



# Gaza and the tragedy of lost childhood



William Briggs

**The killing in Gaza goes on. The USA and Israel's allies continue to mouth the same empty words. US secretary of state Antony Blinken says almost the same thing every week: "A ceasefire is close to conclusion. The destruction must stop." The words are translated into media releases and worried faces talk of imminent breakthroughs. People stop listening. They stop looking at the news. They know that the words are empty. They see the results of the depravity and become desensitised.**

### WHAT FUTURE?

The killing will, eventually, end. When it does, those same representatives of the USA, those same Israeli allies, will talk of building a new future. Tens of thousands of dead Palestinians will not sit too heavily on their consciences. They have no consciences. Netanyahu, if he remains in power, will say that he has defeated 'terrorism' and that an 'axis of evil' has been dealt a blow. His regime will stand indicted as a state that has perpetuated terror on an industrial scale, but will the criminals be brought to justice?

Children in Israel began a new school year at the beginning of September, just as

children do all across the northern hemisphere. The day is marked with a sense of optimism and celebration. The Israeli government, its army, the USA, and all of its blood-stained allies have ensured that there will be no celebrations, no photos of happy, or nervous children in school uniforms in Gaza. There are no schools!

### ATTACK ON CHILDREN

Since the invasion of Gaza, almost 10,000 children have been killed. More than 400 teachers have been killed. Nearly 700,000 children were enrolled in schools in Gaza when the bombs began falling. Today, the schools that are still standing are used as shelters from the Israeli attacks. The words of 12-year-old Afnan al-Shenbari say it all: "Here I am, spending my life in school, not for education, but as a shelter from the shelling."

It is estimated that 625,000 of those children are no longer in any form of school. The 'lucky' few are using makeshift facilities. But as 11-year-old Rima al-Kurd puts it, "I don't like going to class in tents. I only love school."

Eighty-five per cent of all schools in Gaza, 477 out of a total of 564 have been damaged or destroyed. All 12 Gazan universities have been bombed. 88,000 university students

cannot complete their studies. The ongoing results for the future of Gaza are obvious.

### DUTTON-ALBANESE-NETANYAHU

When Peter Dutton declares that Australia should shut its doors to all Palestinian refugees, he is also including these children and young people. When the Albanese government denies access to 75 per cent of visa applicants, they are rejecting these children and young people, and yet it is children and women who make up the great majority of deaths in Gaza.

The death toll now is almost 41,000. Sixty-nine per cent of these are women and children. These are the "terrorists" that Netanyahu is waging war against. More than 11,000 women have now been killed. Close to 17,000 children are dead.

The Netanyahu regime has destroyed 280,000 housing units. When people seek shelter, the shelters are bombed. It has been reported that 170 displacement shelters, many former schools, have been bombed and shelled.

### ISRAELI LIES

So far, the Israelis have dropped 80,000 tons of explosives on this tiny strip of land.

The Israeli leadership and its army spokespeople maintain the lie that they do not target civilians. When Netanyahu addressed the US Congress earlier this year he claimed that the assault on Gaza showed "one of the lowest ratios of combatants to non-combatant casualties in the history of urban warfare." While he was receiving standing ovations in Washington, the horrendous statistic of 69 per cent of all deaths being women and children was blithely ignored by the Israeli leader and the assembled politicians.

One thousand medical and civil defence workers, and 172 journalists are among the deaths at the hands of the Israeli military. The latest figures show that 30 Palestinians have now starved to death. There will be many more.

United Nations Spokesperson, Stephane Dujarric has called the humanitarian crisis in Gaza "beyond catastrophic." He used, as an example, the fact that there has been a 35 per cent decrease in cooked meals provided to those in need. This is partly due to multiple evacuation orders issued by the Israeli security forces, with at least 70 kitchens forced to either suspend cooked meals provision or relocate.

Continued on page 2

3



All workers' rights threatened

16



Nuclear-armed bombers to be based in Australia

## The Guardian has a podcast

Search for "Communist Guardian Podcast" or use the QR code



# Guardian

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## Try this simple trick for better health!

There's a simple trick which could make you and everyone in the country healthier, but you'll have to read to the end of this editorial to find out. No peeking!

When is free medicine not free? Some GP clinics think they have found the answer to this, by charging patients a 'membership fee' to access bulk billing. Around 100 GP clinics have engaged in this creative form of double-dipping, getting funding from the government that's meant to make sure they provide a free service, while also charging patients for it. The federal health department isn't amused and has called this creativity a breach of the Health Insurance Act.

The rort is almost amusing in its shamelessness, but it conceals a deeper problem. Bulk billing is in trouble in this country and we can not take free or affordable medicine for granted.

Australians are proud of their health system, especially when they compare it to the horrendous insurance company-dominated US system, where the motto might as well be 'be rich or die early'. However there's no reason we couldn't have the same system as the US one day. Congratulating ourselves for having a better system instead of fixing the one we've got is no way for Australians to stay healthy.

Since it was introduced in the 1970s, Bulk Billing has been starved by successive governments which have also encouraged the entry of private health insurance and private hospitals. It's been a vicious circle of ideology and short-term thinking. Both our major political parties believe that the free market can solve everything, even in areas where the free market has already made things far worse. Both our major parties cry poor on health, but think the sky's the limit when it comes to nuclear-powered submarines.

Bulk Billing pays much less than it used to. Think about prices. Everything else has gone up over the last decade – houses prices, rents, food, you name it. But the Medicare rebate was frozen by Labor in 2013 as a temporary saving. The Coalition government that got in the next year kept the freeze in place until 2018. Meanwhile every other price went up.

So it's not surprising that out-of-pocket costs for an average GP visit have increased almost 50 per cent in the last ten years.

Characteristically, Labor have made a partial attempt to improve things, putting an extra \$3.5 billion into bulk billing. That sounds like a lot of money, but it's not much after a decade of underfunding. It also appears to have been swallowed up by state payroll taxes.

So what's the simple trick that will make you – and all of us – healthier? It's called fully-funded socialised medicine. We can afford it – in fact, it would save the nation money by preventing more expensive diseases that are more likely to occur when people skimp on GP visits.

Governments would rather fund tax cuts and AUKUS, and they don't want a fight with the private health industry. But the Communist Party of Australia will keep calling for it and working towards it.

## Another book club!

The Melbourne Branch of the Communist Party of Australia supports a long-running broad left book club which studies communist classics in detail. In the last few years, the club has gone through Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism*, Lenin's *State and Revolution*, and *Imperialism, the highest stage of Capitalism*, Engel's *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, and Mao's *On Contradictions*.

Now the club is working on Lenin's 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Back.'

Meetings are held from 6:00-7:30 pm, on the third Monday of the month, on Zoom, and in the Party offices in Trades Hall. Meetings are open to any interested readers

Contact [kistenmit@bigpond.com](mailto:kistenmit@bigpond.com) for more details. ✳

## Gaza and the tragedy of lost childhood

Continued from page 1

### WHITEWASH

All of this goes on with the support of so-called civilised, democratic states. The UK government has tried to whitewash its own complicity in genocide by cutting back "some" arms shipments. Prime Ministers, Presidents, Foreign Ministers, and the US Secretary of State all issue statements calling for a settlement and an end to the killing, but ultimately they lay the blame for lack of progress on Hamas. The reason why the orgy of killing continues is because Israel, supported by the US, refuses to make concessions. It refuses to accept a future in Gaza that does not include Israeli troops on the ground.

The intransigence of Netanyahu is seen daily. The image of him in front of a map of Gaza pointing out the 'Philadelphia' corridor on the Egyptian border and demanding the right to remain an occupying force makes a mockery of any lasting peace.

The vision of children receiving anti-polio vaccines is meant to offer a sense of hope and humanity in the face of such inhumanity. Israel makes a big deal of how many children have been vaccinated. The fact that polio is present where it has not been for the past 25 years is conveniently overlooked. The fact that these children receive their vaccinations, then return to the squalor of tent-encampments and open sewers is downplayed. The fact that the bombs continue to fall and more children die each day, is overlooked.

So much is ignored and overlooked as the world becomes desensitised to the horror of what is happening. We need to remember that according to the UN, a million Palestinians received no food rations in August. We need to remember that there have been reports of Israeli forces blocking entry of medical teams delivering vaccines in some areas. We need to know that in order for Israel to construct its 'buffer zone' around the Philadelphia corridor, it has

bulldozed farms, laid explosives, and destroyed homes, schools and mosques.

A report by Amnesty International states that "the Israeli military's relentless campaign of ruin in Gaza is one of wanton destruction. Our research has shown how Israeli forces have obliterated residential buildings, forced thousands of families from their homes and rendered their land uninhabitable."

These are the realities that confront the people of Gaza on a daily basis. In Israel, people are on the streets, and unions have called strikes. There is a feeling that cannot be ignored that Netanyahu must go. When the protests shift from anger at the deaths of Israeli hostages and become strident calls for an end to the invasion, for an end to occupation, for a free Palestine in a free Palestinian state, then Palestinian children and teachers may, one day, be able to celebrate the beginning of a new school year, as teachers and children do in Israel. ✳

## Hands off our Union!

Labor and the Coalition have teamed up to pass the most draconian, anti-union laws in Australia's history.

### The laws:

- deny rank-and-file CFMEU members the right to run and control their own union.
- violate international law.
- violate the rule of law and basic fundamental rights.

The CFMEU is a strong and effective union that belongs to its members - not politicians.

This is an attack on all unions and workers and we must fight back!

Stand up for your union and help us take this fight to the High Court!



Donate

<https://your-union-your-choice.raiselysite.com/>



### Sydney Vigil

## STOP USA BLOCKADE ON CUBA

4:15 pm to 5:00 pm Tuesday September 17

Outside the USA Consulate 50 Miller Street North Sydney

# All workers' rights threatened

Marcus Browning

**The aim of the Albanese government's attack on the union movement is to skyrocket corporate profits by cutting deeper into the standard of living of Australian workers. The neoliberal agenda is a global phenomenon. Its features include smaller government, deregulation, privatisation, trade agreements with the free flow of goods, services and capital, and the slashing of wages and working conditions.**

The attacks Australian workers are experiencing are being faced by workers across the world. The scope and need for international co-operation and solidarity has never been greater.

To defeat this offensive, unions need to work together across factional divides. The emphasis of the campaign should include mass mobilisations leading to a strengthened and solid mass movement that embraces all forms of struggle, ranging from electoral pursuits to civil disobedience and defiant militant activity.

This could include a marginal seat campaign heading into the looming federal election, targeting both the Coalition and the ALP. For the growing number of unemployed and marginalised to vote for the Coalition would be to embrace the hangman: and social democracy as promulgated by the ALP is a fraud.

There is a long history of attacks on the construction workers and their union. The Rudd/Gillard Labor government retained the industry police force – the Howard's government's notorious Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) – which spent millions of dollars a year hounding union officials who attempted to enter workplaces over safety, underpayment, loss of entitlements, and other issues.

The employers want this fascistic cop back, with even more union-busting powers.

The ABCC cost unions millions of dollars in fines, while accusing the unions and their officials of "breaking the law". The law they were "breaking" is the 'right of entry' law that prevents them from legally carrying out their legitimate trade union business, and protecting their members from criminal actions by employers who are rewarded with the guarantee of no more union visits. It is the law

that prohibits or tightly restricts strike action over safety, wages, and working conditions.

