



# US-Australian bombing plans No to invasion of Syria!

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has announced that Australia is about to join the US in bombing Syria. There is a great deal of speculation about where the idea came from. It had already been floated by Liberal backbencher Dan Tehan who heads the Parliament's intelligence and security committee. The PM claims the suggestion came from Barack Obama a few weeks ago when they were having a phone conversation. The US president was pressing Australia's final endorsement of the sovereignty-destroying Trans-Pacific Partnership. Fairfax media reported leaks from senior government sources that Abbott had pestered the US for such an invitation.

The move to bomb Syria by the US and its allies is along the lines of Obama's 2011 "humanitarian intervention" in Libya which saw the real intended outcome: the toppling of the Gaddafi government. The current intention on Syria is in fact invasion from the air. Military personnel on the ground from the US-Australia invading forces are there to help facilitate regime change by the terrorist forces that have been unleashed and given impetus by those planning the air invasion.

In September 2014, when Abbott announced that the Australian military would be returning to Iraq, he avoided giving a direct answer as to whether Australia would join the US in bombing Syria too.

Regardless of the origins of the idea, Australia's involvement in yet another US war suits Abbott and the Pentagon.



RAAF set to join the US in bombing Syria.

As the president is claimed to have told Abbott from aboard Air Force One, the Pentagon would look kindly on a decision by the Australian government to extend its military's bombing operations into Syria.

For Abbott, an extension of the war would also be a major distraction from issues worrying voters as the next federal election approaches. Former independent member for

New England, Tony Windsor, spoke for many when he discussed Tony Abbott's motivations and what they mean for the rest of us during an appearance on ABC TV's Q&A program last week. "I remember him saying 'I will do anything to get this job'. So, it was about getting the job. And I'm sure I think we are seeing it being played out now with the possibility of war in Syria. To me, that's more about keeping the job than actually putting up an argument to take this country to another war," Windsor said.

Of course, the reasons given for considering the "invitation" to bomb Syria include accounts of IS's continued military progress and its atrocities. The bombing of Iraq has achieved little in that regard but it has contributed to a crisis of more than three million internally displaced Iraqis.

When asked about the legality of entering Syria against the wishes or the internationally recognised government of President Bashar al-Assad, the PM stated nonsensically: "The terrorists don't respect the border, so why should we?" he said. So, we follow the lead of the terrorists.

People are starting to see through the "right to protect" camouflage the US usually deploys in these situations. Every country that the US intervenes in to protect "democracy" and "security", descends into chaos and uncertainty. The only predictable result is that functioning and independently-minded sovereign nations are dismembered and converted into a bunch of warring fiefdoms whose desperation "cries out" for great powers to come in and restore "normality". The secular government of Syria is a prime candidate for this sort of treatment. Russia and China are bigger challenges but, ultimately, are targets for the same strategy.

The people of the world want peace. They want the redressing of historical injustices and economic progress. They don't want to be washed up on the shores of foreign countries as refugees. They don't want imperialist powers determining the course of development of their homelands. Australians must speak up now to prevent our involvement in the next stage of this criminal, illegal aggression. ✖

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# Guardian

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## Who won WW2?

During and shortly after WW2, people had no doubt that the main area of conflict was the Russian front. The most troops, the most weapons, the greatest battles, the greatest destruction of German military forces, it was all on the Russian front. Consider the statistics: a total of 607 Nazi divisions were destroyed or captured on that front, representing 80 percent of the Wehrmacht's strength. That is three and a half times more than the Nazis lost on all the other war fronts – in North Africa, Italy and Western Europe – combined.

The road to Berlin was a long and hard one. There was fierce fighting for 1,418 days and nights along a front varying in length from 3,000 to 6,200 kilometres, as well as behind the lines in enemy-occupied territories.

The Soviet people paid a high price for victory over fascism: every minute of the war, they lost nine lives, 587 lives every hour and 14,000 lives every day. Two out of every five persons killed during the Second World War was a Soviet citizen. On top of deaths on an unimaginable scale, the country also suffered unprecedented material damage, to the tune of a staggering US\$485 billion.

It had taken the Soviet people a decade to overcome the devastation of WWI and the Civil War before they could begin the momentous task of industrialising the country and building socialism. They had had little more than a decade of that reconstruction before they were invaded by the Nazis. Such was the strength of the new society however that despite such colossal losses, they not only won through to victory but in the process they liberated some 113 million people in lands west of the Soviet Union.

Ever since Churchill launched the Cold War in 1946, Western propaganda has assiduously promoted the myth that D-Day alone brought victory over Nazi Germany, that the USA won WW2, that the Russian front was basically a side-show. The recent anniversary of VE Day has seen that propaganda campaign ramped up exponentially. Even the USSR's 26 million war dead – a figure so staggering as to be almost inconceivable – are largely ignored in the West. There is no propaganda line that can turn that to the advantage of the West, so it is simply ignored, buried, hopefully to be forgotten.

Harry Truman, who would succeed Franklin Roosevelt as US President, bluntly if tactlessly expressed the policy of US capitalism after Germany invaded the USSR in 1941: "when Russia is winning, we should support Germany, when Germany is winning we should support Russia." The people disagreed, and in Britain and the USA – and here in Australia – they marched to demand the urgent opening of the Second Front (the first being the one in Russia).

The capitalist powers, however, were in no rush to aid their Soviet ally. Their class interests took priority. Churchill and his US allies delayed opening the Second Front, invading first of all North Africa, then Sicily and then Italy, leaving the majority of Axis troops free to continue fighting in Russia. D-Day did not become a firm commitment until they were faced with the likelihood that if they delayed any longer, when they landed in Normandy they would be greeted by Russian soldiers busy liberating France.

Churchill had not been shy about appealing to Stalin for the Red Army to begin virtually every offensive ahead of schedule in order to assist Anglo-American military operations. Despite cogent reasons (such as the cost in human lives) for sticking to their plans, the Russians agreed every time to advance their offensives so as to relieve pressure on their allies.

Today, you are hard put to even find a mention of the Russian contribution to defeating Hitler. Capitalism's relentless rewriting of history must not be allowed to cover up the truth about who really won the war against fascism. It was the Soviet Union, in a victory made possible by the superiority of socialism.

### PRESS FUND

Some people have described as a farce last week's raid on Melbourne's CBD by newly armed and uniformed Australian Border Force officers. But the raid was no comedy. It gave the Border Force the new role of a police force entitled to accost and interrogate citizens on Australian streets. Not surprisingly, the raid was greeted frostily by the Victorian Police, and ordinary citizens were enraged. That's undoubtedly why it was cancelled, even though the Abbott government has cowardly blamed one of its own publicity officers. Are you concerned about this new development? So are we! But we need your help by way of Press Fund donations, to follow up this very important story, so if you possibly can, please send us something for the next edition. Many thanks to this week's supporters, as follows:

Mark Mannion \$5, Peter Reed \$100, "Round Figure" \$15  
This week's total: \$120 Progressive total: \$4,810

# "Operation Fortitude" - a wake up call

There was a rapid response to a press release issued by the Australian Border Force (ABF) last Friday (August 28). Hundreds of angry protesters quickly gathered outside Flinders Street Station in Melbourne to protest against the ABF's Operation Fortitude. Last Friday's turn of events was a wake-up call to all left and democratic forces in Australia and to the wider community.

"ABF officers will be positioned at various locations around the CBD speaking with any individual we cross paths with," ABF Regional Commander Victoria and Tasmania, Don Smith said.

"You need to be aware of the conditions of your visa; if you commit visa fraud you should know it's only a matter of time before you're caught out," Smith added.

The press release said ABF was part of an inter-agency operation to "target crime" in the CBD of Melbourne.

Just in case the point was not clear, the press release continued: "The inter-agency outfit will continue to work together on an ongoing basis to target crime in and around the Melbourne CBD to make the city a safer place for everyone."

The ABF was officially formed in July this year with the full support of the Labor Opposition. The departments dealing with immigration and customs were merged to form the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

The ABF is a fully armed paramilitary outfit, operating under the command of Commissioner Roman Quaedvlieg. Immigration and Border Protection Minister Dutton claimed proudly, "... secrecy provisions in the department are in line with partner and like agencies such as the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Defence Force".

No one has explained why customs and immigration officers would be preventing crime in the city centre. That is the responsibility of police.

So who would they stop? What would happen if someone did not have a visa on them? After all there is no requirement in Australia to carry



Protesters outside Flinders Street Station in Melbourne.

**The operation has all the dressings of a crude, highly visible exercise in the promotion of racial profiling aimed at Muslims.**

ID papers. What was the purpose of this exercise?

These and many other questions remain unanswered. The operation has all the dressings of a crude, highly visible exercise in the promotion of racial profiling aimed at Muslims. The press release also carries an implied link between Muslims and criminal activity, otherwise why would immigrations officers be required?

Neither Border Protection Minister Peter Dutton nor the PM Tony Abbott had answers. The ABF's response was to imply the media had misreported the stated intent of the operation. Tony Abbott tried to dismiss the whole incident saying, "All sorts of press releases go out all the time".

Dutton who, like Royal Commissioner Heydon, apparently doesn't read emails tried to duck the fact he had been sent a copy twice.

### Political exercise

Asked about the Melbourne issue on the Friday, NSW Police Minister Troy Grant stated that "the Border

Force already engages in NSW ... they do a range of stuff. So it's just Victoria catching up." After the operation was cancelled he issued a denial and qualification. Labor leader Bill Shorten not only failed to condemn it on the Friday, but said, "Labor obviously believes in targeting crime".

Clearly this was not a genuine exercise in catching people who have committed "visa fraud". If it were, it would not have been preceded by a public announcement enabling offenders to take cover. There are strong similarities with the way in which the media is present when raids on the homes of "terrorists" are carried out.

There can be little doubt that this was a political exercise from an extremely reactionary government, one of the most reactionary governments Australia has ever had. Abbott is playing the anti-Muslim/security/terrorist card and intends to do so right up to the next election.

He has the full support of his enabler Bill Shorten. ☘

## Website and Computers Appeal

The PA has launched a Special Appeal to buy a few computers and develop its website and social media – the latter now being an important way of reaching younger people. As everything, this costs money and our resources are stretched. We still need to raise more to meet our needs. We urge you to dig deep and support our fund-raiser. If you have just received a tax refund, perhaps you could share it with us.

### Website and Computers Appeal

Name/Organisation \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Contribution: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque/Money Order: make out to "Communist Party of Australia".

Credit card: sign, give name on card, card number & expiry date:  Visa  Mastercard

Name on the card \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

I agree /  I disagree to having my name published in *The Guardian*.

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

**Thank you for your support.**

# Horrors in offshore detention centres

Peter Mac

**Last week a former Nauru detention security guard testified he had seen male detainees gasping after experiencing the horrible waterboarding torture, and there are continuing reports of the rape and sexual assault of women, girls and young boys.**

Many of the guards are former soldiers, described by journalist Martin McKenzie-Martin as involved in a "hyper masculine and immature culture". They refer to the detainees by identification numbers, not by name.

The women detainees must take showers close to male guards, and must ask them for sanitary pads, because the management maintains they might be set alight and used as weapons during riots!

Morale collapsed within the centre last year after the government announced that no detainees would ever gain Australian citizenship. Incidents of rape, assault, self-harm and attempted suicide increased.

