



Turn to police state

Bob Briton & Tom Pearson

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull says he wants to “re-set the relationship” between the federal government and the Muslim community. He has been taking advantage of a media honeymoon following his promotion to present his government as somehow different from that of Abbott. But in the midst of all the schmoozing to camera at a recent press conference, the old confrontational line was still there. “If you find Australian values unpalatable, then there’s a big wide world out there and people have got freedom of movement,” he said.

The “freedom of movement” throw-away would be news to people seeking asylum in Australia. The question of the relationship between the government and the Muslim community flared up again following the shooting of accountant Curtis Cheng outside police headquarters in Parramatta. The job of accessing “radicalised” Muslim youth and putting them on a less destructive course is being discussed once more.

And while the PM is happy to talk platitudes to a gathering in honour of the National Day of Unity established by the Lebanese Muslim Association and pro-refugee organisation Welcome to Australia, the government’s real feelings are about to be expressed in draconian new legislation.

This Abbott/Turnbull government is seeking and has succeeded in passing legislation to bypass the courts, throwing out the most basic democratic rights. This includes, but is not limited to, the surveillance of telephone and internet data through metadata collection of ordinary citizens and the Border Force Act, which could see teachers, doctors and security staff jailed if they speak publicly of what they have witnessed.

The government’s abandonment of Julian Assange – an Australian citizen – in 2010 following WikiLeaks revelations is the most high profile example of how these laws can be used against future whistleblowers. The recent, defeated, attempt to give the Immigration Minister the power to strip people of their citizenship on suspicion is a pointer to the absolutist strategy being sought.

The recent Australian Border Force Act – passed with support of the ALP and opposed only by the Greens – turned the Department of Immigration into a secret security organisation with police powers. Under the Act it is a criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment for up to two years, for any person working directly or indirectly for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to reveal to the media or any other person or organisation anything that happens in detention centres such as Nauru and Manus Island.

“Secrecy”

Section 42 of the Act is entitled “Secrecy” and provides that a person who is an “entrusted person” commits an offence if he or she makes



Photo: Anna Pha

a record of, or discloses, what is termed protected information. An “entrusted person” is defined to mean not only government employees, but also a consultant or contractor.

The effect of these provisions will be to deter individuals such as doctors, councillors and others who have publicly voiced their concerns about the appalling conditions endured by asylum seekers in detention centres from collecting information about those conditions and then raising their concerns in community via the media and other means.

As the Australian Lawyers Alliance put it, the government is erecting an iron curtain of secrecy over what is happening and what has happened in Australia’s immigration detention system. The Act not only criminalises whistleblowers but those such as medical professionals and teachers who believe they have an ethical duty to report physical and mental harm that occurs in a systematic fashion.

“The Border Force Act goes much further than any other Commonwealth, state or territory legislation in seeking to reduce scrutiny of government actions in a detention setting,” the Lawyers Alliance says. “This legislation is antithetical to a society that professes to be a liberal democracy where independent scrutiny of, and protection for those, who lift the veil on human rights abuses ought to be the norm.”

Fifth tranche

The shocking murder of Curtis Cheng by 15-year-old Farhad Jabar is being used opportunistically to smooth the way for a fifth “tranche” of purported anti-terror legislation. Among the bills about to be launched by

Attorney-General George Brandis is one that allows for control orders on children as young as 14. The orders would put parole-like restrictions on children suspected of involvement in terrorist activity or planning. Brandis claims a 12-year-old boy came onto the “radar” of security forces in connection with suspected terrorist activity.

The community is left to wonder just how young the suspects will be who get dragged off to police headquarters for questioning. The government has defended itself from allegations of a knee-jerk reaction to the shooting of Mr Cheng by claiming that the legislation has been on the drawing board for months. NSW Premier Mike Baird wrote to former Prime Minister Tony Abbott in August about toughening Australia’s preventative detention regime for tackling terror threats and received an encouraging reply.