For decades trade union officials freely entered workplaces, checked out working conditions of all employees, inspected wages and working hours books, attended to safety issues, assisted members with problems and ensured that employers were complying with their legal obligations.

They were free to talk to workers during meal and other breaks, and to actively recruit and organise in the workplace. They exercised one of the most fundamental basic trade union rights – right of entry.

Up until the mid-1980s a system of centralised union-negotiated, comprehensive awards governed minimum wages, and working conditions.

Awards not only covered wages, hours or work, penalty rates and many other important condition of work, but contained 'Time Record' and 'Right of Entry' clauses which gave authorised union representatives considerable rights to enter workplaces, speak to workers, and inspect time and wages records where a breach of the award was suspected. These awards covered multiple workplaces and industries or crafts.

The Hawke-Keating Labor governments commenced the process of dismantling the comprehensive system of centralised awards in the 1980s, with a shift in focus to enterprise-based determination of wages and working conditions. But it took the Howard government to emasculate the centralised system of trade union-negotiated awards, and gut awards to 20 'allowable matters.'

Amongst the key provisions that were not just removed from awards but outlawed in enterprise agreements were basic trade union rights including the right of entry and free access to time and wage records of all employees.

When the Rudd Labor government was elected in 2007 there were expectations in trade union circles that the right of entry would be restored. It was not.

The union movement still has a fight on its hands to restore the right of entry, and now in the courts against the attempt by the Albanese government to wipe the movement out.

The theft of the Construction and General Division of the CFMEU from its members is a taste of things to come. ✪



## employers want the ABCC back, with even more union-busting powers

### 'Landmark deal,' union launches national push for reproductive leave after landmark deal

**Hundreds of workers will receive 12 days reproductive leave under a watershed agreement with the Health Services Union (HSU) that could be expanded nationwide.**

Scope, one of Australia's largest not-for-profit disability service providers, will become the first employer to provide 12 days of leave to cover IVF, severe menstrual pain, endometriosis, vasectomies, menopause, gender transitioning therapies, and other health issues.

The HSU is calling for the 12-day leave entitlement to be part of minimum employment standards for all workers.

The union will meet with federal politicians in Canberra as part of its national campaign for reproductive leave.

HSU National Senior Assistant Secretary Kate Marshall said the

agreement with Scope should be replicated nationally.

"This landmark agreement is life-changing for thousands of disability care workers and their families," she said.

"We're seeing so many people, mainly women, use up all their leave to look after their reproductive health.

"Making 12 days' reproductive leave part of the minimum entitlements for all workers will have incredible benefits across the entire economy.

"Women will be able to stay in the workforce longer, build more superannuation, and help us close the gender pay gap.

Marshall received fertility treatment to conceive her twin daughters, Ava and Lucy, after two miscarriages.

"I did want to work but I also

desperately wanted to have a family – why should a person have to pick one or the other?"

"It shouldn't be down to being lucky enough to have an understanding boss. All workers deserve this critical leave to deal with a range of reproductive health issues."

Reproductive health leave provides time off for contraception, endometriosis, fertility treatments, hormone therapy, hysterectomy, menstruation, miscarriage, pregnancy, poly-cystic ovarian syndrome, screenings for breast and prostate cancer, termination and vasectomy.

Scope operates across Victoria and NSW through 425 locations and is one of the biggest employers in the sector. The agreement with the HSU covers Victorian staff.

Health Services Union ✪

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# CFMEU here to stay



Anna Pha

**The High Court has agreed to hear a case by sacked CFMEU officials from the Construction Division of the CFMEU against the Albanese government for putting the union in the hands of an administrator.**

Three leaders of the CFMEU construction division's Queensland branch allege the Albanese government's Administration Act and provisions it introduced into the Registered Organisations Act and the Fair Work Act are unconstitutional, breaching separation of powers principles, and therefore invalid.

Five unions have so far indicated their willingness to contribute millions of dollars to challenge the legislation appointing an administrator to take over the union in the High Court.

## SA CFMEU CLEARED BUT...

In South Australia, a police investigation has found that the CFMEU has not engaged in criminal behaviour in South Australia, yet it has been placed in administration along with all the other branches of the union.

In July, Premier Peter Malinauskas asked SA Police to launch an investigation into the union following interstate allegations that the CFMEU had links with organised crime and biker gangs.

"Their advice on the back of that exercise to us is that there has been no evidence of criminal behaviour undertaken by South Australian elements of the CFMEU," Malinauskas said. "That is welcome news, but that has not changed the fact that we are absolutely committed to the supporting of the CFMEU being put into administration."

"While there hasn't been any evidence of criminal behaviour, that doesn't mean there hasn't been evidence of behaviour that is unwelcome and inconsistent with the best traditions of the labour movement."

For Malinauskas, not being guilty is no reason not to be punished.

## SOLIDARITY

A number of unions and other organisations have expressed solidarity with the CFMEU and joined the large rallies at the end of August.

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), a division of the CFMEU, said: "Our Division remains deeply concerned by the legislative precedent established by the Federal government to remove trade union

rights on the basis of untested media allegations. We are also concerned by the near certainty that similar future legislation will be used by governments of either stripe against other militant blue-collar unions, including the MUA.

"When a criminal conspiracy between Patrick Stevedores and the then Howard government was revealed in the release of Cabinet papers, no criminal investigation or proceedings were ever launched. This double standard goes to the heart of the MUA's determination to join and fund a High Court challenge against these laws. We have been on the receiving end of these calculated political and media smears in the past and will support our fellow members in the Construction Division as they seek to clear their names and fight for the principles of natural justice, presumption of innocence, the rules of evidence, and procedural fairness.

"We are supporting our federated Union's members in the construction industry and backing them in as they fight for the right of their Division to exist. The have been and remain central to the protection of trade union and labour rights both in the construction industry, the maritime sector and more broadly for all Australian and international working women and men that benefit from the strength of the CFMEU," the MUA said.

## HOUSE PRICES

Labour constitutes around 40 per cent of construction costs at the most. The Australian Bureau of Statistics attributes growing costs to an increase in the prices of building materials, fuel and energy. As for take-home pay, Jobs and Skills Australia shows that the \$1,538 a week median income of a construction worker is lower than all industries median earnings of \$1,600.

Add to that mismanagement of construction projects, the transient nature of the work, the dangerous and physical nature of the work, the difficulty of working in the industry until an older age – construction workers deserve every cent they earn and more. Above all they need a strong militant union to protect their interests.

Unethical and illegal behaviour that is rife in the industry must be addressed but the government has targeted the union, not the bosses.

Anyone who watched the ABC's *4 Corners* on 9 September will have seen just how corrupt the developers are, yet they have gone unscathed for years despite numerous complaints. Are they under an administrator? Also corrupt insurance companies and strata management companies that are linked to the developers – have they been taken over by an administrator? The answer to these questions is NO.

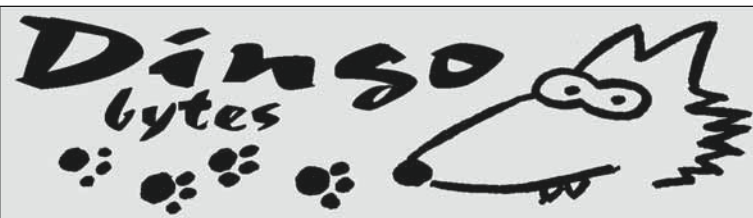
It is called capitalism. The state, and its apparatuses act in the interests of corporations, of big capital against working people.

The attack on the CFMEU must be defeated and the union returned to its members.

The CFMEU is here to stay! ✖



[cpa.org.au](http://cpa.org.au)



"Free trade" is pushed by the big corporations because it permits them to undercut domestic manufacturers or growers, to drive them out of business or take them over. "Free trade" is really anarchy and the law of the jungle by which the stronger drive all others to the wall and into bankruptcy, while workers are left on the scrap heap.

A struggle between "free trade" and "protectionism" has waxed and waned in Australia for over 100 years. One of the early political parties in Australia went by the name of 'Free Trade' and won over 35 per cent of the vote in the 1901 elections.

The alternative to these methods of trade is the adoption of the principle of "mutual benefit." "Mutual benefit" trade means that the buying and selling of goods between countries is carried on with an eye to the benefit of both countries – not just one. It means the widespread use of trade agreements which set out the terms and conditions and quantities of goods to be bought and sold. It introduces a planned approach to trade and industry development.

It involves the public ownership of major trading organisations so that the national interest can be effectively protected while taking into account the interests of a trade partner.

When the struggle against apartheid in South Africa was at its height, a global blockade was implemented, to make South Africa's isolation tangible and clear. Several countries – and quite a few capitalist firms – sought to thwart this blockade but few dared to do it openly because of the world-wide abhorrence of the blatantly racist apartheid system.

One state that did not hesitate to give aid (especially military aid) and succour to the South African racists was Israel. South African gold helped make Israel one of the world's major arms manufacturers and suppliers.

The universally-condemned South African policy of segregated areas or 'Bantustans' for the black population of the country today forms the basis for Israel's policy in illegally-occupied Palestine, with Palestinians substituted for Africans.

For half a century the US, with an eye to securing control over Middle East oil and at the same time countering Arab unity and possible Arab power, has given Israel open and unstinting support, using military might and UN veto to provide a shield for Israeli aggression.

Israel has been the USA's big stick in the region, and a mighty useful big stick it has been. In the meantime, on the strength of this special relationship, the Zionist 'Israel Lobby' in Washington has flourished, attaining extraordinary influence and consequently power.

Now that power is attempting, with the aid of the corporate mass media to hide from the eyes of the world Israel's genocide against the Palestinians. It is a reflection of the changing world that the post-apartheid South African government has now brought charges of genocide against Israel for this crime in the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: Peter Dutton and the Coalition he represents: someone so rigid, so stiff with crippling hatreds, so spiritually dysfunctional, out of touch with everything that is joyful and beautiful, with no discernible reverence in him for human life, with never a hope of wisdom, living through politics in a constant striving for self-gratification, as if politics were a colourless blood substitute in his veins.

# MUA to join and fund High Court challenge to CFMEU Construction administration laws

## Statement by the Maritime Union of Australia

**The Maritime Union of Australia will join other trade unions in funding a High Court challenge against the Federal Government's unjustified, chaotic and reckless decision to place the CFMEU's Construction Division into administration.**

We have made it clear that corruption and criminality have absolutely no place in unions, the construction sector, or in Australian society more broadly. Any allegations relating to criminality and corruption are serious. Where this behaviour is alleged, it should be investigated by the relevant authorities.

Today at a meeting of the MUA's National Executive, the leadership of our Division reconfirmed our opposition to both the method of the government's intervention and its implementation to date, noting that the legislation rushed through both houses of Parliament last month had effectively robbed construction workers of an effective union while also setting aside key democratic principles essential to all Australian citizens, organisations, community groups, religious

organisations, and charities that the presumption of innocence, natural justice and due process should always prevail under law.

The MUA has already highlighted the disastrous impact of administration on the progress of EBAs that were on foot and the green light it has sent to bad and abusive employers who treat construction workers as an expendable resource in unsafe workplaces.

