE's proxy in the Yemeni Civil War, and Somalia terminating port agreements.

Because of this, the UAE has looked towards the breakaway region of Somaliland, and Ethiopia. The new partnership with Ethiopia has resulted with UAE weapons flooding into Ethiopia to be sent on to the RSF. Reports say that Ethiopia has been quietly supplying the RSF since the beginning of the civil war. Recently there has been an escalation with Ethiopian-trained RSF troops opening a new front in the South-Eastern region of Sudan, bordering the Ethiopian boarder.

Some regional officials say that Ethiopia's extended involvement in Sudan is because of its own selfish reasons. Sudan is worried about the recent construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) that will lead to less water to the river Nile. In order to protect the dam, officials say, Ethiopia must tear and divide Sudan apart, just as the UAE has been doing.

The situation could get worse. It's possible Ethiopia and the UAE's involvement could lead to regional powers such as Egypt getting involved, as was seen during the first and second Congo Wars.

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Global Briefs

UN: United Nations experts on human rights issued a joint statement on 12 February condemning the Executive Order signed by US President Trump on 29 January which authorises the imposition of trade tariffs on countries that sell or supply – directly or indirectly – oil to Cuba, labelling the country an "unusual threat." The experts described the measure as a "grave violation of international law" and "an extreme unilateral coercive measure with extraterritorial effects," which represents a "grave threat to a democratic and equitable international order. "There is no right under international law to impose economic penalties on third states for engaging in lawful trade with another sovereign country," they concluded.

RUSSIA: "Russia will not be represented at the meeting of the Board of Peace. Work on forming a position continues," said Maria Zakharova, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman. President Trump announced the formation of the Gaza Board of Peace and invited heads of 50 states to join in September 2025. The Board includes US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and special envoy Steve Witkoff, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, infamous former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and World Bank President Aiay Banga. It follows a Security Council resolution of November 2025 supporting Trump's Gaza plan which includes a temporary international government. Israel officially joined the Board of Peace before the first formal meeting of the Board on 19 February in Washington. According to Reuters, delegations from over 20 countries are expected to attend the meeting.

FINLAND: Finland has been hit by the largest bankruptcy wave in the past 29 years, according to data published by Statistics Finland. By the end of 2025, more than 3,900 companies had become insolvent. Experts say the trend is partly due to the almost complete rupture of trade and economic ties with Russia. Several key sectors faced mounting difficulties, including the timber processing industry, tourism, hospitality, logistics, retail trade, and construction.

CHINA: The CIA recently produced a video urging Chinese military officers to become CIA informants. The Mandarin-language video on YouTube urged officers and troops to leak information on top Chinese leaders or provide information regarding sensitive information regarding military or technological fields. The Chinese Foreign Ministry warned that "China will take all necessary measures to resolutely combat infiltration and sabotage activities of foreign anti-Chinese forces and resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests."

AFRICA: The African Union has condemned Israel's recent recognition of Somaliland as an independent country, warning that no external actor has the authority to alter the territorial configuration of its member states and that any such declaration is "null and void" under international law.

PUERTO RICO: Puerto Rico's governor Jenniffer Gonzalez signed a law criminalising abortion. The new legislation defines the death of a foetus, including as a result of a spontaneous abortion, as murder. Civil liberties groups, human rights advocates, religious groups and health care professionals strongly denounced the law.

UN: The United Nations general assembly overwhelmingly voted to approve a 40-member global scientific panel on the impacts and risks of Artificial Intelligence. The UN secretary-general called the decision "a foundational step toward global scientific understanding of AI". The US strongly objected to the panel, with US Mission Counselor Lauren Lovelace calling it "a significant overreach."

Africa climate crisis alert: 1.5°C limit 'shattered'

JMVR

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres declared that the Africa climate crisis demands immediate global action, during the opening of the 39th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly in Addis Ababa on 14 February 2026. Addressing heads of state and government, Guterres painted a stark picture of accelerating global heating and its disproportionate toll on the continent.