The Abbott government persuaded some detainees with refugee status to resettle on Nauru, offering them rudimentary education, employment and accommodation services. However, that generated bitter resentment among some Nauruan citizens who saw it as an act of favouritism for the "illegals".

Many resettled women have been attacked. One is dying in hospital after having been raped and beaten. She was left semi-conscious for hours before being discovered and taken to the police station and much later to hospital.

Another woman detainee was set on fire after being raped. Yet another found herself pregnant after an

attack. Deeply religious, she sought a termination but then attempted suicide after it was performed at a Brisbane hospital. She was then returned to Nauru.

Resettled women have spoken about the "50-dollar man", who rapes women and then drops a \$50 note onto their bodies. However, the Nauruan courts have recorded no convictions for assaults against detainees.

## The cover-up

The Australian Lawyers Alliance (ALA) claims that some crimes uncovered by the former Moss and Senate inquiries, including rape, assault, sexual assault, harassment and the trade of sexual favours for marijuana, were never reported to Comcare, the national work safety regulator.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) claims it reported 81 notifiable incidents over the last two financial years, but Comcare says it only received 79 reports.

A spokesperson for Connect, the company that organises accommodation and other resettlement services, stated. "We are not aware of any allegations of rape made either to the local police or through Connect's incident reporting process".

However, the Nauru police are notoriously corrupt and the courts subject to ministerial control, and the statement regarding the incident reporting process is only technically correct.

Under that process DIBP is required to report to Comcare, any "notifiable incident", including death, serious injury, or illness arising from a detention centre's operation. But not all notifiable incidents involve criminal behaviour, and notifiable

incidents don't have to be reported to Comcare unless the patient requires immediate treatment.

One reported case of sexual assault was described as involving "no serious injury or assault", i.e. not notifiable, so no action was taken. Seven other incidents were described as not notifiable because they "did not result from the conduct of the business or undertaking".

Transfield, the company running the offshore processing centres for a \$1.2 billion fee, has now confirmed there were 67 allegations of child abuse at Nauru, including 30 against members of staff.

An ALA spokesman also claims that cases of typhoid and tuberculosis were not reported, and that DIBP over-reports slight injuries to centre workers, but fails to report serious injuries or incidents affecting detainees.

Meanwhile the Papua New Guinea government is furious because three Australian guards at the Manus Island detention centre who were accused of having drugged and raped a PNG nurse were repatriated before a formal investigation took place.

The DIBP has merely described the event as "inconsistent with expected behaviours and contrary to the service providers' code of conduct".

## The bigger picture

Only a minute percentage of the world's 60 million displaced people seek asylum in Australia. This year more than 150,000 asylum seekers crossed the Mediterranean from Libya to Italy and 157,000 from Turkey to Greece.

In March 479 drowned or went missing in the Mediterranean and in

April another 1,308, including 800 in a single wreck. Last week approximately 250 drowned off the Libyan coast, and almost 100 suffocated in two sealed people-smugglers' trucks on the road to Austria.

The huge number of asylum seekers results primarily from wars, most of which involved military interventions by the US, or conflict generated as a result of US intervention.

At least a million people have fled Iraq and Syria, where the brutal terrorist group ISIS has captured huge areas. The Western forces could co-operate with the Syrian government in dealing with the situation but refuse because that government has an independent foreign policy and wants to break the US-imposed arrangement under which global oil sales are conducted in US dollars.

The US also refuses to adequately arm the Kurds of northern Iraq, even though they have fought ISIS with great courage and determination.

Also, supporting the Kurds to fight ISIS would enrage Turkey, a key US ally, which has ruthlessly oppressed its own Kurdish minority.

Australia has participated in most of the US-led wars, which have generated the refugee tidal wave. The appalling situation in our offshore detention centres stems directly from the inhumane policies of offshore detention and mandatory detention, the demonisation of asylum seekers by the government, (which incorrectly describes them as "illegal" immigrants and bans them forever from our shores), and the secrecy and militarism which now dominates immigration operations and is beginning to do so in the wider society.

Labor has endorsed the cruel policy of asylum seeker boat turnbacks, and is unlikely to adopt a humane approach. Nor will it resist US attempts to gain our participation in a new war in Iraq and/or Syria, which would add to the numbers of asylum seekers. ☹



## Pete's Corner



Sydney

## Update on Guatemala

6pm-8pm Saturday September 12

Peter Symon House – 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills

The situation in Guatemala is desperate. People are demanding the resignation of President Otto Perez Molina and the suspension of the national elections, a provisional government and a National Constitutional Assembly to draft a new constitution. On August 27 business and government offices closed, thousands of protesters took to the streets. Guatemala is in the midst of a corruption scandal that reaches the highest levels of government. The attorney general's office urged the Guatemalan President to resign "to prevent unaccountability that could destabilise the nation." Even the National Council of Bishops has issued a statement saying that President Molina should resign "to avoid greater social unrest that could have unpredictable consequences." The US embassy and the business sector want a "constitutional outcome" leaving the status quo.

Hear Ovidio Orellana the URNG (Unity-Wide Left Movement) representative in Australia

Entertainment, light refreshments – Drinks available

A lucky draw for a prize from Guatemala

Entry by donation – All proceeds to URNG election campaign

Organised by the Sydney District Committee of the CPA and URNG-MAIZ Australia



Sydney

CPA Port Jackson Branch invites comrades and friends to join us for our **Port Jackson Discussion Hour**

Tuesday September 15

**The implications of Russian-Chinese co-operation**

Tuesday October 6

**Why is there an environmental crisis?**

All classes 5:30 pm  
at 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills  
Enquiries: Hannah 0418 668 098

# Action on free trade agreements

Richard Titelius

To coincide with the Federal Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties sitting in major cities around Australia, unions have been organising rallies to help raise awareness of the pitfalls lurking in free trade agreements which erode their working conditions.

Rallies have already been held in other capital cities and on August 25 a rally of over 1,000 workers was held outside Solidarity Park opposite the Western Australian parliament.

The rally was organised by the Electrical Trades Union and Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and supported by Unions WA and those unions who would be affected most by the provisions contained in the proposed free trade agreement between Australia and China i.e. the Chapter 10 Provisions. While the traditional blue collar unions (CFMEU, ETU, MUA, AMWU, Plumbers Union) were there in force, solidarity was also extended from service unions such as United Voice, Community and Public Sector Unions, Australian Services Union, Financial Services Union, State School Teachers Union and the Railway, Bus Transport Union.

The unions are concerned that agreement allows Chinese companies to bring in their own workforces where the project is worth over \$150 million (with as little as 15% stake in the project) and it also

allows for trade qualifications to be undermined.

Allen Hicks, National Secretary of the Electrical Trades Union also added that the agreement removed mandatory skills assessments for workers coming to Australia for a range of high risk trades including the electrical trades, replacing it instead with a desktop audit by immigration staff who are faintly equipped to understand the requirements of a workers skills to enable them to work safely here. The audit must be done within 90 days.

The state secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia, Chris Cain, was the next speaker.

Cain expressed his contempt for the corporations such as Chevron who sought to line their pockets with even more profits from the operation of free trade agreements, when they already did not pay any corporate income tax – not one dollar in the past year. The billions that corporations such as Chevron avoided could have been used to fund infrastructure such as roads, schools and hospitals and pay for the up-skilling of workers.

Cain also advised the rally that recently when crew members on board a Chinese-owned vessel had fallen sick with Legionnaires disease, he put his union's resources at the disposal of the ship to ensure that both Chinese and Australian crew were rescued and taken to hospital, including one worker in an induced coma. "We didn't just look after the



The Perth rally held on August 25 opposite the Western Australian parliament.

Australians, we looked after the Chinese crew as well."

Mick Buchan, state secretary of the CFMEU reminded the rally, "It is trade unions which do more for migrant workers than most other groups in this country by recovering underpaid wages."

Buchan added that the upcoming

by-election in the federal seat of Canning was an opportunity for workers who lived in the mostly working class electorate. It includes areas such as Armadale and Mandurah which have high levels of youth unemployment as well as over-50s attempting to regain a foothold in the workforce.

The Communist Party of

Australia stands with workers and trade unions in voicing their concern at aspects of the trade deal. The CPA supports the just demands of workers in Australia for the protection of local jobs, rates of pay, conditions and skills assessments and the right to industrial action to protect those rights. ✪

## Money and injury – big changes afoot

Jane Campbell\*

Significant change is now occurring in each of the three main areas impacting the financial circumstances of injured Australians. Change is certainly needed because, at the moment, nearly half of disabled Australians live at or below the poverty line. But are these changes taking us in the right direction?

### 1. National changes to government support

There are two main changes going on at a national level – the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and changes to the Disability Support Pension (DSP).

The NDIS is designed to provide "reasonable and necessary care supports", not income, to those with serious and permanent disability.

The DSP provides income

support to people whose disability stops them from working. Changes introduced between 2012 and 2015 mean that eligibility is now tighter and fewer will qualify.

The combined impact of introducing the NDIS and tightening the DSP is likely to be more people getting support services and fewer people getting income support.

So will people be better off? Who is best placed to work out how limited funds can best be spent?

### 2. Changes to compensation

Changes to compensation law occurring throughout Australia are largely being driven by the National Injury Insurance Scheme (NIIS), to which all jurisdictions have signed up as part of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the NDIS Launch.

The NIIS aims to provide no-fault care and support to the newly catastrophically injured. The idea is

for State and Territory governments, via existing insurance premium sources, to support the catastrophically injured rather than have them look to the NDIS.

The right to a common law lump sum for future care is to be removed for catastrophically injured people, and instead the provision of care services through a state government bureaucracy is to be mandated.

People who would otherwise have received lump sum compensation and been able to emerge from a "system" will lose the opportunity to be independent. Many will be forced to continue to live in government housing.

Instead of a learned judge making a single decision based on evidence, injured people will be exposed for life to the vagaries of politics, funding constraints and the beliefs of individual bureaucrats as they decide what is "reasonable and necessary".

The overall impact of the changes coming through as a result of NIIS

obligations is that a small number of people who previously could not receive compensation will now get access to care services. Many more people will lose access to any compensation or access to lump sum compensation.

### 3. Changes to disability insurance

Disability insurance was largely ignored by the Productivity Commission when it looked into Disability Care and Support in 2011. The Commission's focus was squarely on creating two big government "insurance" schemes (NDIS and NIIS) which delivered only services, not cash.

But as soon as the NDIS and NIIS started to roll out from 2011, the impact of change started to be felt by life insurers. Firstly, as people just started to become aware of the NDIS they became slightly less enthusiastic about buying new or renewing existing private disability insurance policies.

Secondly, as people unable to work were starting to find themselves unable to claim workers' compensation (due to increased thresholds or tightened eligibility criteria) or the DSP they started to look to their superannuation accounts, for support.

Life insurers have responded by tightening disability definitions and reducing default levels of cover. Thus, fewer people will be able to

make successful claims, and claims will deliver smaller sums. More people will have to look back to the government for welfare support.

These changes impact us all. We all pay tax and any one of us could be injured or become disabled any day. How will we support ourselves and our families? Will we have adequate insurance cover, be able to obtain fair compensation, or will we need to rely on welfare and slip into poverty?