We join other unions and concerned groups and citizens in our opposition to the legislation. Our support for this legal campaign is not just to restore the rights and protections of Construction Division members but to hold the line against future attacks using similar legislation on other Australian workers.

Our Division remains deeply concerned by the legislative precedent established by the Federal government to remove trade union rights on the basis of untested media allegations. We are also concerned by the near certainty that similar future legislation will be used by governments of either stripe against other militant blue-collar unions, including the MUA.

When a criminal conspiracy between Patrick Stevedores and the then Howard government was revealed in the release of Cabinet papers, no criminal investigation or proceedings were ever launched. This double standard goes to the heart of the MUA's determination to join and fund a High Court challenge against these laws. We have been on the receiving end of these calculated political and media smears in the past and will support our fellow members in the Construction Division as they seek to clear their names and fight for the principles of natural justice, presumption of innocence, the rules of evidence and procedural fairness.

We are supporting our federated union members in the construction industry and backing them in as they fight for the right of their Division to exist. They have been and remain central to the protection of trade union and labour rights both in the construction industry, the maritime sector and more broadly for all Australian and international working women and men that benefit from the strength of the CFMEU. ✳



## Victorian private schools over-funded

**The extent of inequity in Australia's school funding has been revealed in new research, showing that more than half of private schools in Victoria now receive more combined government funding (Commonwealth and state) per student than public schools of very similar size, location and with similar student needs.**

Using school finance data, the AEU report 'A Decade of Inequity' reveals:

In 2013, 504 private schools in Victoria received more combined government funding (Commonwealth and state) than comparable public schools. By 2022, this had increased to 521 private schools.

In 2013, 200 private schools in the ICSEA 1050+ group (which includes the top quartile of Socio-Educational Advantage) were funded higher than comparable public schools and by 2022 this had increased to 263 schools – an increase of 31.5 per cent.

In the top 15 per cent of SEA (in the 1100+ ICSEA range) private schools receiving greater government funding than comparable public schools have increased from 59 to 83 over the last decade – an increase of 40.6 per cent.

In 2022 the largest gap between a private and public school in the same ICSEA range and same school size group is \$7,282 per student.

The report compares the combined Commonwealth and State/Territory government recurrent funding for comparable public and private schools. Its key findings reveal entrenched and increasing inequities in the funding of Victorian private and public schools.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said the shock findings underlined the urgent need for public schools to be fully funded by all governments.

"Some private schools in Victoria are

receiving up to \$7,282 per student more in government funding than similar public schools with very similar student profiles. In some cases those schools are just around the corner from each other."

"This unfair private school funding advantage translates into a school resourcing and staffing advantage, and has fuelled a private school capital works boom, while at the same time denying public schools the recurrent funding needed to attract and retain teachers and to address the high level of student needs in the classroom."

AEU Victoria President, Meredith Peace said, "Right now, school funding for the next decade is being negotiated between the Commonwealth and the Victorian government. The urgency is clear and we call on Premier Jacinta Allan to fight hard for Victoria's public school students in these negotiations."

"Public schools in Victoria educate proportionally 2.2 times the number of students

from low socio-educational advantage backgrounds compared to private schools, and 3.3 times the number of First Nations students. Currently our schools are not getting the funding they need to meet students' needs.

"The challenges are too great and the cost of inaction too high for governments to continue to fail on funding.

"Full funding is the only way to ensure every child gets the support they need to succeed, and we can recruit and retain sufficient numbers of teachers. We need the Albanese and Allan governments to deliver a funding agreement that provides a full 100 per cent of the SRS for all public schools. Anything less will fail Victoria's public schools and their students." ✳

## Building Workers International condemns government's move to administer CFMEU

**The Building and Wood Workers International (BWI) has condemned the Albanese government's move to administer the CFMEU in the following statement:**

Workers have the right to form unions and to elect their own representatives. This is a human right under international law, protected by Convention 87 of the International Labour Organisation. Australia has ratified this Convention, yet the Australian government's actions in dismissing the elected officials of the CFMEU Construction Division clearly breach it.

The Australian government says that it has acted following media

allegations of criminal activity involving the union. The Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI) opposes any criminal infiltration of trade unions; workers are entitled to unions free of criminality and corruption. But media allegations are not proof, and persons facing charges are innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law. Any allegations of criminality should be prosecuted by police dealt and dealt with by the courts. Until such time as courts have dealt with charges, individuals and organisations are entitled to the presumption of innocence.

This important principle has been abandoned by legislation

overriding the democratic rights of members and imposing an administrator on the CFMEU. We note that the Australian Government has stated that corporations may also be involved in criminal activity; yet no similar legislation similar has been passed to deal with employers.

BWI calls on the Australian government to take immediate steps to return the CFMEU Construction Division to the control of members and to commit to the repeal of this anti-worker legislation.

BWI stands in solidarity with the CFMEU and Australia's construction workers.

Building and Wood Workers International (bwint.org) ✳



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# Social media ban not an effective solution

Peter Farmer

**The Federal government is planning to introduce a minimum age restriction for social media platforms to prevent harm, but many people who seem to know what they're talking about are opposed.**

Lisa Given, Professor of Information Sciences at RMIT university has said that the calls for a ban are "premature and not supported by clear evidence."

Given argues that children "need to gain the necessary skills to navigate online worlds – including social media" and banning them from these platforms is "not the solution."

Given instead says that parents and teachers need to support children to develop "technical and information literacy" around social media platforms. Adult support is also critical if a child is navigating harmful behaviour online such as cyber-bullying.

Given points to possible harmful consequences of a ban. For one thing young people may find ways to get around bans and be less likely to tell teachers or parents if they run into harmful content online.

Another issue on a lot of people's minds is the technical aspect. Given says that "strategies of age assurance are easily circumvented by users, while

strategies for verifying age raise data privacy concerns."

Others have pointed to the possibility of children missing out on the positive side of social media. Dr Dana McKay, also of RMIT, calls a social media ban for children "a blunt instrument that ignores the social benefits children get from having direct communication with their friends." It's also been pointed out that social media, like the internet in general, can help isolated people to 'find their tribe.' If you're the only person in your town, state or country with a particular interest, social media can help you find others with the same interest.

McKay points out that social media helps children to maintain connections with distant friends and loved ones that would otherwise be impossible, and calls the ban "a blunt instrument that ignores the social benefits children get from having direct communication with their friends."

She believes that the risks inherent to social media could be addressed "by regulating social media rather than children," and gives the examples of minimising advertising and using behavioural analytics to address harmful interactions. ✖



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## Oxfam: Woolworths and Coles profits must be taxed

**As Coles Group and Woolworths announce their full-year profits for 2024, Oxfam Australia is calling for urgent action to address the growing inequality in Australia by better taxing the excessive profits of big corporations.**

Oxfam Australia Chief Executive Officer Lyn Morgain highlighted the injustice of the supermarket duopoly's profits as the cost-of-living crisis continues.

"It's unacceptable that while everyday Australians are struggling to put food on the table, Woolworths and Coles continue to

report staggering profits. It's clear the Australian people are fed up with it. We need the government to step in and directly address the failures in the system that allow this toxic situation to continue," said Morgain.

Woolworths and Coles dominate the supermarket sector in Australia, holding a combined market share of 65.5 per cent. The Allan Fels inquiry into price gouging revealed that market power and a lack of competition are driving up prices for consumers. Woolworths was also found to have misled customers with loyalty

schemes and unclear discounting practices.

"While this year Coles and Woolworths did not generate the crisis profits spikes we saw in 2021 and 2022, they still raked in huge profits that many in the community are deeply concerned by with food prices so high.

"According to Oxfam analysis of profits made in 2021 and 2022, Woolworths alone raked in \$5.6 billion in crisis profits, at the same time as inflation soared and the COVID19 pandemic and Ukraine war was at its peak. This high profit situation has moderated slightly,

but not fundamentally changed, which is unacceptable," she said.

Oxfam Australia is calling on the government to introduce a 'crisis profits tax' in preparation for the next cycle of crisis profits and a tax on excessive corporate profits, as recent Oxfam commissioned YouGov poll revealed that 80 per cent of Australians believe it's unfair to allow big corporations to exploit tax loopholes.

"A tax on the excessive profits of big supermarkets like Woolworths and Coles would not only discourage price gouging, but also help boost the budget during tough times

and provide much-needed funds to address inequality and ease cost-of-living pressures," said Morgain.

"We welcome the Greens contribution to the debate on tax reform, particularly with respect to closing the tax loopholes for the mining industry and an excess profits tax in big corporations. We need bold proposals to make our tax system fairer, ensure we have more funding for public services and reduce the inequality created by unbridled and excessive corporate profits," she said.

Oxfam Australia ✖

## New Victory inquiry into old gas wells

**Friends of the Earth (FoE) is welcoming a new inquiry into hundreds of "plugged and abandoned" retired oil and gas wells off the Victorian coast, many of which are likely to be leaking dangerous methane gas, but argues that the scope of the inquiry needs to be broadened.**

Methane (most often euphemistically called "natural gas") is almost 90 times worse than carbon dioxide for global warming.

A recent independent academic study published by the Maritime Union of Australia, concluded that it's likely about 100 old wells off Victoria are leaking.

The inquiry has come after FoE uncovered plans to decommission a dozen retired and rusting old oil and gas platforms in Bass Strait.

ExxonMobil has applied to dump much of the steel from eight of the rigs into the ocean, and to bring a dozen toxic multi-storey "top-sides," and hundreds of tonnes of other toxic waste, to a site in the middle of the internationally recognised Corner Inlet Ramsar Site.

FoE's Offshore Fossil Gas Campaigner, Jeff Waters, congratulated Greens Victoria leader Ellen Sandell for prompting the inquiry, but called on her to make sure the hearings wouldn't be confined to leaking wells.

"ExxonMobil is trying to save hundreds of millions of dollars by threatening Bass Strait and Corner Inlet, when there is an alternative brown field site in Geelong that they can use," Jeff Waters said.

"Although leaking wells are an urgent problem, so too is the preservation of the ocean and wetland environment, and according to the World Steel Association, 1.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide is produced by not recycling one tonne of steel," he said.

"The inquiry should look into all of the company's decommissioning plans, and ExxonMobil's relationship with the government."

Jeff Waters said the inquiry will set a precedent that will have national implications for the entire oil and gas industry and the (at least) \$60 billion clean up required nationwide. ✖

## Opinion: queer Marxism, class and identity

Tea Wedgewood

**It's clear that some comrades are concerned about identity politics.**

The failure of liberal identity politics is its rejection and concealing of class relations, however I do not believe it is the correct line to ignore the role of identity entirely and risk taking a class reductionist position.

The primary role class plays on identity is protection from consequences. A rich homosexual can pay off reporters or sex workers to keep their position, a celebrity can use their social capital to turn their gender transition into a virtue. This is not true for the trans worker who is fired due to their identity or the lesbian couple who are denied a home loan. Bourgeois queers live free of systematic oppression while the thousands of queer proletarians are left to rot.