The planet is set to surpass the 1.5°C limit agreed under the Paris Agreement. This overshoot carries devastating consequences for ecosystems, economies, and human lives everywhere. Guterres stressed the need for swift measures to minimise the extent, duration, and risks of this breach.

Africa faces faster warming than the global average. Droughts, floods, and extreme weather already disrupt livelihoods across the continent. Yet Africa bears minimal responsibility for the crisis, contributing negligibly to historical emissions.

The continent holds immense clean energy potential. Africa possesses 60% of the world's best solar resources, alongside vast wind, hydro, and geothermal opportunities. These assets position Africa to lead in renewable energy and drive sustainable growth.

However, the reality remains stark. Africa attracts only 2% of global clean energy investments. This injustice hinders the transition to renewables and perpetuates vulnerability to climate impacts.

CLIMATE FINANCE

Guterres urged developed nations to honour commitments. He said that:

- Developed nations must triple adaptation finance and mobilise US $1.3 trillion annually for developing countries by 2035, as outlined in recent climate negotiations.
- Funds for loss and damage need rapid expansion to address irreversible harms already occurring. Early warning systems must scale up to protect vulnerable communities from extreme events.
- A just transition away from fossil fuels toward renewables remains critical. This shift requires technology transfer, capacity building, and investment in grids, storage, and clean infrastructure.

EMPOWERING AFRICA

Guterres highlighted Africa's critical minerals essential for the global energy transition. The continent must benefit fully through sustainable value chains and local manufacturing.

No more exploitation, no more plunder, he insisted, echoing recommendations from the UN panel on critical minerals. African nations deserve fair returns that support development and climate resilience.

Developed partners should invest in processing and beneficiation within Africa. This approach would create jobs, build industries, and reduce dependency on raw exports.

PRIORITY NUMBER ONE

In an emotional moment, Guterres rejected suggestions that his appearance marked a farewell. His second term concludes at the end of 2026, yet he affirmed unwavering commitment.

Until the last moment of my mandate, Africa will be the number one priority of the United Nations, he declared. The strategic alliance between the AU and UN will endure.

The UN chief said that even beyond 31 December 2026, Africa will stay central to his concerns and solidarity. Guterres emphasised Africa's growing voice in shaping multilateralism, peace, and sustainable development.

The Africa climate crisis exposes deep inequities. A continent with vast renewable riches receives scant support while bearing heavy burdens. Guterres's message is clear: justice in finance, technology, and resource governance is non-negotiable.

Prensa Latina

Japanese PM plans military buildup

CJ Atkins

A day after scoring a landslide victory in parliamentary elections, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi made clear her intention to move ahead with revising the country's constitution to clear the way for a large-scale military buildup.

Takaichi has Article 9 in her sights, a clause which outlaws war as a means to settle international disputes. Adopted after Japanese imperialism was defeated in World War II, Article 9 has long limited the size of the nation's armed forces and restricted them to a self-defence role.

The 8 February snap election was called by Takaichi just three months after she became leader of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which captured 316 out of 465 seats in the House of Representatives. This gives the LDP control of the national agenda and returns the country to its status as a de facto one-party state.

Combined with the 36 seats won by her allies in the far-right Japan Innovation Party, Takaichi now commands a 352-seat supermajority – a margin that will make it difficult for opposition parties to restrain her.

At a press conference the morning after the vote, Takaichi said she will hold "a national referendum to amend the constitution as soon as possible." During the election campaign, she expressed her personal support for revising Article 9, but the scale of her win emboldened the LDP leader to openly declare her goal.

The prime minister also indicated her intention to completely overhaul the security apparatus of the state "to establish a system to strategically protect national interests." That includes establishing a new spy outfit, the National Intelligence Agency, and initiating a massive increase in military spending.

Her policies have the backing of US President Donald Trump, who congratulated Takaichi and wished her "Great Success in passing your Conservative, Peace Through Strength Agenda." His administration is happy to have a solid ally in its Cold War against China. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent hailed the election outcome as a win for the US saying, "When Japan is strong, the US is strong in Asia."