State and federal governments can:

- continue to roll out the NDIS, but slowing down if necessary to get it right;
- maintain fair access to the DSP for those who need it;
- not use the NIIS as an excuse to cut compensation, but rather supporting the ongoing existence of legal rights so that people can receive fair compensation and lump sum compensation as appropriate to support themselves; and
- encourage life insurers to develop quality insurance products, fairly and transparently priced and sold, with improved claims management processes.

Hopefully the big picture in the future for Australians with disabilities will be a sustainable one of personal financial security, independence, choice and control.

\*Jane Campbell provides independent financial advice to seriously injured Australians and works to improve financial outcomes for injured people. ✪



Sydney

## Vigil demanding that the USA stop the blockade on Cuba

54 YEARS IS ENOUGH

Thursday September 17 at 5:30 pm Outside USA Consulate in Martin Place

Also to stop the subversion funds against Cuba & to return Guantánamo to its rightful owners – the Cuban people.

# Another recession looming large

Anna Pha

Treasurer Joe Hockey had economic commentators scratching their heads in bewilderment last week. “Why pick now of all times, to cut income tax?” asks Peter Martin under the headline: “Treasurer’s ‘bracket creep’ reasoning fails to add up.” (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 25-08-2015) Sixty billion dollars was wiped off the value of shares on the Australian stock market last week. Unemployment and under-employment continue to rise.

The All Ordinaries Price Index (an index of the value of all shares listed on the ASX), usually referred to as the All Ords, plunged to a low of 5,014 last week before rising a little again. It has fallen almost 16 percent since April this year.

Prior to this collapse, the All Ords had still not fully returned to its 2007 – pre-global financial crisis – level and another recession is looming large.

This has prompted comparisons with the 2007-2008 global financial crisis and the deep recession that hit Europe and other economies.

It is not just the small “mums and dads” investors who bought a few shares in public companies being privatised whose savings are being hit. Superannuation typically holds around half their investments in national or international shares. International markets are just as volatile.

The Reserve Bank of Australia has deliberately driven the Australian dollar down with successive interest rate reductions and is considering whether to make further cuts in the official rate. This is a double-edged sword. It makes our exports cheaper but hurts retirees and others whose savings are in bank deposits.

Australia has been hit hard by the fall in iron ore and coal prices. Now oil prices have plummeted (although motorists are still to see any benefits at the bowser).

Wage rises, where workers are lucky enough to be receiving them, are in many instances falling behind price rises.

Sackings continue. Bluescope Steel is considering whether to close its Illawarra plant in NSW which would see 5,000 workers sacked. Public sector workers continue to be sacked. Workers waiting for their tax returns are feeling the effect of the sacking of around 1,000 employees from the Australian Taxation Office. Returns have been delayed by weeks or even longer as there are not enough staff to process them immediately as in the past.

Add to that the turbulence on stock markets

around the world and a reduction in the rate of growth of the Chinese economy on which Australia is so dependent, it is hard to find the good news story. But it is no use blaming China for our economic woes. It is government policy. There is no future in an economy built around fossil fuels and turning Australia in to a quarry.

All of these developments are affecting the income the government is receiving from personal and company taxation that is set (yet again) to fall far below the government’s rosy predictions.

So what has Treasurer Joe Hockey to say about the impending economic crisis?

He is still insisting the fundamentals of the Australian economy and the global economy are sound. They are so sound that he claims he can balance the budget at the same time as cutting income taxes!

## Tax cuts

He is serious about cutting taxes and uses bracket creep as the excuse. (Bracket creep is where successive wage increases result in wages being taxed at a higher marginal rate.)

In an address to the Tax Institute and Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand on August 24, the Treasurer argued that around 300,000 Australians will move into the second highest tax bracket. Expressing feigned concern for these workers who would be hit by the higher rates, he argued for a reduction in personal income tax rates.

“Why should the reward for hard work and endeavour be swallowed up by higher taxes?”

“The problem is that, right now, Australia relies heavily on personal income tax,” says Hockey. That is all too true. Over recent decades corporate taxes have been reduced and the largest corporations pay no tax whatsoever. The government has no intention of making them pay.

And, in Hockey’s eyes, there is another problem: “the top 10 percent pay almost half of all personal income tax.” How unfair! He doesn’t see a problem with huge income gaps – they must have all got there by hard work and endeavour.

“Reducing taxes will put money back where it belongs – in people’s pockets – and send that simple message I spoke of earlier: have a go!”

If wage increases fail to keep up with inflation, then real wages fall. So Hockey is correct, that in real terms wages are being taxed at a higher rate. There is a strong argument for adjusting the marginal rates so that income taxes are not eating into real post-tax wages.



**Abbott and Hockey are not about to increase corporate taxes, quite the opposite. They have no intention of cutting multi-billion subsidies to mining corporations or private health insurance funds.**

It would put more money in people’s pockets and that is certainly needed if the economy is to be lifted from its recessed state. But how would the cuts be funded?

Abbott and Hockey are not about to increase corporate taxes, quite the opposite. They have no intention of cutting multi-billion subsidies to mining corporations or private health insurance funds.

## Sleight of hand

No, the cuts will come out of the pockets of the people who will end up worse off as funding for public health, education, community and other services is slashed.

Privatisation will result in higher charges or introduce fees where they presently do not apply. The prime motive will become profits, not service, as recently seen with Medibank Private’s negotiations with a private hospital group.

The government’s aim is to ultimately reduce company and personal income taxes to zero.

He speaks quite openly about “the end of

the age of entitlement” and has already started the process of cutting back social programs, sacking public servants and dismantling the public sector.

The government has a responsibility to plan and build an economy that is balanced, has a strong manufacturing sector and provides the public services that the community requires. Public education, health services, housing and public transport are key to any plan along with the development of sustainable renewable energy sources.

Such planning would result in a highly skilled and educated labour force while generating jobs and benefiting people – a big turnaround from the government’s pro-big business policies.

At the time of going to press it looked as though Hockey’s days as Treasurer might be numbered. It is no use throwing Hockey out, he will only be replaced by another ultra-reactionary neo-liberal cut from the same cloth. It is necessary to throw the whole government out and replace it with a government intent on serving the people. ☺

## Wik people in mine law fight

Young Wik leaders Gina Castelain and Llyle Kawangka followed their Elders’ footsteps to the High Court last week, as they prepare for another fight with the Queensland government to protect their people’s rights. The Wik and Wik Waya people’s registered native title body, Ngan-Aak Kunch Aboriginal Corporation (NAK), achieved a significant first step in the High Court, after it ordered the state to file a defence by September 16 to NAK’s writ to overturn a piece of Queensland law.

NAK is seeking to have the so-called “Aurukun Provisions” of the Mineral Resources Act struck down by the High Court.

The “Aurukun Provisions” were inserted into the Act in 2006 to fast track the mining of bauxite deposits in lease RA315, near Aurukun. The Wik people have said that the provisions suspend the right to appeal or object to decisions made

by the Queensland government and that they are the only landholders in Queensland affected by these special provisions. NAK will argue before the High Court that the provisions offend section 10 of the *Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act*.

The Newman government awarded preferred proponent status to mining giant Glencore, after a tender process. However, NAK had signed an agreement with miners Aurukun Bauxite Development (ABD), and had entered into an Indigenous Land Use Agreement with the company.

NAK director Mr Kawangka said ABD pledged a package of measures to NAK, including part-ownership through a 15 percent diluted equity share, seats on the board and up to 300 local jobs.

“Our people have fought for decision-making rights over our land for 40 years,” he said. “We

don’t want to wait for royalties from a big mining company, which is just corporate welfare. We want to be mine owners.”

The Young Wik leaders delivered a letter to Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk and Deputy Premier Jackie Trad last week, asking for their urgent reconsideration.

## Surprise

The Labor government had agreed to revisit the mine tender process but in a move that surprised the NAC, last week announced they would ratify the former government’s decision to award Preferred Proponent status to Glencore.

“The Aurukun provisions were introduced by the Premier’s father Henry, who was Minister for Mines in 2006, and we are hoping that the Premier will take a personal interest in the matter – that’s why we are making this personal plea,” Ms

Castelain, who is a Wik native title holder and director of ABD, said.

Members of NAK said they were deeply upset and frustrated that the government was not prepared to work with the Wik people to “set an exciting precedent in how miners and Indigenous land holders can work together”.

On August 15, Queensland Mines Minister Anthony Lynham flew to Aurukun for a meeting with Glencore.

NAK members say they and representatives from the Cape York Land Council, including chair Richie Ah Mat, were initially excluded from the meeting.

“The minister came to tell us about the decision to appoint Glencore as the miner, but won’t tell us the details of Glencore’s offer to native title holders of our land. It is wrong,” Mr Kawangka said.

NAK chair Jonathon Korkatain said the government should be

having a proper conversation with the native title holders. “My question to the minister was: If Glencore was the proponent, I’m the chair of the native title body. They bypassed me, not negotiating with me or communicating with me. At the meeting when I heard the proponent was Glencore, I got upset about that,” he said.

“They should be coming to the traditional owners and the board that represents the traditional owners. We are the people to make those decisions, to make sure the traditional owners understand this process.

“I know that this mine will give our people the good opportunity, but let us make the right decision. It is not up to other people to make that decision for us.”

Koori Mail ☺

# Capitalism Delenda Est (Carthage must be destroyed)

Paul Edwards

**Evolution in economic systems produced the fatal cancer of contemporary Capitalism. In retrospect, this appears to have been inevitable.**

Human life requires food, water, shelter, clothing, which, if not produced, must be traded for, bought, or stolen. As societies ramified in complexity general self-sufficiency decreased and a money economy supplanted them.

With ever growing populations, demand increased exponentially, allowing entities that could provide necessities exploitative power—even with an abundance of supply – through ownership and control of resources.

In Capitalist economies, as in nature, greater force displaces lesser. More money displaces less; consolidation is inevitable. Larger and fewer financial entities eliminate competition. Capitalism perfected the process.

Economics is not governed by human ethics or morality any more than gravity is. The survival of humanity, though, depends in the long run on a polity that is ethically based. Economics in any form is at odds in its essence with viable social systems.

The entire history of humankind has been characterised by disequilibrium between the need for ethical management of societies and the inherently unethical function of economics. Predatory Capitalism, protected in nations it infects as a parasite, is historically unrivalled as a destroyer of societies.

The world today is a grand theatre displaying the assault on all life by Capitalism. The utter fraud and criminality of its methods and motives can no longer be denied nor easily peddled to the vast mass of its victims by the minuscule fragment of mankind who are its owners and operators.

Power – the application of energy or force – exists independent of human ethics or morality, as well. Its application in human endeavours, predictably, is always described as ethical and moral by those who apply it.

Capitalism today exists in the wildest, most precarious, state of imbalance and inequity in economic history.

Two forces sustain it and enforce its rule: the deeply inculcated dogma – amounting to a secular religion – that it is the only system possible or even conceivable, and the absolute authority of colluding and colliding states.

The dogma is rapidly failing, eroded by the sheer range and volume of misery and squalor relentlessly inflicted on the propagandised masses, and by the continual escape of actual information about it that the economic tyranny, even with near absolute control of media, cannot now prevent.

Power – as the focused and directed use of massive state force – remains.