In fact, Premier Baird would like to extend the period suspects can be detained without charge from the current 14 days to 28 days. The federal attorney-general points out that the proposition would violate the Commonwealth’s constitution which allows for a maximum of eight days detention without charge. He added that the measure isn’t needed. People’s protections have already been gutted under previous “anti-terror” legislation.

The threshold test for arrest for commonwealth terrorism offences has already been lowered from “reasonable belief” to “reasonable suspicion”. “The orthodox power of arrest for terrorism offences at the lower threshold of suspicion rather than belief has given the police the power they need to arrest people preparing for

terrorist crimes,” Brandis told the *Australian*. While the federal A-G doesn’t feel the need to extend the legal period for preventative detention at the moment, he is not discouraging the NSW Premier from making NSW legislation harsher.

“Too much”

People in contact with young Australian Muslims are appalled at the approach. Sydney-based school chaplain Sheik Wesam Charwaki has described the legislative barrage as simply “too much.” Legal experts are stunned at Baird’s gung-ho stance. “It’s ridiculous to think of someone being locked up for 28 days without charge,” Rule of Law Institute vice-president Malcolm Stewart said recently. “This is Australia, this is NSW, we don’t do that sort of thing ...”. If Australian governments don’t do “that sort of thing” already, they clearly want to.

The message to alienated Muslim youth battling unemployment, lack of services to facilitate community involvement and other problems compounded by intolerance and racism is that they are under suspicion and surveillance. If governments were serious about their “respect” and “tolerance” agenda, they would be seeking to engage with the young people considered “at risk”. Efforts in this direction are lame by comparison with the aggressive legislative response. Capitalist governments are not interested in ensuring jobs for all, for example. They are very keen, however, to exploit division and manage it in the familiar, repressive ways.

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Guardian

Issue 1708

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Let's talk about real threats

The federal government has gone to great lengths to appear tolerant in the midst of the social tensions it has had the major hand in creating. Over a decade of opportunistic, dog-whistling slogans of the "children overboard" and "turn back the boats" sort and the policies that flowed from them, have taken their predictable toll on Australian multiculturalism. Prime Minister Turnbull launched a National Unity Day to be seen to be doing something about the disturbing outcome of his own party's efforts. The campaign called *Living Safe Together – Building Community Resilience to Violent Extremism* falls into the same damage-controlling category.

The kit associated with the campaign mentions racist groups and even anti-logging activists as part of the problem of violent extremism in Australia. But when people hear of the threat posed by "radicalised youth", most Australians would think of Muslim youth and support for IS-type groups. Such is the power of the media in tandem with essentially racist government policy. Australia is not alone in experiencing an outbreak of Islamophobia. Far right, anti-immigration parties in Europe are making ground in Switzerland, Greece, France, Hungary, the Netherlands and elsewhere.

Pauline Hanson's One Nation collapsed like a soufflé when the Howard government hijacked its immigration policies. But a new wave of intolerance with hostility to Islam as its centrepiece is getting organised. Reclaim Australia continues to organise rallies across the country. The United Patriots Front acts as a storm trooper organisation for the anti-Islam movement. It was there in Bendigo at a recent protest against plans for the construction of a mosque.

The United Patriots Front describes itself as "a nation wide movement, opposing the spread of Left-Wing treason and spread of Islamism." It believes Muslims are being used by Communists in a race war leading to the destruction of the "white race" and the establishment of a "Communist dictatorship". The UPF supported the call coming from US racist groups for people to rally with guns outside Mosques in their communities.

Adding to the irrational and dangerous trend was the recent visit of Dutch parliamentarian Geert Wilders. The smooth talking politician is topping the opinion polls in the Netherlands on the strength of his anti-Islam stance. Wilders wants all mosques in his country closed and other measures taken to stop the supposed "Islamisation" of Europe. He visited Perth to launch an anti-Islam party, the Australian Liberty Alliance. The party is a project of the "Islam-critical" Q Society. Its efforts to incite hate against the Muslim community will be added to all the others.