While Western history records World War II as starting in 1939 with Germany's invasion of Poland, for many countries in Asia targeted by Japanese imperialism, such as China, the war started much earlier. In Nanjing, then the Chinese capital, more than 300,000 people were massacred by Japanese troops over a several-week period starting in December 1937.

In her press conference, Takaichi said Japan will "prepare for a long-term war" and explore "new ways of fighting, including the mass deployment of drones." The aggressive posturing continues the confrontational stances she adopted upon taking office late last year. In November last year, she threatened Japanese intervention if China ever takes steps to reunify with Taiwan by military means.

People's World (edited for space)

Prime Minister of Japan, Sanae Takaichi. Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office – wikimedia.org (CC BY 4.0)

Sweets and execution: Israel to pass death penalty law

Peter Farmer

They celebrated with sweets. Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israel's National Security Minister, handed out sweets to commemorate the first reading of a bill for a death penalty for 'terrorists' in the Israeli Parliament.

Ben-Gvir is in a party called 'Jewish Power' which brought the legislation to a vote. The law would mean the death penalty for people deemed to be terrorists who act against the state of Israel. In practice, that would mean executing Palestinians found guilty of causing the loss of life while attacking Israelis. It's unlikely to be used on Israelis killing Palestinians on the illegally occupied West Bank, because there's a clause about harming Israel.

The law would be a significant step for Israel. While the country has the death penalty for some crimes, it has only been applied twice since 1948. The most recent use of the death penalty was in 1962 when Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichman was hanged.

Ben-Gvir is so extreme in his support for illegal and violent Israeli settlements that he's barred from travel to Australia. He lives in an illegal settlement.

The new law has been called "a new form of escalating Israeli extremism and criminality" by the Palestinian Authority. Human rights organisations in Palestine have warned that the law could be applied retroactively and could be used to execute collective death sentences on hundreds of Palestinian detainees.

Ben-Gvir voted against the Gaza ceasfire deal which saw Israeli hostages returned in exchange for Palestinian prisoners.

The bill passed in Israel's parliament, the Knesset, by 39 votes to 16. It has to pass two more readings to become law.

Sudan: UAE faces protests

Albig Marino

Demonstrators from the Sudanese diaspora have marched in protest against the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) role in funding a civil war that has displaced millions of people and killed more than 40,000 so far.

There are indications that the conflict is being funded by external sources in the Middle East and Africa. A recent report by Reuters news agency has found that a secret camp in Ethiopia has been used to train Rapid Support Forces (RSF) fighters. The RSF has been fighting Sudan's government since 2023. The report names the UAE as funding the camp. The UAE denies any involvement.

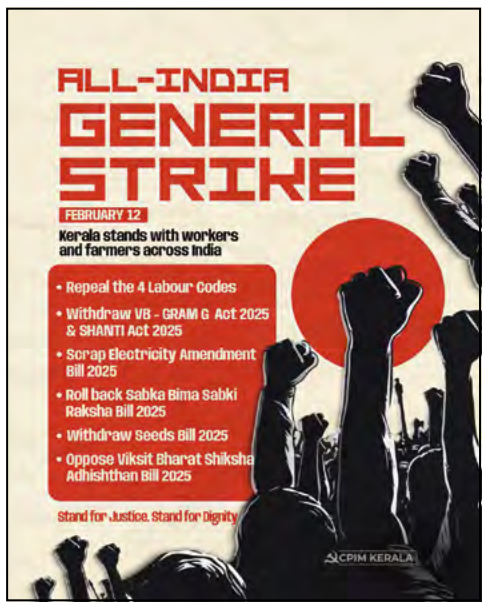
According to German news outlet Deutsche Welle, an expert on the Horn of Africa has described the UAE as 'the driving force' behind Ethiopian involvement.

Other reports have described how the RSF trades gold, oil, and other resources in the areas it controls for weapons and training.

cpa.org.au

India: 300 million people in historic strike

Abdul Rahman



300 million workers, farmers, students, and professionals from various fields took to the streets across India on Thursday, 12 February, in defence of their rights and to denounce the policies of the country's ultra-right-wing government.