When a belief system loses its capacity to enthrall its believers it faces a choice: to yield to the attrition that will in the end vitiate and destroy its dominion; or, to use power in any way necessary to enforce its mandate.

This is the point at which the Capitalist rule of the world has arrived.

Those at the levers of its power understand this and have taken steps accordingly. Major Capitalist nations have radically militarised their police forces, creating far more lethally armed and scientifically equipped versions of the Nazi Waffen SS: high-tech weaponised state commandos dedicated to eradication of dissent and elimination of “enemies of the Homeland”.

Snowden, via Greenwald and Poitras, informed us that our privacy has been eliminated and that we are all suspect in the ubiquitous eyes of our Security State. In protests, cages and corrals ringed by uniformed goons with mace and truncheons are the spaces where we are allowed “peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for redress of grievances”.

JFK said, “Those who make peaceful evolution impossible make violent revolution inevitable.” That was poetry as regards America. The idea of a radical political movement – much less rebellion – by our passive, frightened, obedient citizenry is a pathetic juvenile fantasy. We will live as cowed subjects rather than to face the monster and take action that could free us.

Capitalism must be destroyed.  
Information Clearing House ✪



## Israel's choice sends Message to UN

Jonathan Cook

**The appointment by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of one of his most hawkish and outspoken rivals as Israel's new ambassador to the United Nations has prompted widespread consternation. As one analyst noted, Danny Danon's appointment is a “cruel joke” on the international community. The new envoy “lacks even the slightest level of finesse and subtlety required of a senior diplomat”, the analyst said.**

Last year, Netanyahu sacked Danon as deputy defence minister, describing him as too “irresponsible” even by the standards of Israel's usually anarchic politics. Danon had denounced the prime minister for “leftist feebleness” in his handling of Israel's attack on Gaza last summer.

Danon is a UN official's worst nightmare. He is a vocal opponent of a two-state solution and has repeatedly called for the annexation of the West Bank.

The appointment comes as the Palestinians are expected to step up efforts at the UN to entrench recognition of their statehood, and as Israel tries to fend off war crimes investigations at the International Criminal Court.

The accepted explanation is that Mr Netanyahu's move is driven by domestic, not diplomatic calculations. The two faced off for Likud party leadership in November. Danon lost but Netanyahu doubtless fears, as his party and the Israeli public shift further to the right that his rival's time is coming.

The posting removes Danon as head of the Likud's powerful central committee, dispatches him to a distant land, and should provide him with opportunities aplenty to self-harm.

Danon's appointment also reveals something more significant about Israel's deteriorating relations even with its international supporters.

In the decade following 1948, Abba Eban, Israel's foremost diplomat, sought to carve out international recognition and respectability for his country at the UN, even as it launched wars in 1956 at Suez and again against Egypt in 1967.

Reality caught up with Israel when the UN adopted a resolution in 1975 equating Israel's official ideology, Zionism, with racism. The resolution was only revoked 16 years later after Washington arm-twisted the General Assembly with promises that Israel would engage in a peace process with the Palestinians, culminating a short time later in the Oslo Accords.

But as Oslo slowly unravelled, Israel was

forced on to the back foot again. Today, the consensus in Israel is not only that the UN is a bastion of anti-Israel prejudice but that it is an incubator of global anti-Semitism.

This year, after stepping down as Israel's ambassador to the US, Michael Oren argued that the plague of anti-Semitism had infected even America's leading Jewish journalists. Their critical coverage of Israel was proof of self-hatred, he claimed. The need for such desperate diplomacy has grown as Israel's moral image has tarnished. But the hectoring has produced diminishing returns.

Danon's posting is part of a pattern of appointments by Netanyahu that reflect a growing refusal to engage in diplomacy. It started with the decision in 2009 to let the thuggish Avigdor Lieberman lead the foreign ministry and diplomatic corps.

## A year of slow death since Gaza attack

Nora Barrow-Friedman

**On August 26, 2014, a ceasefire brought an end to 51 days of Israeli bombing of the Gaza Strip. Israel killed more than 2,200 Palestinians, including 551 children. A year later, due to the eight years of continuous siege, reconstruction of the tens of thousands of homes Israel destroyed has not yet begun. More than 100,000 homes were damaged and more than 100,000 people in Gaza remain without permanent shelter – as Israel still tightly regulates what comes in and out of Gaza, home to 1.8 million Palestinians.**

Unemployment has skyrocketed and electricity is available only a few hours per day for most of Gaza's residents. Gaza's infant mortality rate has also risen for the first time in 50 years, according to the United Nations. The

agency points to Israel's blockade as the likely reason for the increase.

“The rubble from our house is still there,” says Gaza-based writer, editor and educator Refaat Alareer, in a recent interview with The Electronic Intifada. His home was destroyed and his brother Mohammed was killed along with 25 extended family members in Israeli attacks.

“We've been through one of the toughest years ever as Palestinians,” he adds. “We lived through the first intifada, the curfews, the daily shootings and the horrors of the second intifada. Miraculously, some of us survived the three wars – but the year that followed, to me, to my family members, to so many people I know, has been the toughest because it's been a slow death.”

“We're being killed slowly by the siege imposed mainly by Israel – and with the

complicity of the international community,” Alareer explains.

### Gaza Unsilenced

In their brand new book *Gaza Unsilenced*, Alareer and co-editor Laila El-Haddad meticulously collected essential reporting, essays, analysis, Tweets, blog posts, poetry and art that was made during the war on Gaza and the year that has followed.

As they write in the introduction, “We were driven by a sense of urgency, despair and obligation to curate and edit this book, to be a conduit for voices writing from and about Gaza, as a means for changing the narrative and thereby changing public opinions, which we hope can help push the long-standing US policy of alliance with Israel in a different direction, and ultimately let Gaza live.”

El-Haddad says that last year's assault was

unique in the sense that it was “the first time we were hearing very loudly and clearly Palestinians from within Gaza writing, tweeting live from the hospital, from their houses, but also writing and speaking out to Facebook and to the media.”

El-Haddad adds that she and Alareer “wanted to include those voices in a way that could narrate that story – and by extension the Palestinian story – in a way that hasn't been documented before.”

### Restlessness

The Electronic Intifada also spoke with contributor Charlotte Silver, who recently returned from Gaza. She says she saw “a very different place than I ever could have imagined.”

“You feel – in people's energy, sitting at a table, walking around – the restlessness and the confinement that they're in,” she explains.

# Nuclear-weapons-free world no lost cause



The 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has as one of its main goals the realisation of general and complete nuclear disarmament. While it is tragic that an NPT review conference held on the 70th anniversary year of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki should have ended without an outcome document, it was by no means a total failure. *Jamshed Baruah* explains the positive outcomes of the 2015 NPT review conference.

The 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August was an appropriate occasion to start developing a legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons. This, according to experts, is the distinct message emerging from a four-week-long United Nations conference which ended without an outcome document on May 22.

The failure of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to reach consensus on a substantive outcome has prompted the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to express his “disappointment”, which is widely shared.

But the conference had two positive outcomes: the Humanitarian Pledge, initiated by Austria, representing a commitment of more than 100 states to work for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons; and recognition of the crucial role of the Vienna-based Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) in facilitating steps towards a nuclear-weapons-free world.

The conference failed not only – as the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada claimed – because of the lack of agreement over making the Middle East a nuclear-weapons-free zone. The draft outcome document had also generally been considered deeply flawed on disarmament.

In a statement, the UN Secretary-General’s spokesperson said on May 23 that Ban regretted “in particular that State parties were unable to narrow their differences on the future of nuclear disarmament or to arrive at a new collective vision on how to achieve a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction”.

At the same time, Ban appealed to all states to sustain the momentum they had built over the previous five years. These included new initiatives in the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and continuing efforts to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation.

“With respect to the Middle East, the Secretary-General continues to stand ready to support efforts to promote and sustain the inclusive regional dialogue necessary to achieve this goal,” Ban’s spokesperson said.

How far this offer would be helpful remains to be seen. Rose Gottemoeller, the US Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, has described as “unrealistic and unworkable” the demand from Egypt to set a deadline for the convening of a conference on a zone in the Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction – a conference the last NPT review in 2010 had stipulated must take place by 2012.

Ban hopes that the growing awareness of the devastating humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons would continue to compel urgent actions for effective measures leading to the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Secretary-General’s remarks address the basic issues at the heart of disagreement in the NPT review conference from April 27 to May 22 in New York – and this in spite of the fact that the NPT, which entered into force in 1970 and to which 191 states have subscribed, is regarded as the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime.

The treaty covers three mutually reinforcing pillars – disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy – and is the



basis for international cooperation on stopping the spread of nuclear weapons. However, the official nuclear weapon states – Britain, France, Russia, China and the US – are faulted for not doing enough for nuclear disarmament.

## Rollback

According to Elizabeth Minor, writing in *Open Democracy*, the draft document contained no meaningful commitments by the nuclear-armed states and their allies. It set out few clear activities and no deadlines.

“Indeed, in many areas it rolled back on disarmament promises made in 2010 – such as diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, excised from the draft. It also suggested that work on nuclear disarmament at the UN General Assembly be done by consensus, even though that forum has always operated through democratic voting procedures,” argues Minor.

“Overall, the draft strongly reflected the priorities of the NPT’s five officially nuclear-armed states and their nuclear allies, in favour of upholding a status quo which features little activity on disarmament on the one hand and the modernisation of nuclear arsenals on the other,” adds Minor.

The Federation of American Scientists (FAS) says: “More than two decades after the Cold War ended, the world’s combined inventory of nuclear warheads remains at a very high level: approximately 15,700. Of these, around 4,100 warheads are considered operational, of which about 1,800 US and Russian warheads are on high alert, ready for use on short notice.”

Most warheads are many times more powerful than the atomic bombs dropped on Japan in 1945. A single nuclear warhead, if detonated on a large city, could kill millions of people, with the effects persisting for decades, experts say.

“Despite significant reductions in US, Russian, French and British nuclear forces compared with Cold War levels, all the nuclear weapon states continue to modernise their remaining nuclear forces and appear committed to retaining nuclear weapons for the indefinite future,” says FAS.

According to Stephen Young, a senior analyst at the Union of Concerned Scientists, the Barack Obama administration plans to rebuild the entire US nuclear arsenal, including the warheads, and the missiles, planes and submarines that carry them. These plans will cost US\$348 billion over the next 10 years, according to a Congressional Budget Office estimate beginning of 2015. The National Defence Panel, appointed by Congress, found that the price tag over 30 years could be as much as US\$1 trillion.

While the US blamed Egypt, others from the Middle East expressed anger that the interests of Israel, a nuclear-armed state outside the NPT, had been prioritised over the interests of NPT member states. “Their criticisms seemed to be borne out when Israel’s Prime Minister Netanyahu reportedly thanked the US, UK and Canadian governments for ‘blocking an Egyptian-led drive on a possible Middle East nuclear arms ban,’” writes Rebecca Johnson in *Open Democracy*.

## Anti-democratic and non-transparent

According to Reaching Critical Will (RCW), the disarmament program of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, “The process to develop the draft Review Conference outcome document was anti-democratic and non-transparent. Several delegations, including ASEAN [Association of South-East Asian Nations], expressed their sense of frustration with and exclusion from the process ... South Africa lambasted the NPT for denigrating into rule of the minority, where the few have control even when it doesn’t make sense.”