The proliferation of such groups at a time of capitalist crisis should come as no surprise. Capitalism has form in this regard with the rise to power of the Nazis and other fascist governments across the globe in the 1920s and 1930s. Millions of people were sacrificed to ensure the survival of the anti-human capitalist system. This danger is real once more. It may seem like a remote threat in Australia but the potential for extremist violence from the right is, despite the media's obsession with Islam extremism, the greatest one facing us.

It is not just the Communist Party of Australia saying this. Counter-terrorism expert, Curtin University's Dr Anne Aly, points to statistics from the US that confirm the right-wing's reputation for violence, including politically-motivated killings. NSW Deputy Police Commissioner Nick Kaldas described far-right marches and rallies as some of the biggest challenges facing his officers. Last year, the then Deputy Commissioner of Victoria Police, Tim Cartwright, warned of an increased likelihood neo-Nazi groups will target Muslims.

Progressive Australians must continue denouncing the spread of racism and intolerance. The demands for an end to policies of war and exclusion must become louder. So must the calls for the government to purge its ranks of members who encourage the extremists and lend them a sympathetic ear. Calls for capitalist governments to act in a proper way have to be made and, if sufficiently forceful, may have some temporary impact. The truly urgent task before us is to unite left and progressive forces against this real threat.

PRESS FUND

How enlightened Australia has become! The government imprisons on little foreign islands anyone seeking asylum by boat, to discourage others from doing the same. If the detainees get attacked, as often happens, they're flown to Australia for treatment, including abortions for women or girls made pregnant by rape - and then they're taken back to the islands for more of the same. And all this at no cost to the detainees! It's so generous maybe the government should charge them a fee and offer them repayment loans, like the equally generous student HECS scheme. If, on the other hand, you don't agree, you should send us a contribution to the Press Fund for the next issue, because we're deeply committed to helping rectify this appalling national shame. Many thanks to this week's supporters, as follows:

Garry Spiers \$150, Mark Mannion \$5, Jasmine Spence \$50, "Round Figure" \$10

This week's total: \$215 Progressive total \$5,540

Turn to police state

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Mission creep

Muslim youth are not the only people left behind by the latest capitalist crisis. Other young people are asking if they have a place in Australian society. They question the destructive, anti-people practices of that society and the conservative values hammered by governments and the media. The federal government is eager to limit these young people's beliefs and activities, also.

Government spokespersons use the term "radicalised youth" incessantly. One could be excused, given the anti-Muslim political environment, for thinking that the reference is limited to young people adopting a reactionary, fundamentalist brand of Islam. But it's more than that. Leaflets from the federal government's *Living Safe Together* program spell it out:

"When a person's beliefs move from being relatively conventional to being radical, and they want a drastic change in society, this is known as radicalisation."

"Radicalisation happens when a person's thinking and behaviour become significantly different from how most of the members of their society and community view social issues and participate politically. Only small numbers of people radicalise and they can be from a diverse range of ethnic, national, political and religious groups."

Radical change to society is seen as "drastic". It cannot be viewed as desirable or necessary. Capitalism is the root cause of global poverty and the climate emergency but the idea of changing the economic system to socialism, for example, to achieve a solution will put you in a small, highly suspect minority. All political activity must follow restricted channels or be considered borderline, "illegal" or even "violent extremism".

The example of "Karen" is given in the government's kit. She was an activist around old growth forests who belonged to a group that advocated blockading logging sites and other forms of direct action. She grew disillusioned with these tactics

and now works through the "legal system" for her "more moderate eco-philosophy". Karen's earlier activity used to be described as "civil disobedience" but that tolerant definition is no longer used by supporters of capitalism about the actions of citizens of capitalist countries.

The Communist Party of Australia doesn't advocate violence to achieve the necessary, radical change to Australian society. The history of revolutions world-wide shows that the violence attending revolutions on behalf of the overwhelming majority of the population comes from privileged sections of society seeking to preserve their power. The people are then obliged to defend themselves and their chosen political course.