Workers went on strike shutting down thousands of coal fields, refineries, factories, banking, and transportation in remote corners of the country, heeding the call of the Central Trade Unions (CTUs), a joint platform of major trade unions in India, including the Centre for Indian Trade Unions (CITU), the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), the All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU), and the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS).

The strike was called jointly by the worker unions and farmers groups to demand the withdrawal of the anti-people policies, such as the four new labor codes and recently signed trade deals with the US and the EU.

HISTORIC SUCCESS

The All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) congratulated millions of Indian workers, agricultural workers and toiling peasantry for making the 12th February 2026 General Strike a historic success.

The workers were joined by millions of farmers and agricultural workers from across the country under the call of the Samyukta Kisan Sabha (SKM) and the All India Agricultural Workers Union (AIAWA), among others. The farmers and agricultural workers demonstrated at all the district headquarters and the village centres across India.

AIKS called the strike a warning to the government to withdraw the slew of anti-people bills and acts and restore the pro-worker and pro-farmer policies. They added that if the Modi government fails to respond adequately to the demands of the country's working people it will be inviting a much longer strike.

SOLIDARITY

In several places, workers and farmers were joined by students, women's organisations, and other civil society groups who extended their solidarity with the strike call.

Strikers in many areas defied attempts by factory owners and security forces to stop the strike by picketing the factory gates and marching on the streets to implement the strike.

In several states, such as Kerala, Odisha, and Tripura, among others, most businesses were shut in solidarity with the strike call. Demonstrations were held at government offices with thousands marching, shouting slogans, carrying banners, posters, and red flags.

In Delhi, the capital, workers held large gatherings at the state secretariat. Later they also gathered at Jantar Mantar, where the central leadership of the CTUs and the SKM made speeches calling the strike a success.

Sudip Dutta, president of the CITU, claimed that the one day strike is just symbolic and if the Narendra Modi-led government fails to fulfill their demands it should be ready to see larger and longer strikes in the coming days as workers and farmers will not allow the government to harm their interests or sell India's national sovereignty to the US and other foreign powers.

DEMANDS

One of the major demands of the strike was the withdrawal of the trade deals India has recently agreed to with the US and the EU. The CTUs, SKM, and left parties in India have called the deals a surrender of the country's sovereignty and harmful to the interests of the millions of farmers in the country as they allow open access of Indian markets to foreign farm products.

Another key demand was the withdrawal of the four new labor codes brought by the Modi government despite long term opposition by the trade unions, and withdrawal of a new rural employment guarantee act called the VB GRAM G Act.

The SKM and the AIAWU have claimed that the VB GRAM G Act actually makes the right to employment ineffective. Employment has long been a legal right in India, but the Modi government is trying to change that.

Farmers and workers in India have also been demanding the withdrawal of a series of laws brought by the Modi government, such as the electricity law, seed bill, and others, calling them pro-corporate and anti-people.

The protection of India's secular and democratic polity was one of the major demands raised during the strike. The CTUs, the SKM and others believe that the Hindu supremacist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-government is threatening the secular and democratic nature of India by pursuing majoritarian and authoritarian actions.

The major left parties in the country: Communist Party of India (Marxist), Communist Party of India (CPI), Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation and others also supported the strike call.

The CITU and the SKM thanked millions for participating in the strike, calling it "historic." They mentioned the large-scale participation of workers from unorganised sectors and peasants and cautioned the government to listen to their demands.

People's Dispatch

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Reasonable (person)

The good thing about people who are reasonable is that they think exactly what the person using the expression 'reasonable person' thinks. Nine journalist Chip Le Grand spoke for 'reasonable people' everywhere when he said that no reasonable person wanted a repeat in Melbourne of the violence in Sydney. The demonstrators in Sydney who were attacked by the police didn't want the violence in the first place, but nobody, reasonable or not, seems to have explained this to Le Grand.