RCW points out that, as a large cross-regional group of 47 states argued in a statement delivered by Austria, the discussions during the Conference and resulting text demonstrated the “urgency to act upon the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons”, but then fell “dramatically short of making credible progress on filling the legal gap”.

A total of 107 states – the majority of the world’s countries (and of NPT member states) – have highlighted this legal gap and have committed to fill it, by endorsing the Humanitarian Pledge issued by Austria. These states have collectively demonstrated their empowerment by demanding that their security concerns be considered equal to those of the nuclear-armed states.

RCW, headed by Ray Acheson, is of the view that these states – and those that endorse the pledge after the Conference – must now use the pledge as the basis for a new process to develop a legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons. “This process should begin without delay. The 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has already been identified as the appropriate milestone for this process to commence.”

Observers agree with Acheson that a treaty banning nuclear weapons remains the most feasible course of action for states committed to disarmament. “This Review Conference has demonstrated beyond any doubt that continuing to rely on the nuclear-armed states or their nuclear-dependent allies for leadership or action is futile.”

As the 47 states represented in the Austrian statement highlighted, “The exchanges of views that we have witnessed during this review cycle demonstrate that there is a wide divide that presents itself in many fundamental aspects of what nuclear disarmament should mean. There is a reality gap, a credibility gap, a confidence gap and a moral gap.”

These gaps can be filled by determined action to stigmatise, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons. “History honours only the brave,” declared Costa Rica. “Now is the time to work for what is to come, the world we want and deserve.”

RCW argues: “Those who reject nuclear weapons must have the courage of their convictions to move ahead without the nuclear-armed states, to take back ground from the violent few who purport to run the world, and build a new reality of human security and global justice.” *Third World Resurgence* ✪

Most notably, Netanyahu picked Ron Dermer to replace Oren in 2013. Dermer is credited with engineering Netanyahu’s provocative address this year to the US Congress – an undisguised effort to undermine president Barack Obama’s talks with Iran.

Danon’s appointment indicates the extent to which the Israeli right has abandoned any hope of persuading the international community of the rightness of its cause – or even of working within the rules of statecraft. Danon can be expected to barter, abuse and alienate fellow ambassadors at the UN.

An Israel that has no place for negotiations or compromise wants only to tell the world that it is wrong and that Israelis don’t care what others think. Danon is the right man for that job.

*The Nationalist* ✪

“Gaza is a tiny place. You can’t go anywhere that takes longer than 20 minutes. And there’s an entire population made up of mostly young people who can’t look into their future without seeing these small parameters, these small borders.”

Silver reported on the lack of reconstruction across Gaza, pairing up with photojournalist Ezz Zanoun for a powerful photo essay on the thousands of displaced Palestinian families. She met with Palestinians whose homes were bombed by Israel more than ten years ago and still haven’t had their homes reconstructed.

“The destruction to Gaza is something that pre-dated last summer’s war and it continues to go forward. It’s not just the 12,000 homes that were destroyed, it’s much more, it’s much broader, deeper. It’s not just that travesty that happened last summer,” Silver adds.

*The Electronic Intifada* ✪

# Ongoing refugee tragedy

Robert Stevens

**Around 50 refugees and asylum seekers were found dead in the hold of a boat off the coast of Libya last week. While rescuers were able to save 439 other people on board, the latest reports indicated that 51 people had died.**

According to the Italian coast guard, the Swedish ship *Poseidon*, working as part of the European Union's border control agency Frontex, discovered the bodies after it went to a stricken wooden boat that was in difficulty.

The latest number of fatalities is similar to the 49 migrants who perished on August 15 in the hold of another boat. That vessel was also found off the Libyan coast, south of the Italian island of Lampedusa. Those deaths are thought to have been caused by the migrants being asphyxiated after inhaling fumes from fuels as the boat's hold took on water.

The nationality of those who died last week has not yet been reported, but they are almost certainly from the war zones of Syria, Afghanistan, Libya or other African countries. Hundreds of thousands of the many millions who have been made refugees are seeking to reach Europe from throughout the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. They are fleeing as the result of more than a decade of wars and carnage, carried out by the imperialist powers and their proxies. An estimated 10 million people have been made homeless in Syria alone.

The vast scale of the crimes of imperialism is evident by the enormous numbers attempting to cross the Mediterranean every day. At least 2,300 have died trying to make the crossing this year, in what has been designated the most dangerous journey for any refugee on the globe.

Streams of refugees have attempted to seek shelter in Europe, mainly via the continent's southern states, Italy and Greece. According to the International Organisation for

Migration, 293,000 refugees and migrants have reached Europe by sea so far this year. This is already one-third more than the total that arrived in 2014.

Also last week, Italian rescue services received 10 calls for help from various boats in difficulty. The calls were from vessels located in an area around 30 miles from the Libyan coast, according to the Italian coastguard. It said at least 2,000 migrants, and "probably more" were in danger. These included an Irish coast guard ship attempting to rescue up to 500 people from a boat. In one day last week:

- An Italian coast guard vessel saved 113 people from a partially-deflated rubber boat. One passenger, already fighting to survive, died soon after.
- *Poseidon*, the same rescue vessel that found the dead bodies in the hold, earlier saved 130 people from a rubber boat.
- A merchant ship reportedly picked up 225 people.

The local it web site reported that according to Italian sources, "another boat with some 700 people aboard was in trouble in the same area. Moas, a Malta-based private organisation, said in a tweet that its boat, the Phoenix, was taking part in a complex rescue operation."

Moas tweeted, "Phoenix are working with Italian and Swedish vessels to assist thousands."

This year Greece overtook Italy as the country receiving the most migrants. So far, more than 160,000 have entered the country, whose population is impoverished due to years of savage austerity. As well as the Mediterranean crossing from Africa, thousands are making the shorter but still dangerous trip to Greece's eastern Aegean islands, via the Turkish coast.

In the space of 24 hours the Greek coastguard rescued 578 people in 15 separate incidents at sea near the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos and Kos. These figures did not include those now arriving daily,



Migrants boarding the ship *Poseidon* off the Libyan coast.

often in unsafe inflatable dinghies, from the Turkish coast.

Just days earlier, on August 22, Italian coastguard teams rescued 4,400 people, a record number, in 22 operations over a single 24-hour period. This followed the rescue of 5,300 migrants off the Libyan coast the previous week.

The 22 rescue operations were carried out in seas near Libya. According to AP, Italian coast guard, navy and border police boats as well as Norwegian and Irish naval vessels co-ordinated the rescues. Those rescued were travelling on unseaworthy boats and motorised rubber dinghies, all overcrowded with desperate men, women and children.

The rescues took place in a relatively small area around 30 miles from the Libyan coast. That so many had to be rescued in such a tiny area of sea in the eastern Mediterranean, which covers a total area of 637,000 square miles (1.65 million square

kilometres), highlights the scope of this vast movement of refugees, which is without parallel since World War II.

Some 110,000 migrants have been rescued off the Libyan coast and taken to southern Italian ports.

Those who manage to enter Europe are being treated as an invading army to be repelled by brute force. As news was emerging of the latest tragic deaths, Hungarian riot police were reported to have attacked around 200 migrants in the town of Roszke, near the border with Serbia. According to the AFP, police were sent in "after migrants tried to leave the main processing centre without being fingerprinted ..."

The agency added, "Tensions escalated after more than 2,500 people, the highest ever daily total, arrived in Hungary from non EU-member Serbia."

As with those refugees reaching Greece and Italy, most of the 100,000 migrants arriving in Hungary, via various routes in the Balkans, are fleeing their devastated homes in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

To stop refugees and migrants entering, Hungary's right-wing government is constructing a massive, 109-mile fence on its border with Serbia. It has announced that 2,100 police officers would be sent to guard the fence.

This is just the initial stage of repression. Hungary's ruling party said it would ask parliament to back sending the army to help seal its southern border. Szilard Nemeth, deputy head of the National Security parliamentary committee, said the ruling Fidesz party wants to "make possible the use of the army for tasks related to border defence and migration."

Every day features new reports of the latest harrowing tragedy engulfing refugees in the Mediterranean.

In June, the EU held a summit to discuss the escalating crisis. This was prompted by a wave of public revulsion at the indifference of the European powers, in the face of a series of mass drownings of refugees in which hundreds of lives were lost. The assembled heads of state failed to agree on a policy, clashing over whether to set quotas for how many immigrants each country should take.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President François Hollande met in Berlin to discuss the refugee crisis. They threatened to put the entire Balkan region on the list of "safe countries" from which no immigrants would be accepted. This would increase pressure on governments in the Balkans to step up their already savage repression of refugees.

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## Big tobacco pressures trade negotiators

Dan Wright

**Documents related to discussions between US, British and European officials and multinational tobacco corporations concerning the regulation of tobacco under a new trade agreement were censored by the European Commission.**

This censorship has stoked fears that Big Tobacco is planning an end run around existing laws concerning the use of tobacco with the assistance of public officials working on the trade deal.

According to Paul Gallagher, writing in *The Independent*, activists with Corporate Europe Observatory revealed the meetings through a Freedom of Information request, but the documents were heavily edited:

Almost all the content, including the names of officials and tobacco lobbyists involved, the issues discussed and even the dates some meetings took place, had been redacted.

TTIP is an agreement that parallels the corporate power grab known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership

(TPP), but is limited to the United States and Europe. Like TPP, TTIP is written by and for transnational business interests looking to loosen regulations.

Among the objectives of TTIP is further deregulating Wall Street/finance capital, lowering food safety and environmental standards, and weakening trade unions. In other words, the same agenda Big Business has always had but with new legal, regulatory, and political tools to see their agenda achieved.

The new order brought in under TTIP and TPP creates opportunities for Big Tobacco. The further empowerment of the corporate sector under the trade deals means businesses can sue governments to weaken regulations. It's something Big Tobacco has already started doing using existing international agreements.

In 2011, Australia enacted a "plain packaging" law for cigarettes that required cigarette boxes to be in simple colours with an image showing the dangers of

smoking. Philip Morris International sued the government of Australia and lost. But previous to the law being enacted and the lawsuit being filed, Philip Morris had moved the trademark related to the Australian market to Philip Morris Asia in Hong Kong.

That manoeuvre allowed Philip Morris to use investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provisions of a 1993 bilateral agreement between Australia and Hong Kong to sue Australia for compensation for harming Hong Kong-based Philip Morris Asia's investments in Australia. Whichever way that suit is resolved, the message is clear – Big Tobacco will use trade agreements to attack public health laws related to smoking.

Will TTIP contain provisions making it easier for Big Tobacco to sue the US and countries in Europe for harming their investments by passing anti-smoking laws? Might that be what government officials and the tobacco companies wanted censored?

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# Lessons a decade after Katrina

On the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina's destruction along the Gulf Coast, registered nurse volunteers with the disaster relief program, Registered Nurse Response Network (RNRN), which sent hundreds of RN volunteers to provide disaster relief to the region in the wake of the deadly storm, say that critical lessons which exacerbated the 2005 crisis – global climate change, our lack of a national healthcare system, and failure to invest in public resources and infrastructure – have still not been learned.