The job before the protectors of Australian capitalism is to ensure the just aspirations of young people for an inclusive, supportive society remain side-tracked and frustrated. The task in front of progressive Australians is to unite the forces with a shared interest in that sustainable future. ✪



The Common Tern

Indians not connected to power grid glad Australia is producing highly moral coal

Millions of poverty stricken Indians have been seen celebrating and dancing in the streets in the wake of Australia's approval of the Adani coal mine this week, reports *Common Tern*.

Harmandeep Choudry, an Indian slum-dweller living in the western Indian state of Gujarat, told *Common Tern* that people's lives will change thanks to Environment Minister Greg Hunt's decision to approve the mine.

"We are just ecstatic," said Mr Choudry. "It has been a long time since Australia has acted morally and even though only one in five

Indians are connected to a power grid, this completely irrelevant proclamation by your Minister is truly something to celebrate," he said.

"Not since Shane Warne last played cricket in India have we seen the strength of moral character people have come to expect from Australian exports. Your Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg has spoken deeply of this and as a result we think Indians will revere him forever," said Choudry.

The Adani coal mine was approved subject to meeting "the highest environmental standards,"

according to Energy Minister Frydenberg.

"This is very moral coal," he said. "This coal doesn't behave like any coal we've previously known, and it is particularly fond of poor people with no access to electricity. It's great that Adani will be producing coal that has a social conscience and can help people living in slums, even if only psychologically," said Frydenberg.

Common Tern flies over the heads but beware not to take him too seriously ... ✪



Communist Party of Australia

Melbourne

Invites you to our Annual Celebration of the momentous Great October Socialist Revolution, the event that for the first time in history concentrated the means of production in the hands of the working class.

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\$15 Afternoon Tea included. Drinks available

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Immigration detention Take action!

Paul Brown

Anyone who arrived in Australia seeking asylum prior to 1992 was allowed to live in the community whilst waiting for decisions on their claims for refugee status. There was no difference in the treatment of those who arrived by plane or by boat without a visa. From 1976 to 1981, 2,059 people arrived by boat from Vietnam. The Fraser government worked with the UNHCR in camps in Thailand and Malaysia and approximately 70,000 Vietnamese refugees were brought here up to the mid 1980s. So that's key to the whole situation, to have people's claims assessed before they even think about getting on a boat to come here. On arrival, most lived in the various migrant hostels in Queensland, NSW, Victoria, SA and WA. On arrival here they were provided with health and welfare support, as well as English language teaching, housing and employment services.

In 1992 the Keating Labor government introduced mandatory detention for people arriving in Australia by boat without a valid visa. They were coming here to seek asylum, to seek our protection. This policy change was in response to an increase in the number of people arriving from Vietnam and Cambodia. It was meant to be a temporary measure to discourage people arriving by boat without a visa. In reality it began the system that has continued for the past 23 years and has become increasingly harsher. The notion of it being "unlawful" or "illegal" to arrive without a visa began at this time. Why do we lock people up? Because according to the myth – they must have done something wrong.

Various beliefs have increasingly taken hold, such as "illegals", "queue jumpers", "country shopping". We hear the phrase "boat arrivals are not genuine refugees, they are economic migrants" and we also hear often quoted: "we are generous".

Governments over the past 23 years and in particular since 2001 have done nothing to dispel these myths and to educate people, and I am talking about Labor and Coalition governments.

I am focusing on detention as that is the cruellest centrepiece of our policies. Three areas of detention: on the mainland, on Manus Island and on Nauru.

On the mainland, according to the Immigration Department numbers on June 30, there were 127 children, 250 women and 1,636 men in detention.

Eight hundred and forty-two people have been in detention for more than one year and 348 of these have been in detention for more than two years.

Despite the then Minister Morrison making an agreement in December last year with Senator Ricky Muir that children would be released from detention, this has still not happened. One hundred and twenty-seven children remain in detention on the mainland.

The Australian Human Rights Commission published *The Forgotten Children* report last year detailing the damage which detention does to children:

"There were no positive responses to detention – the most common impact on the emotional health of children and their parents were feelings of sadness and 'constant crying'. Almost all children and their parents spoke about their worry, restlessness, anxiety and difficulties eating and sleeping in detention."