This creates two main benefits for global capital, firstly it allows non-queer workers

to imagine themselves at holding a higher status in a social hierarchy and thus makes it easier to ignore their own oppression, as well as creating a permanently desperate underclass. One needs only look at the vigour with which some liberal portray NATO as some kind of bastion of Queer liberation simply due to the US and Australia having legalised marriage equality. They were thrown a bone, and like an abused puppy they defend their new master despite how quickly they will be abandoned if it becomes politically convenient.

This dynamic mirrors most of the identitarian struggles of past communist movements, Sexism, racism, colonialism and Queer oppression are all threads in a net that prevents capitalism from falling too far towards its own death. It is the role of the communist to sever all these threads at the same time as smashing the Economic Base.

An injury to one is an injury to all, the liberation of one is the liberation of all. ✖

# Pacific Islands Forum and Australian control

William Briggs

**The Pacific Islands Forum in Tonga has come to a close. Official photographs have been taken, and media conferences have been held. For Albanese the Forum was apparently an opportunity to show his “true feelings” for the Pacific family. As far as our mainstream media is concerned, there was only one issue of any substance. That issue was discussed and resolved, not without a few misgivings by some of the ‘family.’ The big-ticket item, for Australia and for our media, was the sorting out of ‘policing’ arrangements for the region and what special role Australia could play.**

Australia’s role in ‘supporting’ the Pacific Island nations in the face a range of problems is significant. Much was made of responses to natural disasters, but a whole lot of politics lurked just below the surface. Prime Minister Albanese offered carefully scripted comments to the media. “The Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting is central to safeguarding our region’s collective prosperity and security.”

Albanese was clear that the ‘region’ one where he thinks China should have no place and no role. His comment that “it is important that Pacific leaders meet each year to discuss our shared aspirations and challenges, and work together towards Pacific-led solutions that benefit us all” was again a veiled reference to keeping China out of “our” region.

The dominant role that Australia is to play in policing and security issues is portrayed as one of concern, bordering on altruism. However, at a media conference Albanese was asked whether he thought that the new arrangement “will mean that no Pacific nation has to turn to China for their security needs?” The question showed how obsessed Australian media can be with China. Albanese’s answer was interesting: “Now Australia, be it through the ADF or through the AFP or other security agencies, has often been called upon to provide support in the region. What this will do is put that in a really structured way.”

In an unguarded moment, US Deputy Secretary of State, Kurt Campbell and Albanese let slip the fact that the entire ‘security’ issue was initially an American initiative. The two were recorded with Campbell talking about a “lane” being “clear.” What he made clear is that Australia operates as a US proxy.

The US first urged the Rudd government, to maintain control of the region. The US got an even better response from the current ALP government. The ‘hot-mic’ gaffe exposed the whole deal as nothing more or less than a means to control the sovereignty of these island states.

Australia and the USA made much of security and support in response to natural disasters. When Pacific Island states refer to natural disasters, they almost exclusively refer to the climate disaster that threatens their very existence. Pacific Island nations have long campaigned for climate change policies at a global level. While they have been campaigning, Australia, the paternalistic ‘big brother’ in the ‘Pacific family,’ has been busily ignoring the calls and has gone about its business of opening coal mines, exporting fossil fuels, and leaving the ‘family’ to their own devices.

The most important ‘security’ issue remains that of rising sea-levels. The call by Pacific leaders over many years has not changed. They see Australia, regardless of who might be prime minister, digging up fossil fuels, opening new mines, opening up newer and bigger gas fields, and they see the water rise around them. There has long been a recognition that Australia’s priority is Australia.

Australia and more recently, the USA, have re-discovered the Pacific. More specifically they have discovered that China is engaging more seriously with the Pacific and that Pacific leaders and states are engaging more seriously with China. This is good news for the Pacific Island states, but is deeply disturbing for the USA and Australia.

In recent years China and Pacific countries have been developing stronger relationships and relationships that are based on achieving mutually beneficial outcomes. China says clearly that it seeks ‘win-win’ solutions. Pacific Island leaders

repeat that they wish to be a ‘friend to all and an enemy to no-one.’ The results of this sort of relationship have been seen in areas as diverse as infrastructure development, disaster reduction, poverty alleviation schemes, fishery developments and significant delivery of aid programs and projects into the Pacific.

Not long before the Pacific Islands Forum was due to convene, a report titled ‘the Great Game in the Pacific Islands’ was released by the right wing Lowy Institute. It spoke of “unbridled strategic rivalry” between Australia, New Zealand and the US on one side, and China on the other and that the real problem is the “challenge” posed by China.

The report described China’s outreach and activities in the region [as] “indefatigable.” China is bluntly described as an “aggressor.” The Lowy report writers fret that “traditional partners such as Australia and the US worry that the regional balance of power is changing and their influence is waning.” If this is the case, then some serious questions need to be asked as to why China’s ‘influence’ is growing. Instead of asking those questions, the report falls back on the tired proposition that China must be ‘countered.’

Playing up the lie of a ‘China threat’ feeds into the push for ‘policing’ strategies and Albanese’s desire to further make these ‘security’ arrangements that ‘connect’ the states. The Pacific nations are caught, unwillingly in what the Lowy strategists like to call a “Great Game,” a jostling for power between big powers (the original ‘great game’ was between Britain and Czarist Russia in Afghanistan and India).

The Western powers in the Pacific region continue to coerce the “family,” but the nations of the Pacific Islands know that there is no ‘China threat.’ They know that the actual and existential threat is the threat of extinction due to climate change.

The security being offered by Australia is superficial. While Australian governments barely tinker at the edges of reducing emissions, no amount of police support, training, or aid will make any real difference. ✨

## GREEN NOTES

### Climate change, and your human rights

Anna Pha

Under the Paris Agreement, governments set voluntary commitments for action on climate change with the aim of limiting climate warming to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, or preferably 1.5°C. The commitments made are inadequate, and action so far falls far short of them being met. By 2030 we may be looking down the barrel of an existential threat of 3°C warming. This non-mandatory approach is in sharp contrast to the successful Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The Protocol’s success lies in the mandatory and enforceable nature of commitments made. It demonstrates that well-developed mandatory measures can deliver results at the scale and speed humanity needs.

Courts worldwide recognise that the climate emergency is a human rights issue. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has long stressed that climate change threatens a variety of human rights, including the right to life, food, health, housing, culture, and development. Failure to take adequate and effective measures to address the climate emergency could constitute a breach of international human rights law.

In April this year, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in favour of a group of senior women, known as “climate seniors” who charged that the Swiss government’s failure to meet climate change mitigation targets is having an adverse impact on their health, well-being and quality of life. This landmark decision by the highest human rights court in Europe confirms not only that climate change is intimately linked to human rights, but effectively holds all European governments accountable to adopt more rigorous measures to combat climate change.

The UN Human Rights Committee found that Australia’s failure to adequately protect Indigenous Torres Islanders against adverse impacts of climate change violated their rights to enjoy their culture and be free from arbitrary interference with their private life, family and home.

The European Court of International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the European Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights have all acknowledged that human rights law plays a crucial role in clarifying, shaping, and strengthening states’ obligations to address the climate crisis.

“Courts now have an extraordinary opportunity to ensure that States’ commitments to tackle the climate emergency are mandatory, by providing clarity on the legal obligations of States. Indeed, the discretion of States to act or not to act has placed humankind at great risk,” Romina Picolotti and Sebastian Luengo, Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development point out. The requirement for states to act upon the “best available science” is a cornerstone of international environmental law. Decisions based on politics can lead to extermination of the human species. That’s what ‘existential threat’ means. It’s not an exaggeration.

Courts can guide states in adopting science-based actions by mandating timely and effective mitigation, adaptation, and restoration measures before reaching irreversible climate tipping points, using the best available science.

“From a human rights perspective, and considering the extraordinary harm posed by climate change, ensuring that the global temperature rise remains below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (or that any exceedance is limited) requires our courts and legal systems to reassess critical factors to protect citizens,” Picolotti & Luengo warn. “Addressing the climate emergency is fundamentally about ensuring human rights protection.”

“The urgency of the climate crisis is evident in today’s impacts, and the window of opportunity to prevent massive, abrupt, and irreversible violations of the human rights to life, to health, to a healthy environment, and to food, among many other human rights, is shrinking.”



Climate Resilience Sector Project in Tonga. Photo: Asian Development Bank – flickr.com (CC BY-NC 2.0)



THEY TOOK OUR RIGHTS







THEY TOOK OUR UNION

HANDS OFF THE CFMEU



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Letters to the Editor  
The Guardian  
74 Buckingham Street  
Surry Hills NSW 2010



email: editor@cpa.org.au

**Dear Editor,  
Congratulations on moving to 16 pages!  
It's nice to have more of the Guardian to read.**

Thank you for covering the CFMEU issue so thoroughly. The more mainstream papers I read either ignore the topic, or just pass on slurs as though they're facts.

I work in a nice safe office job. Nobody I work with has any of the physical risks associated with the building trade. All of us

are going to come home from work safely every day.

I could ask myself what I have in common with the CFMEU members. I could ask myself "Why should I care?"

But I know that if the government can do this to the CFMEU, they can do it to anyone. It almost doesn't matter if the allegations about union officials are true or not (there's so many, I think they can't all be true). What's really important about this

for me, as a working person, is that a Labor government is prepared to throw due process and the Fair Work legislation away, just to make themselves look tough on a union that the Liberals and the media don't like. That's really scary, so I'm in solidarity with the CFMEU in opposing what the Labor government is doing.

All the best,

**Arroka Nekazari  
Melbourne**

## JCP's Kazuo Shii:

# "We want to get out of this vicious circle of war"

**Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced that he would hand over power to another Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) official at the end of September. What do you think of this situation?**

**Shi:** Kishida's resignation comes after a gigantic tax fraud scandal. The *Akahata* newspaper (Editor's note: *Akahata*, 'Red Flag' is the JCP's newspaper) was one of the first to alert people to this subject. Anger has gradually taken over the population, who are shocked. But none of the other LDP candidates has any thoughts on how to solve this problem. The root of this scandal is neoliberalism, disconnection from people's daily lives.

In addition to restoring the trust of the Japanese, we must address the issue of the militarisation of the archipelago. This has

increased enormously under the influence of the United States. In terms of domestic policy and diplomacy, the LDP is leading us to a dead end.

**This change of leadership comes a few months before the next general elections. You are allied with the Constitutional Democratic Party (PDC, centre). How are you preparing for it?**

We have ties with the PDC, and have won several times thanks to this alliance. But the anti-communist campaign is getting stronger and stronger against the coalition, so our cooperation is more limited. Our main objective is to try to concentrate our efforts on winning seats and influence. We are aiming for 6.5 million votes, while we had 4.1 million in 2021. This is a significant difference, but so is our ambition.

**In France, India and elsewhere,**

**communists also form coalitions with social democrats. Do you think these alliances are essential?**

Alliances are needed to change policy, yes. But there are differences with France, for example, where we are seeing a union of the left. In Japan, we have tried to build an alliance to challenge the conservative parties. The PDC has its own positions, but we agree on the fight against the militarisation led by the party in power.