## Katrina commemoration events

Nurses from RNRN, a project of National Nurses United (NNU), the country's largest organisation of RNs, were back in New Orleans to show support for residents of the region and highlight that the problems, which existed 10 years ago, continue to fester.

RNs, some of whom volunteered with RNRN post-Katrina, staffed a first aid tent and participated in Katrina commemoration events hosted by Gulf South Rising, a coordinated regional movement of people and groups to highlight how the global climate crisis, and the rising sea levels that come with it, are affecting the Gulf Coast states.

"Things aren't just the same, they're worse," said Malinda Markowitz, RN, a NNU vice president who participated in the events. "As nurses, we always want to get at the root causes of illnesses, and Katrina exposed them all: the socioeconomic inequality, the racism, the lack of access to healthcare, how we've de-funded our public infrastructure, and how our dependency on fossil fuels has accelerated climate change. On this anniversary, we are again working to build the movement needed to fix these problems."

## Volunteer RNs sprang into action

After Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf and New Orleans flooded, forcing the evacuation of millions of residents and trapping – and sometimes killing – those who remained in the city, RNRN sprang into action to supply volunteer RNs to the affected areas.

What nurses learned was that there was no coordinated emergency system to respond to natural and man-made disasters such as this one. Federal, state, and county and

municipal agencies all implemented their own plans, which resulted in chaos.

Despite the confusion, RNRN was ultimately able to determine the needs of various hospitals and state disaster agencies overwhelmed with the need for qualified medical providers and place more than 300 volunteer RNs in positions where they could fully utilise their skills, experience, and knowledge as registered nurses.

In Baton Rouge, RNRN sent rotations of nurse volunteers to relieve exhausted staff nurses at Earl K Long Medical Centre, the only public hospital (now closed) in the city where scores of New Orleans evacuees had fled. RNRN also sent nurse volunteers to a number of hospitals and clinics in other parts of the Gulf, and provided a significant percentage of nurses who staffed medical services for thousands of evacuees sheltered at the Houston Astrodome, where many New Orleans residents had been bussed.

A decade later, the nation has made little progress in addressing the systemic problems Hurricane Katrina laid bare.

## Systemic problems

Climate change, which results in rises in sea temperatures and likely increased the size and intensity of the hurricane, remains a major global crisis. Despite numerous climate summits and treaties, dependence on burning fossil fuels as the world's primary energy source continues.

A number of countries lag behind efforts to reduce CO2 levels that scientists say must be lowered to arrest and reverse the warming of the earth. Many policy makers in the US, at the behest of the fossil fuel industry, continue to oppose robust action to stem the effects of the climate crisis. The earth's current, identified fossil fuel energy stores – of oil, gas, coal, etc – are already five times more than scientists say we can safely burn and not risk planetary collapse, and the US is still one of the top two emitters of greenhouse gases.

Millions of Gulf residents are still without access to healthcare. While the Affordable Care Act did end some of the worst insurance industry abuses that shut many people out of access to coverage, many patients still cannot afford to use the health insurance they pay for because of the high deductibles and co-payments those plans require. And while the Affordable Care Act greatly expanded Medicaid coverage, all of the Gulf states – Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Alabama, and Florida – have refused to take advantage of



the expansion, depriving their states' lowest-income residents of needed healthcare services.

Investments have been diverted away from public infrastructure and public resources, and systems in New Orleans and the rest of Louisiana into privately owned entities. Public hospitals, such as Charity Hospital in New Orleans and teaching hospitals connected to Louisiana State University, were never reopened, have been shut down, or privatised. The New Orleans traditional public school system has been largely privatised and turned into a charter and voucher system.

The racial disparity in the post-Katrina "recovery" is especially pronounced. A recent Louisiana State University survey found that almost 80 percent of white New Orleans residents say that the city has "mostly recovered" from the disaster, but some 60 percent of black New Orleans residents say the city has "mostly not recovered." African-Americans, reports *fivethirtyeight.com*, are less likely to be working than when the storm hit, more likely to be living in poverty, and the racial wage gap has grown. An estimated 100,000 of the city's poorest African-Americans have been unable to return.

"Those populations that were more vulnerable before the disaster continue to remain the most vulnerable now," said Bonnie Castillo, RN, director of the RNRN program. "Katrina taught us that these types of services – public housing, education, healthcare, safety – need to be centralised and socialised. Instead, there's been a real move to decentralise and privatise."

People's World ☪



## Region Briefs

China's National People's Congress Standing Committee recently delivered a research report to the country's top legislature. The report introduced the 13th Five Year Plan from 2016 to 2020, a blueprint for the country's future development. The plan will emphasise on economic reform driven by a socialist market, as well as technological and systemic innovations. The plan will also pay closer and special attention to issues such as social security, health, education and income distribution, continuing to improve people's living standards.

China's President Xi Jinping urged the government to put more effort into raising living standards in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and the other four Tibetan-inhabited provinces, providing them with special financial support and favourable policies in order to boost social development and economic growth. The president said that measures should be taken to ensure the continuity and sustainability of development, improving living standards for various ethnic groups and increasing social harmony. He added that the government should provide even better public services as soon as possible to alleviate poverty and the reasons that lead to poverty, as well as to foster education on socialist core values. Premier Li Keqiang at the meeting said that Tibet should increase its self-development capability by promoting infrastructure building (water supply, power grids and transportation network), agricultural and tourist industries, and environmental protection.

Vietnam's capital Hanoi plans to build a new water plant by using surface water from the Hong River, intended to provide sufficient clean water to people who live in the southern and northern districts. The plant will cost over AU\$180 million and start construction in October. The plant will provide 150,000 cubic metres of clean water a day by 2018 and double the amount by 2020. This new water plant will relieve the water supply shortage in the city and gradually replace the old water pipes.

The Communist Party of Vietnam's newspaper *Nhan Dan* (People) will officially operate a TV channel from September 1 (the 70th anniversary of the August Revolution and National Day). The channel will broadcast a special program on September 2, introducing and reflecting on the country's political, economic, social and cultural factors. The channel will broadcast four news sessions a day and other programs such as on ethnic minority, culture, business and the Party. The channel director Dinh Nhu Hoan says that it is a channel of the Party, state and people.

According to a survey released by a non-profit organisation, casual workers in Japan were paid around AU\$13.5 an hour in 2013, which was a drop of AU\$3.5 from AU\$17 in 2001. The Japanese Communist Party member and parliament representative, Koike Akira, says the casual workers' annual wage decreased by more than AU\$5,750, which caused further financial difficulties for working families.

Sydney

## Film series: Wild in the streets Portraits of social & political struggle

Various Wednesday,  
Saturdays, Sundays  
until September 30

Domain Theatre – Art Gallery NSW  
[artgallery.nsw.gov.au/calendar/film-series-wild-streets](http://artgallery.nsw.gov.au/calendar/film-series-wild-streets)

## Red Matildas

Saturday 5 September 3:45pm – 4:36pm

Dir: Sharon Connolly, Trevor Graham 1985 (Aust)

Through the lives of three women, May Pennefather, Audrey Blake and Joan Goodwin, *Red Matildas* explores the social and political conditions in Australia during the Great Depression. Massive unemployment, widespread malnutrition and growing militarism at home and abroad provoked many people to political activity. For these women, the Communist Party was one of the few avenues for agitation then available. The story of their stand against injustice is illustrated with archival film providing a dramatic "grass roots" perspective on the turmoil of the Great Depression.

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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

## Search for the missing

**Twenty years on, Australian Red Cross is still helping families search for answers about the fate of loved ones missing since the conflict in the Former Yugoslavia.**

This week to mark International Day of the Disappeared (August 30, 2015) we remember the missing. Everyone has the right to know the fate of their loved ones, and across

the globe countless families live in hope that an answer will one day come.

An estimated 140,000 people were killed in conflict in the Balkans in the 1990s. Today some 12,700 – brothers, fathers and sons, sisters, mothers and daughters – are still unaccounted for.

Red Cross, which helps find those answers for families of those separated because of conflict, war and disaster still has over 70 open cases relating to the former Yugoslavia on its books in Australia. These are some of the most difficult cases we work on, because of the time it takes to get information.

For 100 years Australian Red Cross has been helping reconnect families and clarify the fate of missing relatives separated by war, conflict and disaster – from the First World War to the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami, from the conflict in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo to current crises in Syria and Yemen.

Not knowing what happened to your loved ones is an almost intolerable burden – the distress, grief and uncertainty can be devastating. Many of the Yugoslavian cases we handle result in the identification of remains and not in finding someone alive, but for many people having any kind of answer is better than the uncertainty.

In the search for answers in those Yugoslavian cases, Australian Red Cross has helped 200 families provide vital information to forensic experts in Europe to assist in formally identifying peoples' remains, and we have helped 95 families to clarify the fate of their loved ones.

Red Cross' tracing team searches no matter how long it has been since a war ended or a disaster unfolded, and for many people we are their last hope. Our service is confidential and free.

For more on the International Tracing Service, which this year celebrates its centenary, visit [redcross.org.au/tracingcentenary](http://redcross.org.au/tracingcentenary). A special exhibition telling the stories of some of the families we have helped is currently on at Melbourne's Immigration Museum. It will move to the State Library of South Australia in Adelaide in January 2016.

**Megan Goodwin  
Australian Red Cross  
International Tracing Service**

## Rise of the enraged

**Last night's wonderful 7.30 Report (ABC) (August 25) on Spain's rising 15M movement (AKA the enraged) was brilliant TV at its best. It showed ordinary people fed up with arrogant, out of touch and corrupt politicians running things and the rise of grassroots**

**people's power.**

The old system was not genuinely democratic and not meeting the political, social, economic or other needs of the people. This will all sound familiar to Australians as it is a very similar situation that exists here.

This is the type of change we need in Australia and elsewhere, a truly democratic, just system, where the people can properly participate and share the benefits of their society's development. Spain's example is illuminating the path ahead.

This is real living democracy that is essential for the well being of humanity and the planet. We cannot continue to go on with the way things are now.

A new vibrant dynamic is crying out and is being born; it is simply our only viable future.

**Steven Katsineris,  
Vic**

# Culture & Life

by  
Rob Gowland

## The global impact of regime change policy

**The USA once had possibly the most vibrant newspaper culture of any country in the world. There were hundreds of newspapers across the country, some independent, some part of chains, but of course all of them were privately owned. Capitalist propagandists point to that as a "free press", but in truth very few of those papers served the interests of the people who bought them. No, before all else they served the interests of their owners and their advertisers.**

And also, the more important ones were almost all part of chains, owned by press barons like Hearst or McCormick, the forerunners of Rupert Murdoch. Orson Welles, in his cinema masterpiece *Citizen Kane*, presented a biting satire on the US "free press" with a masterly amalgam in Kane of real life traits of both Hearst and McCormick.

Even though the US media's flaws were (and still are) many and glaring, American journalists were at least raised in a tradition that emphasised the best principles of good reporting: get it fast, gets it first and get it right. However, those same journalists very quickly discovered that those principles were honoured more in the breach than the observance, that their papers were interested above all else in boosting circulation (and hence advertising revenue) and stories that conflicted with that aim would soon bite the dust.

They might find it frustrating, but they very quickly became aware of what sort of stories suited – and what sort did *not* suit – the editorial line of the newspaper they worked for, and they cut their cloth (and their stories) accordingly.