On Manus Island, 945 men are in detention. There are also 41 men who have been found to be refugees but it is not safe for them to be released into the community.

The office of the UNHCR visited Manus Island from October 23 to 25, 2013 and raised a number of concerns in their report which states: "UNHCR was deeply troubled to observe that the current policies, operational approaches and harsh physical conditions at the RPC do not comply with international standards".

After the death of Reza Berati in February 2014, the report of the Senate inquiry into the incident at the Manus Island Detention Centre found:

"At least 51 asylum seekers sustained injuries, some of them serious, between February 16 and 18, 2014. Mr Berati sustained the most grievous injury and died a few hours after he was attacked. Other serious



Medical staff at Lady Cilento Children's Hospital call on the Federal Government to release children from detention.

(Photo: Leonie Mellor)

injuries included one asylum seeker who lost an eye and another who had a gunshot wound in the buttocks."

On the September 20, 2014 Sarah Whyte reported in *The Age* on the allegation that Hamid Kehazaie spent a week on Manus Island waiting for approval for his medical evacuation to Port Moresby. He had developed severe septicemia after cutting his foot and subsequently died at the Mater Hospital in Brisbane. Her article drew attention to the lack of medical care available on Manus Island.

On Nauru, there are 88 children, 114 women and 453 men in detention.

The UNHCR visited the detention centre on Nauru from October 7 to 9, 2013. Their report commented:

"In light of the overall shortcomings in the arrangements, highlighted in this and earlier reports, UNHCR is of the view that no child, whether an unaccompanied child or within a family group, should be transferred from Australia to Nauru."

In October 2014 the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection announced a review by Philip Moss into allegations relating to conditions and circumstances at the Centre in

Nauru. The Moss Review found that "there were both reported and unreported allegations of sexual and other physical assault" in relation to children.

The Moss Review also found that between October 2013 and October 2014, "17 children engaged in self-harm (including lip stitching by 16 and 17-year-olds, and one attempted hanging). The youngest child involved in self-harm was an 11-year-old."

What can we do?

I want to touch on six things:

1. The first thing to do is to stay informed. The media, in particular the ABC, the Fairfax press, the UK *Guardian* and *The Saturday Age* constantly monitor and report on the range of issues regarding people seeking asylum. The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, the Refugee Council of Australia and the Red Cross websites publish fact sheets and FAQs. TV programs such as the SBS series *Go back to where you came from* are also valuable.

2. Talk about the issues to friends, family, neighbours and others in the community.

3. Write to newspapers and call talk back programs.

4. Join community groups such as Grandmothers Against Children in Detention.

5. Become involved in campaigns such as those organised through GetUp and Change.org. On Thursday this week a 23-year-old Iranian woman was brought from Nauru to Australia for medical treatment after allegedly being raped in May. She had subsequently been on a hunger strike and had attempted to take her life twice. Fifteen thousand, eight hundred and forty-eight people had signed a petition to Minister Dutton to bring her to Australia. He has been on the record a number of times saying that people will not be brought from Nauru to Australia. So we can never underestimate the power of what we do.

6. Write to your Members of Parliament. In particular, the independent senators are influential and Ricky Muir and John Madigan are on the record and both have shown a strong interest in this area of refugees and asylum seekers.

Abridged
The Beacon ☘

Pete's Corner



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Sydney

CPA Port Jackson Branch
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Tuesday November 3

What is happening in Syria?

Tuesday November 17

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Safe minimum rates for owner-drivers

The Transport Workers' Union (TWU) says owner-drivers should be paid for overtime work and when taking mandatory fatigue management rest breaks.

The TWU has come out strongly in favour of a proposal to fix pay rates for owner-drivers, ahead of scheduled hearings that will help determine if the plan goes ahead.

The union has lodged a formal response to the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal's (RSRT) draft order on contractor pay, backing the move while pushing for higher rates and taking aim at its critics.

The RSRT set aside four days October 22 to 25 in Melbourne for hearings on its draft payments order, which proposes varying minimum rates for those delivering goods to supermarket chains or over long distances and includes payments for waiting time and loading and unloading trucks.