**In Okinawa, there have been several cases of rape by American soldiers. This has rekindled the protest movement against US bases on the island ...**

The JCP has long been influential in Okinawa Prefecture, which is occupied by US military bases. There have been incidents for a long time. Many crimes have been committed by US soldiers, including the rape

of young Japanese women. Both countries want to build a new base, on Henoko Bay to the east. But we have continued to lead the protest against this project among the angry population. I really hope that the international community pays attention to this protest movement in Okinawa.

**You have just drafted proposals for peace in the East China Sea. Can you tell us more about them?**

We strongly oppose the (Japanese) ruling party's attitude, which is determined to increase US military bases. We want to get out of this vicious circle of war. That is why we have published our proposals for regional peace.

*L'Humanite* (humanite.fr) ✳

## World Congress Against Fascism begins in Venezuela

**On 10 September, Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodríguez welcomed hundreds of citizens from around the world who gathered to kick off the first "World Congress Against Fascism, Neofascism and Similar Expressions."**

In her opening speech, she recalled that Latin American history has been marked by grotesque expressions of the fascist extreme right that leave behind tortured and disappeared people.

"We, the South American people, have experienced it. We

have suffered and faced coups d'état, assassination attempts, imperial invasions, wars, and economic blockades," she said, recalling that Washington has been behind the attack against Venezuela and the July presidential elections.

"Before the elections, we warned about what was going to happen. A plot of extremists established the dictatorship of algorithms on social media. Directed from the US, this threat operation invested millions of dollars," Rodríguez stated, noting that the rise of contemporary fascism also

occurs amid the peoples' struggle for a multipolar world.

"It is Russia's fight against the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. If fascism were to take over all the spaces on the planet, there would be no spaces left to inhabit," she warned, and invited the peoples of the world to consolidate an anti-fascist movement.

"We must unite as one mind and one soul to prevent fascism from spreading its tentacles throughout the planet. It represents the most serious threat that

humanity must face as a consequence of the predominance of capitalism and its neoliberal and imperialist development model."

The Venezuelan VP Rodríguez also recalled that Elon Musk and Erik Prince, who appear among the most visible leaders of global fascism, tried to carry out a coup against her country.

"Musk poured out his hatred towards Venezuela. He and others serving the empire were fighting among themselves to take over Venezuela as a trophy," she said before representatives of 95

countries participating in the Congress Against Fascism.

The Congress was announced on social media as follows: "On September 10 and 11, Venezuela will become the epicentre of the fight against fascism, neo-fascism, and all manifestations of hatred. The first World Anti-Fascism Congress brings together more than 300 delegates from 95 countries around the world."

*Telesur* ✳

**CFMEU**

**888**

Written and designed by:  
*Cher Jar Zou*

**Across;**

- 2.** Flag Australian unions often use (6)
- 4.** Communist, MP and unionist (4-8)
- 5.** For workers, the lowest of the low (4)
- 7.** Union currently in need of solidarity (5)
- 8.** Ordinary union members (4-3-4)
- 10.** Demonstration at entrance of workplaces during a strike (6)

**Down;**

- 1.** Set aside by unions to support workers during stoppages(6-4)
- 3.** Nickname for waterfront workers/their union (8)
- 6.** Militant Predecessor to 7 across (3)
- 9.** Political party with habit of stabbing unions in the back (3)

# Black Alliance for Peace on the Uhuru 3

## Human Rights to Speech, Association, Information and Political Dissent

**Tampa, Florida, US: The process of jury selection on 3 September 2024, will mark the beginning of the federal trial of Omali Yeshitela, Chairman of the African People's Socialist Party (APSP); Penny Hess, Chair of the African People's Solidarity Committee (APSC); and Jesse Nevel, Chair of the Uhuru Solidarity Movement (USM), together known as the Uhuru 3.**

The Uhuru 3 were indicted by the US government in April 2023 on the absurd charges of being "agents of a foreign government." Charges very similar to the indictment of W.E.B. Dubois, the internationally known Black scholar and human rights defender. Dubois was eighty-one at the time of his indictment as a supposed agent of the Soviet Union for his anti-nuclear and pro-peace

advocacy. Omali Yeshitela is similarly eighty-one with an international standing as a human rights and anti-imperialist fighter for more than 60 years. The African People's Socialist Party and Uhuru Movement that he helped to found have been organising and advocating for African people and colonised peoples for over 50 years.

Ajamu Baraka, Chair of the Black Alliance for Peace's (BAP) Coordinating Committee who will be an official observer of the trial states that:

"It is only in the imagination of white supremacists that African people would need smart white people from Russia to guide our people and movement to oppose the US/EU/NATO proxy war against Russia and analyze and comment on all aspects of US foreign policy. Internationalism has always been a

core principle of our movement from the Garvey Movement and anti-fascist struggles of Africans in America and in Spain in the form of the Abraham Lincoln Brigades, as well as the International Friends of Ethiopia that opposed the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, to our support for the liberation movements in Cuba, Haiti, Africa, Central America, and Vietnam.

Omali Yeshitela is an outstanding product and an example of that tradition, which, among many other reasons, is why BAP gives its inexorable support to chairman Yeshitela, as well as to Penny Hess and Jesse Nevel, who embody the highest example of revolutionary solidarity with African people. Hess and Nevel have stood with us, and we intend to stand with them against the criminal repression that the Uhuru 3 are targets of."

BAP recognizes that the ridiculous charges leveled at the Uhuru 3 represent a shot across the bow of the radical Black movement. The US understands that if it is successful in containing Black opposition to the increasingly aggressive militarism abroad and repression within the borders of the US, the broader movement in the US will be more easily controlled.

BAP and our movement will not be intimidated. We recognise that the complete abandonment of constitutional and human rights by the US and other Western states represents an irreversible crisis of legitimacy. We will continue to stand in support of the right to resist as a core human right. ✪

## New German left party looks set to keep far-right from gaining power in Thuringia

**Sahra Wagenknecht and her new left-wing alliance, BSW, look set to keep the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) from gaining power in Thuringia – despite the AfD's victory in the recent state election.**

The success of the AfD in two state elections piled new pressure on Chancellor Olaf Scholz's struggling government.

Chancellor Scholz described the results as "worrying."

He said: "The AfD is damaging Germany.

"It is weakening the economy,

dividing society and ruining our country's reputation."

The AfD win in Thuringia was the first state victory by a far-right party in post-World War II Germany.

They won 32.8 per cent of the vote under one of its hardest-right figures, Bjorn Hocke.

The CDU was second with 23.6 per cent followed by the BSW on 15.8 per cent.

In neighbouring Saxony, the CDU won around 31.8 per cent, while the AfD secured around 31.4 per cent.

The vote share for the SPD was around 6 per cent in Thuringia and 7 per cent in Saxony.

Voters punished the three parties in Chancellor Scholz's governing coalition, which took well under 15 per cent of the vote between them.

Deep discontent with the national government's economic record, anti-immigration sentiment and scepticism towards military aid for Ukraine are among the factors that contributed to decimating the national coalition parties in eastern Germany.

The support of the BSW will be needed to form state governments since all the other main parties have said they were not prepared to govern with AfD.

Ms Wagenknecht told a news conference today that her party "have become a power factor in Germany."

She said the BSW has a mandate in both regions to help form governments that "really represent the people again."

She added: "It's very much food for thought for all the parties,

especially those who have governed at the federal and regional levels."

CDU lawmaker Jens Spahn told ZDF television that voters "want to send a signal to the [coalition] that the chancellor no longer has their confidence."

To create a majority the CDU would need help from the Left Party, which is descended from East Germany's communist party.

So far, they have refused to work with it.

Morning Star ✪

## New film to show Palestine censorship

A new film aims to expose how "secret censorship" is suppressing what people are allowed to see and hear about events in Palestine.

The documentary by Platform Films, which made *Oh Jeremy Corbyn – The Big Lie*, warns that censorship relating to Palestine is on the rise.

Producer Norman Thomas said that

Censoring Palestine will look at how the topic is silenced, from mainstream and social media to education, art and entertainment.

Thomas said: "In recent weeks we've seen a stand-up comic being cancelled for mentioning the name of Israel in a gag, paintings being dropped from an exhibition because their subject matter included Palestine, and a university rector being

dismissed after she made reference to genocidal attacks by Israel.

"But these are only a few cases which have hit the headlines – there's a lot more going on behind the scenes."

Thomas said the new film will investigate "secret censorship," which he calls "the worst kind."

He said: "This is ... the things you don't

know you're not being told, things which never get to the printed page, the screen or the stage."

Censoring Palestine will be released in October.

Morning Star ✪

## WORTH READING: ECCENTRIC CLASSICS

### *The Prince*

by Machiavelli

Machiavelli is mainly remembered by an adjective, 'machievellian,' describing people who are devious and self-serving, but his short readable book is a classic in people management, and is more about being realistic than ruthless. Machiavelli was writing at a time when wars between city states made life hell for a lot of Italians, and his book is an indirect rebuke to people who ignore actual material circumstances and try to govern by ideals alone.

### *Socialism: Scientific and Utopian*

by Engels

A small but dense book, this is an important one. The urge to be utopian is still with us – who hasn't looked at the way the world is arranged and thought "this could be so much better," and the world is still full of people who just announce great ideas as though announcing them will do the job of making them happen. Engels explains why that doesn't work and looks closely at a number of utopian socialists and goes way past just dismissing them. This book repays close study.

### *Foundations of Leninism*

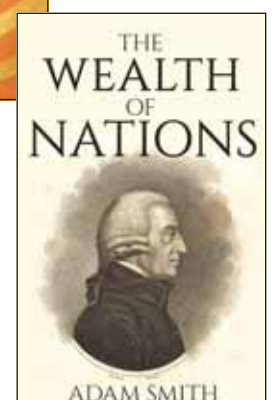
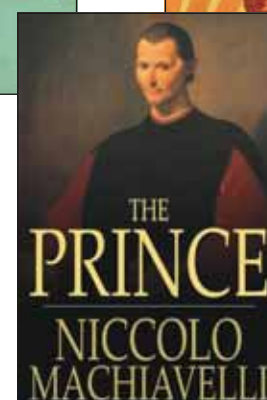
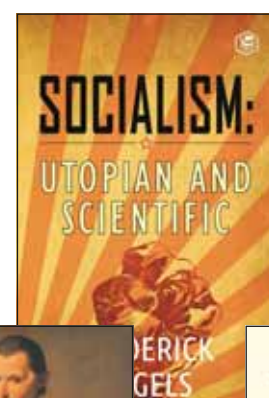
by Stalin

A classic communist text, this short book is refreshingly clear and easy to read compared to a lot of the other Marxist classics. Stalin doesn't pretend that he's going to cover everything that counts as 'Leninism,' but succinctly sums up such vital foundations as Democratic Centralism, the need for theory and practice, and the Party of the New Type. A must-read.

### *The Wealth of Nations*

by Adam Smith

Smith is now known for the 'invisible hand of the market' and is treated like a plaster saint by simplistic neoliberals who know nothing about his work apart from that selfishness will solve everything and competition is good (as with all too-good-to-be-true offers, conditions apply). There was much more to Smith than the simple version of him most people know, and Marx certainly read him and argued with him, so Smith is worth reading if only to see what Marx was disagreeing with.