Today there are many fewer newspapers, more tabloids (both print and television) and less opportunities for serious journalism. Nevertheless, the tradition persists and finds an outlet – for some at least – via the Internet.

For instance, in August 2015, Information Clearing House ran a lengthy article from *Consortiumnews* by US investigative reporter Robert Parry on the aggressive "regime change" strategy that the American neocons have pursued since at least the 1980s and which has left "bloody chaos" in its wake all over the world. The cumulative impact, says Parry, includes "Mideast refugees flooding Europe and overuse of sanctions, and is now contributing to a global economic crisis".

Parry should know: he broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for *The Associated Press* and *Newsweek* in the 1980s. He is the author of a trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives. His latest book is *America's Stolen Narrative*, (from Amazon and barnesandnoble.com).

In his August article, *The Case for Pragmatism*, he writes: "In tracing these patterns [of 'limited military interventions'], you can go back in time to such misguided fiascos as the CIA's huge covert operation in Afghanistan in the 1980s (which gave rise to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda). However, for argument's sake, let's start with the neocon success in promoting President George W Bush's invasion of Iraq in 2003. Not only did that war divert more than \$1 trillion in US taxpayers' money from productive uses into destructive ones, but it began a massive spread of chaos across the Middle East.

"Add in President Barack Obama's 2011 'humanitarian' interventions in Libya (via Western bombing operations to topple Muammar Gaddafi's regime) and in Syria (via covert support for rebels and sanctions against President Assad's government) – and you have two more *Mad Max* scenarios in two once relatively prosperous Arab states.

"These human catastrophes have sent waves of refugees crashing into other Mideast countries and into Europe where the European Union was already stumbling economically, still trying to recover from Wall Street's 2007-08 financial crisis. After tasting the bitter medicine of austerity for years, Europeans now find their fairly generous welfare systems stretched to the breaking point by refugees seeking asylum. ...

"Toss into this volatile mix of a Europe seemingly close to explosion the Obama administration's neocon/liberal interventionist policies toward Ukraine, where neocon holdover Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland helped orchestrate a 2014 coup to remove democratically elected President Yanukovich after he was demoted in the US mainstream media as corrupt.

"Citing 'democracy promotion' and 'anti-corruption', the Obama administration backed the creation of a coup regime that has relied on neo-Nazi and Islamist militias to serve as its tip of the spear against ethnic Russian Ukrainians who have resisted the ouster of Yanukovich. Thousands – mostly eastern Ukrainians – have died. Of course, all this was explained to the American people as a simple case of 'Russian aggression'.

"After the coup, when the ethnic Russians of Crimea voted to secede from Ukraine and rejoin Russia, that became a 'Russian invasion', justifying harsh economic sanctions against Moscow, with the Obama administration strong-arming the Europeans to forgo their profitable trade relations with Russia to punish the Russian economy. But that also added to the pressure on the European economy.

"As this madness has escalated, the neocons and their liberal-hawk pals now envision destabilising the Putin government in nuclear-armed Russia.

"The hard truth", says Parry, "is that there is a limit to the amount of neocon-induced trouble that the planet can absorb without major dislocations of the international economic system – and we may be testing that limit now. The problem is that America's neocons and their liberal interventionist sidekicks continue to put their ideological priorities ahead of what's good for the average person on earth."

Parry correctly points to the ties between neocon think tanks and "self-interested sectors, such as the Military-Industrial Complex", but fails to mention that the "horrors" that US intervention is supposedly going to fix is usually invented by the US government's disinformation machine (and even when it isn't it is certainly aggravated by US sanctions and other "non-military options").

In fact, notes Parry, "the chaos that these neocons and liberal interventionists inflict on the world ... typically ends up creating conditions of far greater horror than the meddling was [supposedly] meant to stop." ☛



Orson Welles, in his cinema masterpiece *Citizen Kane*, presented a biting satire on the US "free press".



**Rob Gowland**  
**previews**  
**ABC & SBS**  
Public Television

Sunday September 6 –  
Saturday September 12

As obesity rates skyrocket and doctors treat the first generation of children suffering from fatty liver disease, the sugar industry has come under increasing scrutiny from emerging scientific and medical studies. And make no mistake: sugar is an industry. In fact, it's a multi-billion dollar industry. And therein lies the problem.

With such a lucrative empire at stake, the corporations involved in the global production and marketing of sugar will go out of their way to protect, safeguard and build their profit-making machine. They are constantly searching for new products that can be "enhanced" by the inclusion of sugar, new ways of enticing people to consume products containing sugar. The more sugar used, the greater their profits. It is that simple.

But as the investigative documentary *The Sugar Conspiracy* (SBS Sunday September 6 at 8.45pm) shows, sugar is, in fact, toxic and for 40 years the US sugar industry (but also elsewhere) has systematically hijacked scientific study to bury the evidence. The big sugar companies have deflected threats to their empire through creative PR and tactics strikingly similar to the way the tobacco industry disguised the fact that its products were addictive and caused fatal illnesses.

The documentary *Venus and Serena* (NITV Sunday September 6 at 9.30pm) looks at the careers of African-American tennis stars Venus and Serena Williams. They have always provoked strong reactions because of their ruthless, take-no-prisoners approach. They seem to be not so much engaged in sport as in the *business* of winning tennis tournaments.

They've been winning championships for over a decade, pushing the limits of longevity in such a demanding sport. They have both also had to cope with the added burden of serious health problems. Over the course of 2011, Venus grappled with an energy-sapping

autoimmune disease while Serena battled back from a life-threatening pulmonary embolism.

Despite this, however much one might admire their skill on court, neither sister seems to generate much warmth among fans, being as likely to be viewed with suspicion as pleasure.

Allergies are on the rise, and reaching epidemic proportions, but curiously only in the western world. Professor Graham Rook believes that the changes we have made to our environment are impacting our microbiome – the bacteria that live in and on every one of us (don't you just love programs where you learn a new word, especially one you are most unlikely to ever use again?) – and that this is having a knock-on effect on our immune system.

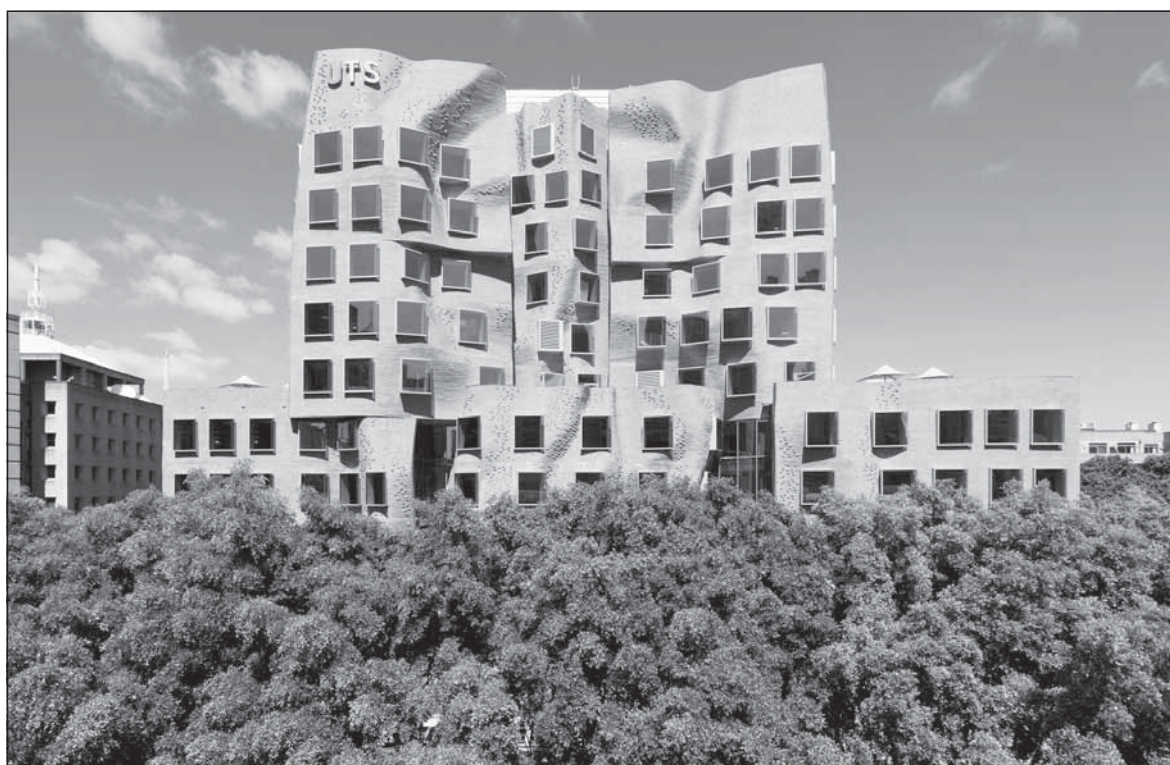
*Allergies: Modern Life and Me* (SBS Monday September 7 at 7.35pm) puts the lives of two ordinary families under the microscope to see if Rook's theory plays out in the real world. Although the program looks at everything from the food in their shopping trolley to the way they wash their hands, from a scientific point of view the sample (just two families) is simply too small to be meaningful. Clearly more research is needed, and presumably that research will generate a compelling documentary. In the meantime, we will have to make do with this experiment and whatever insights it can offer.

I have always believed that it is the role of architecture to provide buildings that best meet people's needs while enhancing both the environment and the specific characteristics of each site. But there's money in architecture if you have the ability to tap into high-profile projects. And the way to do that is to get a reputation for designing "striking" or "iconic" buildings, buildings that well-heeled corporate interests think will make them stand out in the market place.

Such an architect is the American Frank Gehry. *Getting Frank Gehry* (ABC Tuesday September 8 at 9.30pm) is the first of six documentaries commissioned by ABC TV under the umbrella title *Artsville*, "celebrating the rich breadth and depth of Australian art and culture". It is about Gehry's project to design a new Business School for the University of Technology Sydney (UTS).

Of course, if business wants "iconic" corporate headquarters, then logically the university's business school should have an "iconic" building too. Shouldn't it? The authorities at UTS certainly thought so. Hence their choice of Gehry.

Other documentaries to be shown under the *Artsville* banner include *Stranded* – the unlikely birth of the



School Of Buisness University Of Technology Sydney (UTS) –  
Artsville: *Getting Frank Gehry* (ABC Tuesday September 8 at 9.30pm).

Australian punk music scene in Joh Bjelke Peterson's Brisbane; *Cambodian Space Project* – the golden age of Cambodian rock'n'roll; *Deception by Design* – the untold story of the battle between artists and the military over camouflage design; *Cast From The Storm* – refugee children learning to face traumatic pasts by harnessing the power of drama; and *The Diplomat, the Artist and the Suit* – a look back at the work of the award-winning Australian architects and designers of the new Venice Biennale Pavilion, Denton Corker Marshall.

*Getting Frank Gehry* follows the creative process as Gehry creates UTS' new business school. The resulting building may be "iconic", but critics have labelled it a controversial eyesore. I side with them.