Conflict/War

Both terms are both true and untrue. Nine Media calls what the Israelis are doing a 'conflict,' which makes it sound much milder than it is. Media outlets often call it a war, making it sound like a battle between roughly equal sides. Either way, the effect is to 'both-sides' an ongoing genocide.

Context

The thing about context is that it's real, but also includes the whole world. Whoever is using it as an alibi gets to say which parts of the context matter. NSW Police Commissioner Mal Lanyon has had a tough time lately trying to make the unhinged violence of the NSW Police look reasonable. During an evening of what looks a lot like outright assault, police roughly dragged away a group of Muslim men who were praying. The video footage looks pretty clear; the men are praying, the cops grab them and pull them away.

Lanyon's job was to both apologise and not apologise. So he apologised "for any offence taken," meaning he's sorry if any Muslims felt upset about an attack on Muslims praying, but that it's up to them to choose to feel upset. He added, "but it needs to be taken in context that we were moving a violent and aggressive crowd." For the Muslims involved the context would be that they were just praying and the cops didn't have to rough them up.

Social cohesion

Lately this vague and weaselly word has been having a real workout. ABC journalist David Speers says Australia has "long prided itself on strong social cohesion and being far from global conflicts." Anyone who thinks this country has freedom of expression and a proud history of protest is wrong. If you ask Speers, what we really feel proud of is cohering and being a long way from most wars (not that that stops us from sending young people to kill and die in them).

Royce Kurmelovs calls social cohesion "a polite euphemism for white Australian anxiety about race relations and a clumsy tool for social control." How much social control the expression achieves is debatable, but it's certainly clumsy.

Values

Values are weaselly because they're vague and hard to oppose. Appealing to values is a great way to tell a group of people you're on their side without spelling out exactly why. Also if you support values, it means anyone who opposes you must be anti-values, which sounds very bad indeed. Newly-appointed Liberal Party leader Angus Taylor says he wants a return to Australian values. He hasn't said what those values are. He also hasn't said how Australia strayed from them. Our values are apparently threatened by something called "bad immigration," and immigrants who want to change Australia. Angus also wants to change Australia by going back to values he won't spell out, but that's okay because he's not an immigrant.

“Hands off Cuba!”
International support for Cuba against US aggression

LEFT IN EUROPE MOBILISES

Hundreds of people have joined solidarity actions for Cuba in Brussels protesting the blockade imposed by the United States on the socialist island. Demonstrators, including Latin American solidarity groups, trade unionists, and left politicians, demanded an end to the illegal blockade, the delivery of humanitarian aid and oil, and the continued operation of Belgium’s embassy in Cuba, which the so-called Arizona coalition has decided to shut down.

The first protest took place in central Brussels on Saturday 7 February, followed on Monday by the projection of the message “Hands off Cuba!” onto the European Commission building. “Europe and Belgium cannot remain silent any longer,” the group Cubanismo said on the occasion. “It is time to dare to stand up to Trump’s imperialism and to send aid to the Cuban people.”

FOR THE CUBAN PEOPLE, SURRENDER IS NOT AN OPTION

Protesters warned about the effects of Donald Trump’s latest decisions to further tighten the blockade on Cuba, stressing that the oil embargo is bringing large parts of the economy and essential services – like hospitals, ambulances, and food distribution – to a standstill. “Cuba is being punished because, since 1959, it has made a different choice: to use its resources for its people, to invest in free education and healthcare, and to show solidarity with other peoples,” Cubanismo wrote. “That is precisely what imperialism cannot tolerate.”

“The violence of imperialism does not look the same everywhere,” the group added. “In some places it is visible and immediate, elsewhere, it works slowly and suffocatingly through sanctions and blockades. But the logic is the same: peoples are not allowed to decide their own future.”

“Yet Cuba remains standing tall,” Cubanismo concluded. “Even under blockade, it has sent doctors around the world while others exported weapons. That deserves not silence, but solidarity.”