# Macron turns his back on French democracy

William Briggs

**After 60 days without a government, France has one the people don't want. President Macron's refusal to accept the New Popular Front (NFP) choice for prime minister, Lucie Castets, has revealed both the contempt he has for the left and for the choice of the French people, but also exposes the bankruptcy of bourgeois democracy.**

The left-wing coalition won 190 seats in the election of July. Macron's Ensemble centrists have 160 and the far-right Marine Le Pen's National Rally (NR) won 140 seats.

Macron, as head of state, 'chooses' the prime minister but is not obliged to select the candidate presented by the biggest group. The left must rely on Macron's group to have Castets declared prime minister. By refusing to accept the right of the NFP to lead the government, Macron has led the country into disarray.

Macron's own party could only form government with the approval of either the far-right or from the left. While nobody has expressly stated that Macron and the Le Pen party could work together, there are few other options. Such a position would be an appalling sell-out of the wishes of most French people, including many who voted with Ensemble.

The NFP have called for mass protests at the position adopted by Macron. All participating parties and organisations in the NFP have agreed that the issue needs to be taken to the street, with the notable exception of the French Socialist

Party who are vacillating and are not expected to actively support the protest action. This will only embolden Macron who appears adamant that the left will not form government. Splitting the left would serve his interests admirably.

Macron argues that an NFP-led government would be unable to function. By this he means that it would simply not have the numbers in any no-confidence motion. What this means in reality is that Macron's electoral group would support the neo-fascists to bring down the NFP. The only winner in such a scenario would be the far-right RN and Le Pen. The French president has stated that his 'responsibility is that the country is not blocked nor weakened.' By not supporting the biggest group in the French assembly, Macron is doing exactly that; blocking and weakening the country.

The NFP has promised to be a strongly reforming government. It has pledged to abandon austerity budgets and to support programs that support the working class and the poor. This is anathema to both the centrists and the far-right and a dangerous alignment seems possible.

Macron took 60 days of political paralysis to decide to impose a 'centre-right' PM, Michel Barnier on the National Assembly. As PM, Barnier would be the creature of the far-right National Rally part.

The coming period for France will be an historic one. Already the last edifices of democracy are being pulled down. The peoples' wishes have been trampled upon. The left is rightly taking the issue to the people and to the streets. ✚



Photo: Jeanne Menjoulet - flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

## Japan's rising militarism

Zhang Junshe

**Recently, Japan's Ministry of Defence released its draft request for the defense budget for the fiscal year 2025. The request mentioned that the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) will undergo the largest organisational restructuring in over 60 years. This has drawn significant attention from international observers.**

The most notable adjustment is the removal of unit names containing the word "escort." For example, the Fleet Escort Force, which has overseen surface battle vessels and replenishment vessels for the past 63 years, will be abolished and replaced by the newly established Fleet Surface Force.

Under the reorganisation plan, the new Fleet Surface Force will

consist of three Surface Battle Groups, one Amphibious Mine Warfare Group and one Patrol Defense Group by the end of fiscal year 2025.

Although this move is ostensibly aimed at more effectively integrating the existing main naval vessels, it raises concerns among neighbouring countries in light of Japan's continued increases in defence spending and its ongoing efforts to bypass its "pacifist constitution."

According to Japan's Ministry of Defence, the purpose of establishing the three Surface Battle Groups is to respond to multiple emergencies simultaneously. To a certain extent, the "exclusively defense-oriented" nature of Japan's main maritime units is being further weakened.

This significant adjustment trend within the JMSDF inevitably evokes a term that has been buried in history – Combined

Fleet. The Combined Fleet was the strategic battle corps of the Imperial Japanese Navy that carried out aggressive operations in the far seas during the first half of the 20th century. It also served as the vanguard of Japan's invasion of East Asian countries.

It is evident that Japan is now seeking to build an offensive maritime strike force, enhance its military presence in neighbouring countries and maritime areas, strengthen its involvement in regional security affairs, and develop the capability to launch wars against potential opponents in three directions during wartime.

Additionally, Japan aims to be capable of executing pre-emptive attacks and conducting amphibious landing operations to invade other countries' territories once again. What is the difference between such a Fleet Surface Force and the

Combined Fleet of the Imperial Japanese Navy?

As the source of war in Asia during World War II and a defeated nation, Japan adopted a "peace constitution" and an "exclusively defence-oriented" policy after the war, which stipulate that Japan is not allowed to have offensive military forces. Its military forces can only be used for self-defence, and are referred to as the Self-Defence Forces. However, within Japan, militaristic thinking has not been completely eradicated.

In recent years, the Japanese government has made deliberate efforts and used various tricks to break free from both the "pacifist constitution" and the "exclusively defence-oriented" policy. It has vigorously developed offensive military capabilities, and introduced advanced fighter jets and Cruise missiles from the US.

Japan is also actively cooperating with US geostrategy, increasing its military presence in the Asia-Pacific region and around the world and seeking various excuses to continuously send troops overseas.

Through some seemingly small changes, Japan is attempting to covertly accumulate military strength, gradually shedding the restrictions of the "pacifist constitution," seeking recognition as a world political and military power and striving to be "a normal country."

This approach has been a long-standing tactic employed by Japan's right-wing forces. History tells us that Asian countries and the international community should remain vigilant regarding Japan's military and security trajectories.

Global Times ✚

## Student pressure: support from Palestine

A statement, from the Boycott Department of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

**The Democratic Front's Boycott Department praises student training camps in Europe for achieving the withdrawal of Israeli investments from universities.**

The Boycott Department of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) is organising four-week training camps in a number of European universities aimed at strengthening the student movement's capacity to begin studying mechanisms

for withdrawing Israeli investments from universities and adopting the necessary strategies against repression from European and American security authorities.

The training camp program will begin from 17 September to 16 October, and comes in rejection of the decision of some universities that began to dismantle student camps supporting the Palestinian cause, and against the genocide carried out by Israel in the Gaza Strip against the Palestinian people, and in rejection of the Israeli attacks in the West Bank and occupied Jerusalem, after interventions from politicians and organizations supporting the Israeli entity.

The Boycott Department of the Front confirms that the student movement has begun to chart a path for itself to promote humanity in light of the silence of the international community and the complicity of some governments that claim to defend human rights against free peoples, especially the Palestinian people, whose rights are violated daily in front of the cameras without any intervention by the occupation army.

The Boycott Committee believes that student movements have the right to have their own demands by calling on their universities to stop academic and economic support for Israeli universities that provide

the Israeli occupation forces with security, technological and economic studies with the aim of killing the Palestinian people.

The Boycott Department of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, while appreciating the student movements in all Western countries, also calls on all Arab and Palestinian communities and all those who care about humanity and its values to participate in and support the student camps, with the aim of showing the extent of the human suffering experienced by the Palestinian people in all places where they are present. ✚

# Sudan – the world’s largest displacement crisis

Bev Hall

**Conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Response Forces (RSF), has led to a devastating humanitarian catastrophe. Escalating from April 2023, the conflict has led to over nine million people being either internally or externally displaced, many fleeing to neighbouring countries, making this the world’s largest displacement crisis.**

Access to food, water and medical supplies is severely restricted, with as many as 2.5 million facing starvation, according to a Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) report which also details human rights abuses including sexual violence, arbitrary detentions, along with attacks on civilian infrastructure. United Nations experts warn of signs of genocide.

The *Sudan Tribune* has reported Human Rights Watch (HRW) as declaring that the SAF and RSF are both responsible for widespread war crimes and other atrocities in Sudan’s current conflict. Over 20,000 innocent civilians have died so far in the conflict, the result of a dispute between two generals over the process of a return to a democratic Sudan.

Human rights groups have renewed calls for an expansion of the arms embargo in Sudan, amid concerns that weapons manufacturers are exploiting this dire situation. Amnesty International (AI) has detailed the involvement of arms manufacturers, for example, supplying blank guns and cartridges that are possibly being “converted into lethal weapons in Sudan on a large scale, indicating the need for closer scrutiny of this largely unregulated trade.”

The United Nations Security Council is expected to decide on 11 September whether to renew the Sudan sanctions regime, which



A refugee camp in Chad. Photo: Voice of America – (CC0)

prohibits the transfer of military equipment to the Darfur region, the stronghold of RSF under General Hemeti.

“A countrywide arms embargo would contribute to addressing these issues by facilitating the monitoring of transfers to Darfur, preventing the legal acquisition of weapons for use in other parts of Sudan,” according to HRW.

Meanwhile the Sudanese government, under General Burhan and the SAF, being forced from Khartoum to Port Sudan, has opposed an expansion of the arms embargo, and in recent months lobbied members of the Security Council to end the sanctions regime and remove the Darfur embargo altogether.

The United Nations says the war has triggered the “world’s worst hunger crisis”. Five million Sudanese people are dealing with “emergency levels of hunger.”

The organisation UN Women has been assisting Sudanese women, including those in exile with basic needs and argues that women should have a prominent role in any dispute resolution process.

Hadia Hasaballah, president of the Guardians Organization, speaking at a recent conference

in Kampala, Uganda, stressed the urgent need to prioritise a ceasefire and safe corridors to address the humanitarian crisis.

“We must agree on an arms embargo across Sudan and make practical arrangements to protect civilians and deliver aid to those affected,” she said.

Even before the war started, Sudan was one of the poorest countries in the world. Its 46 million people in 2022 were living on an average annual income of AU\$1,000 per head. The conflict has made the situation much worse. Last year, the economy shrank by 40 per cent, according to Sudan’s finance minister.

South Sudan has diplomatically remained a bystander during all the hostilities.

In Australia, the ABC has reported that the federal government has spent \$33.45 million in aid to Sudan since April 2023. A grand total of 227 permanent visas have been granted to Sudanese nationals under Australia’s offshore Humanitarian Program.

To assist in this ‘forgotten’ conflict, Australians should consider lending support to international agencies carrying out humanitarian relief in Sudan. ❖

## Solidarity after US takes Venezuelan presidential plane

**The Venezuelan Foreign Affairs Ministry has denounced the illegal confiscation by the United States of the plane used by Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro.**

“The Department of Justice [DoJ] announced the seizure of a Dassault Falcon 900EX aircraft, which was confiscated in the Dominican Republic and transferred to the Southern District of Florida at the request of the United States based on violations of US export control laws and sanctions,” the US DoJ claimed.

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has rejected the confiscation of the Venezuelan presidential plane and demanded its return to Caracas.

“We stand in solidarity with our Bolivarian friends in their legitimate demands to return what was stolen from the Venezuelan state,” the Russian Ministry said, noting that the excesses in the sanctions policy applied by Washington “have no limits.”

“Once again, there has been a total disregard for international legal norms,” it added, emphasising that the United States has sent a new signal that it can appropriate the assets of other sovereign states.

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega also showed

his support for the Bolivarian nation after the arbitrary confiscation of a plane valued at US\$13 million.

“In our Latin America, we are facing an onslaught from the US empire, which wants to overthrow governments simply because they do not submit to it. Now we see how they have acted and continue to act against the sister Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,” he said.

“The Venezuelan people want peace, but [the US wants] to turn it into a hell just to steal Venezuela’s oil ... That has been the practice of the imperialists,” Ortega stressed.

Evo Morales, former president of Bolivia and leader of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS), also expressed his solidarity with the Venezuelan government and people.