When the towers of the World Trade Centre collapsed on 9/11, 28-year-old Jason Thomas, a black former US Marine, risked his life to find and help rescue the last two men dug out of the wreckage. With his mission achieved, this humble and heroic man quietly walked away from Ground Zero and got on with his life, his identity unknown to anyone. He would only reappear five years later when an award winning Hollywood movie – *World Trade Centre*, directed by Oliver Stone – retold the story of the dramatic rescue but got one crucial fact wrong. Jason's character was predictably played by a white man.

*9/11: The Lost Hero* (ABC2 Wednesday September 9 at 9.25pm) is the true story of Jason Thomas, using intimate first person testimonies of some of the key people involved in the rescue. It is marred by dollops of typically American religious fervour and undiluted patriotism. ✪

Something to say?  
Write to the Editor!  
email: [tpearson@cpa.org.au](mailto:tpearson@cpa.org.au)

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Editorial Office  
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010  
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833  
Email: [guardian@cpa.org.au](mailto:guardian@cpa.org.au)

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### Sydney

*The Committee in Solidarity with  
the Workers Movement of Iran – Australia*

## Commemorating the Twenty-Seventh Anniversary of Massacres of the Political and Ideological Prisoners in Iran

In solidarity with the remaining family, relatives and friends of those fallen victims involved in the dire massacre in 1988, committed by the Islamic Republic of Iran, the committee in solidarity with the workers movement of Iran – Australia has conducted and organized the following program:

**Due to the cancellation of  
Ahmad Mazarei's trip to Australia  
please note the changes  
to the programs.**

**Program: (1) 7:00pm September 5  
CANCELLED**

**Program: (2) 7:00pm September 12**

Topic of discussion: 'Iran – Middle East: The development and consequences of the agreements of the nuclear energy.'

(Now without speaker: **Ahmad Mazarei**)

Entry: Free Entry

**Pennant Hills Community Centre**

Corner Yarrara and Ramsay Rds opposite Pennant Hills train station

More info: 0413 489 420 [proletarianunite@gmail.com](mailto:proletarianunite@gmail.com)

Sydney

# POLITICS IN THE PUB

September 3

**THE TRANSPACIFIC PARTNERSHIP (TPP) –  
WHAT WILL IT COST US AND CAN IT BE STOPPED?**

**Pat Ranaid**, Research Associate, Sydney Uni and Campaigner  
Australian Fair Trade & Investment Network;  
**Arthur Chesterfield-Evans**, Dr, Practising Medical Doctor, former  
Member NSW Parliament Upper House:

September 10

**ABORIGINAL HEALTH IN NSW: CLOSING THE GAP?**

**Peter Shine**, Director Aboriginal Health, North Sydney Local Health  
District;  
**Brad Delaney**, Chairperson, Aboriginal Medical Service Western  
Sydney;

Every Thursday 6:30 pm 'til 8:15 pm

**Harold Park Hotel**

Cnr Wigram Rd & Ross St Glebe

Charles Bradley 02 9692 0005  
[odl\\_bradley@pacific.net.au](mailto:odl_bradley@pacific.net.au)

[www.politicsinthepub.org.au](http://www.politicsinthepub.org.au)

# Palestinian liberation

## "key matter of our time"

More than 1,000 Black activists, artists, scholars, students and organisations have released this statement reaffirming their "solidarity with the Palestinian struggle and commitment to the liberation of Palestine's land and people."

The list of signatories includes scholar-activists Angela Davis and Cornel West, political prisoners Mumia Abu-Jamal and Sundiata Acoli, rappers Talib Kweli, Boots Riley and Jasiri X and Black Lives Matter co-founder Patrisse Cullors. Forty organisations signed, including the Florida-based Dream Defenders and St Louis-based Hands Up United and Tribe X, which were founded after the killings of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown, respectively, as well as the 35-year-old Organisation for Black Struggle in St Louis.

This statement was originally published at [blackforpalestine.com](http://blackforpalestine.com) and also appears in *Ebony*.

The past year has been one of high-profile growth for Black-Palestinian solidarity. Out of the terror directed against us – from numerous attacks on Black life to Israel's brutal war on Gaza and chokehold on the West Bank – strengthened resilience and joint struggle have emerged between our movements. Palestinians on Twitter were among the first to provide international support for protesters in Ferguson, Missouri, where St Louis-based Palestinians gave support on the ground.

Last November, a delegation of Palestinian students visited Black organisers in St Louis, Atlanta, Detroit and more, just months before the Dream Defenders took representatives of Black Lives Matter, Ferguson, and other racial justice groups to Palestine. Throughout the year, Palestinians sent multiple letters of solidarity to us throughout protests in Ferguson, New York and Baltimore. We offer this statement to continue the conversation between our movements:

On the anniversary of last summer's Gaza massacre, in the 48th year of Israeli occupation, the 67th year of Palestinians' ongoing Nakba (the Arabic word for Israel's ethnic cleansing) – and in the fourth century of Black oppression in the present-day United States – we, the undersigned Black activists, artists, scholars, writers, and political prisoners offer this letter of reaffirmed solidarity with the Palestinian struggle and commitment to the liberation of Palestine's land and people.

We can neither forgive nor forget last summer's violence. We remain outraged at the brutality Israel unleashed on Gaza through its siege by land, sea and air, and three military offensives in six years.

We remain sickened by Israel's targeting of homes, schools, UN shelters, mosques, ambulances, and hospitals.

We remain heartbroken and repulsed by the number of children Israel killed in an operation it called "defensive."

We reject Israel's framing of itself as a victim. Anyone who takes an honest look at the destruction to life and property in Gaza can see Israel committed a one-sided slaughter. With 100,000 people still homeless in Gaza, the massacre's effects continue to devastate Gaza today and will for years to come.

Israel's injustice and cruelty toward Palestinians is not limited to Gaza and its problem is not with any particular Palestinian party. The oppression of Palestinians extends throughout the occupied territories, within Israel's 1948

borders, and into neighbouring countries. The Israeli occupation forces continue to kill protesters – including children – conduct night raids on civilians, hold hundreds of people under indefinite detention and demolish homes while expanding illegal Jewish-only settlements.

Israeli politicians, including Benjamin Netanyahu, incite against Palestinian citizens within Israel's recognised borders, where over 50 laws discriminate against non-Jewish people.

Our support extends to those living under occupation and siege, Palestinian citizens of Israel and the seven million Palestinian refugees exiled in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. The refugees' right to return to their homeland in present-day Israel is the most important aspect of justice for Palestinians.

Palestinian liberation represents an inherent threat to Israeli settler colonialism and apartheid, an apparatus built and sustained on ethnic cleansing, land theft, and the denial of Palestinian humanity and sovereignty. While we acknowledge that the apartheid configuration in Israel/Palestine is unique from the United States (and South Africa), we continue to see connections between the situation of Palestinians and Black people.

Israel's widespread use of detention and imprisonment against Palestinians evokes the mass incarceration of Black people in the US, including the political imprisonment of our own revolutionaries.

Soldiers, police, and courts justify lethal



Members of the Dream Defenders delegation to Palestine play with Palestinian children. (Photo by Christopher Hazou)

force against us and our children who pose no imminent threat. And while the US and Israel would continue to oppress us without collaborating with each other, we have witnessed police and soldiers from the two countries train side-by-side.

US and Israeli officials and media criminalise our existence, portray violence against us as "isolated incidents," and call our resistance "illegitimate" or "terrorism." These narratives ignore decades and centuries of anti-Palestinian and anti-Black violence that have always been at the core of Israel and the US.

We recognise the racism that characterises Israel's treatment of Palestinians is also directed against others in the region, including intolerance, police brutality and violence against Israel's African population. Israeli officials call asylum seekers from Sudan and Eritrea "infiltrators" and detain them in the desert, while the state has sterilised Ethiopian Israelis without their knowledge or consent. These issues call for unified action against anti-Blackness, white supremacy and Zionism.

We know Israel's violence toward Palestinians would be impossible without the US defending Israel on the world stage and funding its violence with over \$3 billion annually. We call on the US government to end economic and diplomatic aid to Israel. We wholeheartedly endorse Palestinian civil society's 2005 call for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel and call on Black and US institutions and organisations to do the same. We urge people of conscience to recognise the struggle

for Palestinian liberation as a key matter of our time.

As the BDS movement grows, we offer G4S, the world's largest private security company, as a target for further joint struggle.

G4S harms thousands of Palestinian political prisoners illegally held in Israel and hundreds of Black and brown youth held in its privatised juvenile prisons in the US. The corporation profits from incarceration and deportation from the US and Palestine, to the UK, South Africa and Australia. We reject notions of "security" that make any of our groups unsafe and insist no one is free until all of us are.

We offer this statement first and foremost to Palestinians, whose suffering does not go unnoticed and whose resistance and resilience under racism and colonialism inspires us.

It is to Palestinians, as well as the Israeli and US governments, that we declare our commitment to working through cultural, economic and political means to ensure Palestinian liberation at the same time as we work towards our own.

We encourage activists to use this statement to advance solidarity with Palestine and we also pressure our own Black political figures to finally take action on this issue.

As we continue these transnational conversations and interactions, we aim to sharpen our practice of joint struggle against capitalism, colonialism, imperialism and the various racisms embedded in and around our societies.

Towards liberation.  
*The Electronic Intifada* ✪

**We call on the US government to end economic and diplomatic aid to Israel. We wholeheartedly endorse Palestinian civil society's 2005 call for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel.**



**Communist Party of Australia**

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

[cpa@cpa.org.au](mailto:cpa@cpa.org.au)

**General Secretary**  
Bob Briton  
email: [gensec@cpa.org.au](mailto:gensec@cpa.org.au)

**Party President**  
Vinnie Molina  
email: [president@cpa.org.au](mailto:president@cpa.org.au)

**Adelaide** Bob Briton postal: PO Box 612, Port Adelaide BC, SA 5015

phone: 0418 894 366 email: [sa@cpa.org.au](mailto:sa@cpa.org.au) web: [www.adelaidecommunists.org](http://www.adelaidecommunists.org)

**Brisbane** postal: PO Box 6012, Manly, Qld 4179 phone: 0449 476 540  
email: [bris@cpa.org.au](mailto:bris@cpa.org.au)

**Canberra** Ruben Duran phone: 0421 049 602 email: [act@cpa.org.au](mailto:act@cpa.org.au)

**Melbourne** Andrew Irving  
postal: Box 3 Room 0 Trades Hall, Lygon St, Carlton Sth Vic 3053  
phone: 03 9639 1550 email: [cpavic@cpa.org.au](mailto:cpavic@cpa.org.au)

**Head Office (Sydney)**

postal: 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

phone: 02 9699 8844 fax: 02 9699 9833 email: [info@cpa.org.au](mailto:info@cpa.org.au)

**Newcastle** email: [newcastle@cpa.org.au](mailto:newcastle@cpa.org.au)

**Perth** Vinnie Molina postal: PO Box 98, North Perth, WA 6906  
phone: 0419 812 872 email: [perth@cpa.org.au](mailto:perth@cpa.org.au)

**Riverina** Allan Hamilton  
postal: 2/57 Cooper St, Cootamundra, NSW 2590 email: [riverina@cpa.org.au](mailto:riverina@cpa.org.au)

**Sydney** Wayne Sonter  
postal: 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010 phone: 02 9699 8844

**Tasmania** Bob Briton phone: 0418 894 366 email: [tas@cpa.org.au](mailto:tas@cpa.org.au)