GOVERNMENT SILENCE

As the Trump administration has assaulted or threatened progressive governments in Latin America, European governments have largely remained silent, once again revealing striking double standards in their treatment of international affairs. While EU representatives and mainstream political actors failed to denounce both the kidnapping of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores and the tightening of the illegal blockade against Cuba, left parties and grassroots groups rallied against this latest iteration of US imperialism.

Recent days have also brought more mobilisations in support of Venezuela’s sovereignty in Italy, culminating in a national assembly on 8 February. Organisations involved in organising the assembly and protests, including the left party Potere al Popolo, have announced further demonstrations next month in solidarity with Venezuela, Cuba, and other Latin American countries.

“The blockade of Venezuelan oil and the threats directed at the Mexican government should it continue supplying oil to the island constitute a true act of ‘economic terrorism’ by Trump,” Potere al Popolo wrote in an earlier brief, noting that this is an integral part of US national security guidelines and has a clear objective of “imposing total unilateral domination over the continent.”

“Cuba poses no danger to the United States or to any other country,” the group added. “The only country making the world less safe is the United States, which continues to attack the sovereignty of peoples across the globe through military, economic, and political interference.”

TACTICS OF STARVATION

A broad coalition of elected officials, public figures, and grassroots organisations issued a public letter demanding an end to the Trump administration’s escalating war against Cuba, which they describe as a deliberate effort to induce famine and mass suffering on the island.

“US President Donald Trump is trying to induce a famine in Cuba,” the Call to Conscience states. “This is not a policy of national security; it is a deliberate act of economic warfare aimed at strangling an entire population.”

The letter comes in response to Trump’s 29 January executive order, which labels Cuba an “unusual and extraordinary threat” to the United States and imposes severe economic penalties on any country that attempts to deliver oil to or trade with the island. Organisers reject this characterisation, calling it “obviously false” and a pretext for intensified sanctions.

The letter also accuses Trump of using Cuba in an attempt to distract from growing public discontent with his administration. “It is a cynical and crude ploy to distract public opinion from the issues at home that are eliciting mass public dissent, and as we’ve seen with Venezuela, a precursor to an illegal military attack,” the letter warns.

‘MEASURED IN HUMAN SUFFERING’

In a press conference on 5 February, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel announced a series of emergency measures that his government is taking in light of the renewed attacks. He also revealed that no fuel has entered the island since December and that the electrical grid is therefore operating at a very limited capacity. This, as outlined in the letter, impacts all areas of life in Cuba such as the provision of health services in hospitals and clinics, the distribution of food and medicine, transportation, education, and more.

Rally in support of Cuba, New York, NY. Photo: – pexels.com (CC0)

“The most vulnerable – children, the elderly, and the sick – will bear the brunt of this cruelty,” the letter underlines.

“Cuba poses no threat to the United States. Starving a population into submission is not diplomacy; it is a form of terrorism.”

NEW YORKERS LEND SUPPORT

The Call to Conscience has gained support from prominent actors, including Mark Ruffalo, Susan Sarandon, and Kal Penn; musicians Roger Waters and Vic Mensa; filmmaker Boots Riley; and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alice Walker. The Movement for Black Lives, The People’s Forum, the ANSWER Coalition, the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organisation (IFCO), among others, have endorsed the call.

Notably, 22 members of the New York City Council (nearly half the body) signed the letter, including Council Members Alexa Avilés and Chi Ossé. They were joined by New York State Senator Julia Salazar and State Assembly Member Claire Valdez. Academic signatories include professors from Yale University, Cornell University, Duke University, New York University, and Brooklyn College.

“We, the people of the United States, want to have normal relations with Cuba, treat Cuba with equality and respect, and most importantly to see Cuba and the Cuban people as our neighbours and not our enemies,” the letter concludes.

Peoples Dispatch

(*Although Australia has voted against the US blockade in the UN, the government has not spoken out about the latest US attempt to starve Cuba into submission. If you want to help Cuba:*

• *contact your nearest Australia Cuba Friendship Society about joining or at least donating*

• *contact your MP and demand the government speak out against the US seizing Cuba’s oil*)

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