“Once again, the USA steals a plane belonging to the Venezuelan people. They think they own everything, but the whole world is starting to realise that their power is weakening. We condemn this theft and express our solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution’s administration,” wrote the Indigenous leader.

Telesur ❖



## Global Briefs

**ALGERIA:** 78-year-old Algerian president Abdelmajjid Tebboune won the presidential election held last Saturday with 94.65 per cent of the vote, according to the official count. Tebboune had the support of the National Liberation Front, the majority party in parliament which has ruled Algeria since independence from France in 1962. The Islamist candidate of the Movement for a Society for Peace (MSP) was second with 3.17 per cent of the vote. He was followed by the candidate of the Front des Forces Socialistes (FFS) with 2.15 per cent. Algeria is Africa’s largest country by area and has a population of 45 million people. It is Africa’s second most populous country after South Africa.

**WEST BANK:** 26-year-old US activist Ayşenur Ezgi Eygi succumbed to her wounds on 6 September after being shot by Israeli forces at a protest in Beita, to the south of Nablus. Headlines from Western mainstream media sources have already attempted to obscure who killed the solidarity activist, with CNN stating, “American activist shot dead during protest in West Bank, Palestinian officials say,” CBS News writing, “American woman Aysenur Eygi killed in Israeli-occupied West Bank, US confirms,” and BBC writing, “American activist shot dead in occupied West Bank.” The shooting occurred while Israeli forces were violently suppressing a weekly protest against an Israeli settlement. Israeli forces employed live ammunition, stun grenades, and tear gas. The Israeli attack also resulted in the injury of an 18-year-old Palestinian man via shrapnel.

**IRAN:** Iranian authorities are planning to relocate the country’s capital to the south, closer to the Persian Gulf. According to the Iranian president Masoud Pezeshkian, it is becoming impossible to keep Teheran as the capital for economic reasons and other difficulties. Teheran is often plagued by “water shortages, land subsidence, and air pollution,” the president said, describing the capital as “facing problems to which we have no solution.” He also stressed economic reasons for the move to the south, as key trading routes are there. “Further development of the country is impossible with the continuation of the current trend, when we bring the resources from the south of the country and the sea to the centre.”

**AFGHANISTAN:** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said that Afghanistan currently has more than three million internally displaced people and nearly 6 million refugees in nearby countries. Conflict is no longer the main cause of displacement. However, 3.2 million people remain displaced within the country and more than 6.82 million are registered refugees or in refugee-like situations in the region, mainly in Iran and Pakistan. The International Organisation for Migration reported that the number of people leaving Afghanistan to Iran and Pakistan increased by 11 per cent. According to the organisation’s figures, nearly 65,000 people returned from Iran and Pakistan last week, while more than 72,000 left for those countries.

**RUSSIA:** Russian president Vladimir Putin has been asked about his preferred candidate in the coming US elections. “Firstly, Biden recommended that all his supporters back Ms Harris. This is what we are going to do too – we are going to back her. Secondly, her laugh is expressive and contagious which means that she is doing just fine. Trump has imposed more sanctions on Russia than any other president has imposed before, and if Harris is doing just fine then perhaps she will refrain from such actions,” Putin said.

**US:** Former US president Donald Trump jokingly admitted that he was “very offended” by the Russian president’s support for his rival. “I know Putin, I knew him well. The other day he endorsed Kamala – I was very offended by that. I think it was done maybe with a smile,” Trump told supporters at a rally in Wisconsin.

# The strange case of Daniel Jadue

Vijay Prashad

**CHILE:** Daniel Jadue, the former mayor of Recoleta, a suburb of Santiago, opens the door to his modest home. It is late in the evening. He is as hospitable as ever, despite the fact that he looks tired after his 91 days in captivity at the Capitán Yáber prison annex. His living room, where we are sitting, is decorated with emblems of the Palestinian struggle, of memories of the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende (1970-1973), and of a range of figures of the Latin American left.

It was 4 September, so we had a moment to reflect that this was the day that Allende's coalition won the election of 1970. It was a sober moment. Much has changed in Chile since that day, with a long dictatorship (1973-1990) led by General Augusto Pinochet defining much of the country's culture. Jadue is happy to be home, even though he is under house arrest. "What did I do in prison?" he asks rhetorically in response to my question. "I read, I read a lot of books from ancient India such as the Upanishads." I imagine Daniel in his cell reflecting on the old Sanskrit line, *Sarve jana sukhino bhavantu*, "Let the people of the world be happy."

## PREVENTATIVE DETENTION

On 3 June, Judge Paulina Moya ruled that Jadue should be held in preventative detention for 120 days because of allegations about his role in what has been called the "People's Pharmacy Case" (*Caso Farmacias Populares*). The authorities in Chile began to investigate this case in 2021 based on a complaint made by the company Best Quality Products, which said that it had provided medical supplies to the Chilean Association of Municipalities with Popular Pharmacies (*Achifarp*). Best Quality said it had been paid part of the money it was owed and there was a million dollars in arrears. After a series of appeals to the courts by both sides, Best Quality decided to resume supplies because—as its lawyer Mario Vargas said, "We all recognise the social role that popular pharmacies have played."

When Daniel Jadue appeared before Judge Molina in 2024 (a year after the prosecutor filed charges against him), she sentenced him to prison not because he had been found guilty of any crime. He had to go to prison because an investigation continued that included him, in which the state prosecutor scrutinised records for tax fraud, bribery, and misuse of his mayoral office. Judge Moya said that Jadue's "freedom is dangerous for the security of society" not because there was proof that he had committed a crime but because if he had been guilty then as mayor he *might* continue to commit such crimes. Jadue responded that he was being judged for his role as mayor and chair of Achifarp and not for any personal corruption ("there is not a penny in my pocket"). Yet, despite this limited accusation against him, they sentenced him to the maximum possible period in preventative detention.

## PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT

Daniel Jadue won the election to become Recoleta's mayor first in 2012 and then won re-election three times. When he ran in the primary during the presidential campaign



Daniel Jadue speaking at a women's event, August 2017. Photo: Vocería de Gobierno – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

in 2021, he secured 40 per cent of the vote. The faith of the public in Jadue comes from his promise to revive public services in Chile and from his actions during his mayoralty to do just that. Since the coup against Allende in 1973, Chile has been a laboratory for neoliberal policies, with the private sector able to absorb public functions, from education to health care. It has made immense profits from the provision of these services. As an example, three pharmaceutical providers (Cruz Verde, Salcobrand, and Farmacias Ahumada) control almost all of the supply of medicines into the privately controlled pharmacy network in the country. They have frequently been fined for collusion and price fixing. The result of the latter is inflation in prices for basic drugs that eats into the budgets of the masses. A promise to reverse that situation faces a challenge from the pharmaceutical lobby and raises the hopes of people who would like to see better control of prices. The Pharma lobby had stifled any political challenge until Jadue came along in Recoleta.

When I first interviewed Jadue in 2021, he told me how he decided to build a network of small-scale institutions to start an experiment in Recoleta. In 2016, the city stopped a contract with the private Servitrans company for cleaning services and set up Jatu Newen, a cooperative of cleaners. Two years later, the municipality set up a 'People's Real Estate Agency,' which planned to settle 38 working-class families in a building with three-bedroom apartments and then to expand the project gradually to end homelessness in Recoleta. Against the tide of private universities, the municipality created the Open University of Recoleta in 2018 to

make education available to the very poorest students. Lastly, in 2015, the municipality set up a popular pharmacy – named after a pharmacy student and communist militant Ricardo Silva Soto who had been killed by the dictatorship in 1987 in Recoleta – to provide reasonably priced drugs. This pharmacy project expanded to include opticians, and a bookstore and a music store. The popular library is named after Pedro Lemebel, the gay Communist writer who died in 2015. The entire project in Recoleta was premised on putting people before the profit motive.

Jadue decided to run for president in 2021 so that he could try to combine the utopian energy of the popular uprisings of 2011 and 2019 for better public services and a different Chile with the concrete practices of Recoleta. The Recoleta experiment, in other words, provided the actual possibility of meeting the desires of large sections of Chile's people who did not want to continue with a policy framework that rewards large private corporations and imposes austerity on working people. "This is my hope," Jadue told me in 2021. "The aspirations of the people of Chile can be met. We have shown that in a small-scale way in Recoleta. It was in Chile that neoliberalism was born. We must bury it in Chile."

## PUNISHED FOR DISOBEDIENCE

"I am being punished not for any crime that I committed," Jadue told me on 4 September 2024. "I am being punished for being disobedient, for being against the neoliberal consensus in Chile." The key issue here is the pharmacy project. After the Ricardo Silva

Soto pharmacy opened, the idea of popular pharmacies spread across Chile. Now, about 190 municipalities have some form of popular pharmacy. The association Achifarp that Jadue led for a time is the outcome of the spread of these popular pharmacies. The existence of this process put pressure not only on Chile's wide spectrum of social democrats but also on the hard right. Then-president Sebastián Piñera, for instance, had to allow Drug Law II to be drafted and moved through the legislature that would begin to regulate Big Pharma, and he inaugurated a website in 2018 (Tu Farmacia) that would allow people to compare drug prices. A new dynamic had appeared in Chile. It is this dynamic that provoked the campaign against Jadue.

During his time in custody, Jadue was removed from his post as mayor (his replacement is Fares Jadue, no relation, but also a Communist Party member). Since he was no longer mayor, the basis for Jadue's preventative detention ended. Judge Paula Brito, therefore, accepted the defence appeal for Jadue, and he was moved to house arrest. But she did not stop there. She chastised the authorities for taking the extreme step of incarcerating him for 91 days (a strange decision by the authorities since Jadue had collaborated with the prosecutor in good faith from the beginning of the case).

The case is not over. "I want to fight the case," Jadue told me. "I will be vindicated. The project of popular pharmacies will be vindicated. We will not allow them to punish us because we disobeyed the neoliberal consensus."

Globetrotter ✪

**It was in Chile that  
neoliberalism was born.  
We must bury it in Chile.**

# Zapatista's 30-year struggle

Graham Holton

The announcement of the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) agreement between Mexico, Canada and the USA came into force on 1 January 1994. That day, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), or Zapatistas, seized large landholdings and occupied towns across the state of Chiapas, which borders Guatemala. Armed with makeshift guns, the masked Mayan peasant guerrilla movement, with Marxist-Leninist elements, demanded land rights, self-governance and the democratisation of Mexico. The EZLN created 43 Zapatista Rebel Autonomous Municipalities (MAREZ) governed by communal boards within an autonomous political system.

The EZLN proclaimed that private property was the root cause of Mayan dispossession, state violence, and environmental destruction. Land must therefore be held "in common." The EZLN called upon the Mexican people to support its struggle for "work, land, housing, food, healthcare, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice, and peace." The Zapatistas soon gained worldwide support for their stand against global capital and its support of indigenous sovereignty.

The *ejido* is an organisation of indigenous communal property owners whose land rights were established in the post-Mexican Revolution land reforms of the 1920s. The *ejidatarios* supported the Zapatistas' re-appropriation of land and the establishment of an autonomous, communal system of government. To thwart the Zapatista revolution, they were attacked by the state and paramilitary forces. The government of Carlos Salinas de Gortari sent 17,000 paramilitaries against 5,000 poorly armed Zapatistas in rebel-held territories. The Zapatistas have not used arms since then – until now.

The Zapatistas accuse President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, elected in 2018 as a centre-left populist, of turning a blind eye to the military's human rights abuses and armed attacks. Two Zapatistas were detained on fabricated charges. One was tortured and unlawfully held for three years. The government has encouraged both non-Zapatistas and former Zapatistas to lay claim to the territories recuperated by the EZLN



Zapatista embroidery. "We salute all the Women of Mexico and the World." Photo: Lorena – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

in 1994, creating conflict within communities.

Under López Obrador, the military has been empowered, and the paramilitaries have reappeared. Thirteen new National Guard barracks have been built across Chiapas. Recent information leaks, from Mexico's Ministry of National Defense (SEDENA), show that the Zapatistas are spied on continuously. The military is concerned that the EZLN will disrupt major infrastructure projects, which the movement has denounced for destroying local ecosystems and the ways of life of indigenous communities.

According to the 2023 Fray Bartolomé Human Rights Center report, *Chiapas, a Disaster*, between 2010 and 2022 at least 16,755 people in the state of Chiapas were forcibly displaced. In May 2024 eleven people were massacred, bringing the total killed in the conflicts since 1994 to nearly 1,000 deaths. According to one account, Chiapas is "on the brink of civil war." The cities are in chaos, "with roadblocks, assaults, kidnappings, extortion, forced recruitment, [and] shootouts."

Armed incursions by drug cartels threaten indigenous sovereignty. The Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels are fighting for control of the Guatemala border, affecting the daily life of the indigenous communities. The EZLN struggles to maintain order against the paramilitaries who employ cartel hitmen. A human rights worker told *InSight Crime* that criminal groups "use the civilian population as a shield." Chiapas ranks twenty-sixth out of thirty-two states in terms of homicides per one hundred thousand inhabitants. In November 2023, to create

greater stability in the region, the EZLN announced it would dismantle the old organising structure by decentralising power and communalising indigenous land use. Tasks would now be handled by the communities and their autonomous structures. Rebrii writes: "For the Zapatistas, revolution is a trial-and-error process without an end."

So far this year, 12,771 have fled from 5,000 armed troops in Yajalón and the Tila municipality in the Sierra Madre mountain range. The towns were left empty, creating the largest displacements in southern Mexico in years. In Tila, armed groups burnt homes and vehicles, murdered and raped villagers. The military later escorted the displaced people back to Tila.

In June, President Obrador said the conflict in Tila was "a confrontation between the people themselves, because they have not been able to harmonise." On 22 June, a leader of a group opposed to the *ejidatarios* was found tortured and murdered. The Catholic Church is attempting to mediate the conflict, but some residents see it as compromised. According to one resident interviewed by *Truthdig*, the Catholic church and NGOs are "complicit, working with the municipality."

President López Obrador will leave office in September 2024, leaving behind a militarised Chiapas fighting an internal, violent low-intensity conflict. Thirty years after the EZLN uprising, land continues to foster displacement, dispossession and division within communities. The military are still feared and the government continues to break its promises. The Zapatistas continue to influence the balance of power and social dynamics within Mexico. ✪

## WEASEL WORDS

### Meaningfully

A *Guardian* contributor wrote to the Victorian government about its approval of the Enterprise gas field in the face of the best science available telling us we can't afford more fossil fuel projects. In reply came several hundred weaselly words assuring them that having more gas somehow didn't mean there would be more gas, as well as using the drug dealer's defence (if people don't get the gas from us, they'll get it from someone else).

One particularly weaselly word stood out: 'meaningfully.'

"The approval of the Enterprise project is not expected to meaningfully increase Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions because it will not increase fossil gas demand"

Just because there's more of a climate-change-causing substance around, doesn't mean more people will use it? Makes you wonder why they bother extracting the stuff.

The people who are getting the gas out of the ground think there's 352 kilotonnes of Liquefied Petroleum Gas there. It's very meaningful to them.

### Axis

Not the ones you had to study in maths classes at school, 'axis' is an old favourite. It just always means a group of countries that have been deemed evil. Italy, Japan, and Germany were an axis during WW2. They were genuinely evil and also were in a real alliance, but the good thing about the word is that the countries concerned don't have to actually be working together.

'Axis' got its first weaselly outing after 9/11, when US president George W Bush talked about "the axis of evil" as though Iran, Iraq, and the DPRK were in a genuine team-up like something from a superhero comic. Keeping up with Bush's love of alliteration, the latest axis is "an authoritarian axis" that US think-tanker Thomas Mahnken has described as a reason for the US preparing to fight three wars at once.

### Normative

Usually a word for professional philosophers, for whom 'normative' means something that relates to 'shoulds' and 'oughts.' Neoliberal economist Milton Friedman said that economics should be independent of normative judgements, meaning it didn't matter if his brand of economics led to massive human suffering (it did). For weaselly writers wanting to be more impressive, 'normative' makes them look smarter.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong has said that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the TPNW, has 'substantial normative value.' Also Australia will never sign this treaty because we don't want to do anything the United States won't do. So in Wong-speak "substantial normative value" means "that's nice, but yeah nah."

### Inflammatory

Like 'divisive' or 'controversial,' 'inflammatory' can be used weaselishly to say that someone's views or comments are bad without actually spelling out why or how they're bad. People use 'divisive' to bad-mouth comments on areas on which we're all pretty divided already. Treasurer Jim Chalmers has said that the Reserve Bank's interest rate calls are "smashing the economy." Former Treasurer Peter Costello, retired after a lifetime of putting the boot in, finds this "inflammatory." What's inflamed exactly? Will there be a civil war between the government and the bank? Don't hold your breath.

### Union business (not)

ACTU Secretary Sally McManus has listed a gaggle of allegations against CFMEU officials, admitting that they haven't been proven, and then said that "None of this is union business." Indeed perpetrating corruption, intimidation and crime isn't union business, although fighting against it is. Supporting an undemocratic and lawless administration which will absolutely be used by employers and the Coalition to attack other workers isn't union business either, so we're not sure if McManus has the hang of this term.

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# US nuclear-armed B-52H bombers to be based in Australia

William Briggs

**Once more the Albanese government has made it clear that the interests of Australia, its sovereignty and independence, are irrelevant. The interests and security of the Australian people and the region come a very poor second to the government's commitment to the USA. There is only one interest worth pursuing and that is the US 'alliance.'**

It has just been revealed that the Albanese government has given the green light for American B-52H Stratofortress bombers to be based at Tindal RAAF base in the Northern Territory. What is significant about these bombers is that they are capable of carrying and deploying strategic nuclear weapons.

The US-funded expansion of the Tindal base radically alters the status quo. By hosting nuclear-weapons capable B-52 aircraft, and providing extensive operational mission support, Australia will, for the first time in history, be giving support for potential combat-missions using nuclear weapons.

Any government that even pretends to have the interests of the people at heart would demand the right to know whether the bombers are nuclear armed or not. A statement from the Albanese government waived this right, saying that it both "understands and respects" the US doctrine to neither confirm or deny the presence of nuclear weapons on US aircraft.

This revelation was made in a report for the Nautilus Institute, a progressive public policy think tank that seeks to address critical security and sustainability issues with a view to promoting a peaceful future. The authors, academics Vince Scappatura and Richard Tanter have produced a detailed, reliable and transparent document. Their research came from readily accessible open sources. The government, however, failed to take advantage of these same sources. They owed it to the people of this country to do so and to let us know where we are being led.

Under current Australian law, there is no legal or even policy barrier that might limit US aircraft carrying nuclear weapons from entering the country. The 'respect' that our government gives the US for not feeling any obligation to confirm that Australia is aiding and abetting potential nuclear strikes from an Australian airforce base is out of step with how things play out in other countries. To cite just one important example, the USA, under the conditions of the New Start Treaty that came into force in 2011, is obliged to provide Russia with just the sort of information that our government feels it cannot ask for.

The report is particularly relevant because it takes away a degree of the unknown that goes with a refusal to be 'straight' with an ally. Scappatura and Tanter offer an explanation of how

nuclear capable aircraft can be identified. The term 'Visual Guide' is used. As the report says, this "Visual Guide applies strict classification and confidence criteria to open-source photography to identify each B-52H bomber in the US Air Force active fleet as nuclear-capable or conventional-only." This is important, but our government has wilfully chosen to ignore and deny its significance. After all, if your valued "friend and ally" is not prepared to be open with you, it would seem reasonable to make a few checks of your own. That is not about to happen.

When Minister for Defence, Richard Marles, can fawningly and publicly say to his American counterpart, Lloyd Austin, at the recent AUSMIN meeting that "we could not be happier with the extent of your presence in the Indo-Pacific. It's been wonderful – genuinely wonderful – and for that, we thank you ... but of course, your alliance with us is completely central to our worldview, to our national security," then we all know just how craven our government has become.

Things were not always this way. In the 1970s, during the prime ministership of the conservative Malcolm Fraser, a strong sense of national sovereignty existed. The USA was welcome to use Australian bases but a 'Fraser Model' or code of conduct was put in place. It was a simple case of the US being required to inform us about what sort of armaments their aircraft were carrying. The protocol had a clause that made it necessary for the government to them keep the people informed. How scrupulous the 'truth-telling' might have been is another matter but the intent was there.

The report points out that the Fraser government made it a condition of the alliance that B-52 operations in Australia, including landings in Darwin, were approved on the express condition that they be "unarmed and carried no bombs."

The Albanese government in its subservience to the dictates of America has made a stark choice. Scappatura and Tanter make it clear things need not be that way. Their report provides essential information regarding the nuclear capability of the B-52 bombers that will be using Tindal base. The government should have made this information available to the public. It should be obliged to share this with the other signatory states of the Treaty of Rarotonga. These Pacific Island nations, so patronisingly referred to by Australia as the "Pacific family" along with Australia, signed a treaty in 1985, committing each state and the region to maintaining a nuclear-free status as part of a campaign for a nuclear-weapons free world.

Our government could have done what the authors of the report did, but it pointedly failed to do so. It is one more damning indictment, not merely of the subservience of our government to the USA, but shows of just how far to the right mainstream Australian political structures have moved. ✪



B-52H Stratofortress. Photo: Alan Wilson – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

## Young people reject AUKUS

According to a US Studies Centre poll, obtained by *Crikey*, only 14 per cent of people aged 18-34 strongly agreed that it's a good idea for Australia to have nuclear-powered submarines. The number goes up for the 35-64 age group, in which 17 per cent strongly agreed.

Overall, 52 per cent of those polled thought AUKUS would give Australia no choice about joining the US in armed conflict. 39 per cent of respondents overall thought AUKUS wasn't worth the expense involved (\$368 billion at least).

The report's co-author, Ava Kalinauskus described the results as unsurprising, telling *Crikey* that young people "are more likely to care about issues like climate change rather than defence or security."

We're not so sure that the 62 per cent of young people who think AUKUS is a bad idea don't care about defence and security. A lot of people – not all of them young – are against AUKUS *because* they care about our security and defence. AUKUS makes the country less secure and harder to defend.

FK

**Any government that pretends to have the interests of the people at heart would demand to know if the bombers were nuclear armed**



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