"There is nothing that has been put forward that could possibly suggest there is no need to take action to set appropriate enforceable rates for contractor drivers engaged in supplying supermarket chains or long distance operations," the TWU's submission says.

The TWU wants owner-drivers to receive overtime payments once they work in excess of 38 hours per week, similar to what employees receive. The submission claims the KPMG cost model used to determine the proposed rates did not factor this

in, leading the TWU to argue for an almost double-figure increase in the proposed hourly payment.

"On the basis that contractor drivers should be compensated for their labour at least to the level of an employee driver, the labour cost component should incorporate an overtime provision. This would increase the hourly rate in the calculations by approximately 8 percent," the TWU's submission states.

While sectors of the trucking industry have claimed the hourly and kilometre rates in the KPMG model are too high, the union says such critics have failed to provide evidence or a comprehensive alternative rates model to support their claims.

"It is not sufficient for interested parties to assert that the assumptions or costings utilised by KPMG will, in some circumstances, understate or overstate the actual costs incurred by an individual road transport driver in undertaking his or her business," its submission says.

"The question for the tribunal to consider is whether or not the approach undertaken by KPMG with respect to particular cost components represents a reasonable and appropriate standard to provide for the basis for rates contained within an RSRO. The TWU submits it does so."

The TWU has also refuted claims the RSRT's plan will, if introduced, price owner-drivers out of the market and encourage companies to switch to employee drivers.

"The TWU does not believe that these concerns are genuine. The making of an RSRO [road safety remuneration order] based upon the Draft Order should not have any effect upon the competitive position of contractor drivers, particularly if combined with effective supply chain provisions to ensure appropriate enforcement," its submission says.

"To the extent that it is suggested that hirers may choose to directly operate vehicles using employee drivers, this would only represent an attractive option if contractor drivers are currently being engaged in a manner that fails to create viable businesses for contractor drivers that at least ensure the driver is remunerated for the labour component of the work."

Furthermore, the TWU says there is no evidence presented to date to argue mandatory rates will have a significant effect on areas reliant on the trucking industry or negatively impact the economy or the transport of freight.

"Nor is there any material rising above assertion that the making of an RSRO would affect the viability of business in the road transport industry," the TWU says.

The submission supports the RSRT's proposal to require payment for fatigue management breaks. The TWU argues that owner-drivers are required to take the breaks while completing a transport task so they should be paid for them.

"Fatigue breaks required to be taken by the National Heavy Vehicle Law or Regulations represent time during which a road transport driver is necessarily engaged in order to enable goods to be transported," its submission says.

"If a road transport driver is engaged to transport goods which will require a period of seven and a half hours to complete, the driver must be provided with half an hour rest time in that period. That is, the time during which the driver is necessarily engaged to enable the goods to be transported is eight hours."



Annual payment increases

The TWU supports the RSRT's proposed 3.2 percent annual increases in payments from when the order takes place to when it is reviewed in four years' time.

"The TWU submits that there is merit in providing for predetermined increases over a period into the future in order to provide certainty and clarity for hirers and contractor drivers," it says. The tribunal recommends introducing minimum payments for owner-drivers on January 1 next year.

The TWU says an order "should be made to commence at the earliest convenient date".

"The proceedings before the Tribunal in relation to the setting of contractor driver rates have been, appropriately, ongoing for some time. It is appropriate that reasonable and enforceable standards be made effective as soon as possible," it says.

The RSRT selected Melbourne for a series of hearings from Thursday, October 22 to Sunday, October

25 on its draft remuneration order and the submissions that parties have lodged in response.

TWU national assistant secretary Michael Kaine says the hearings gave the union the opportunity to highlight the pressures owner-drivers face and the need to ensure they are paid fairly for their work.

He says owner-drivers currently are not able to make enough money to cover the costs of running their business and support their families.

"Because of this they are at risk of death and injury on the roads because of the pressure to skip breaks, speed, drive for longer with over-loaded vehicles in a stressed and tired state – all to meet unrealistic deadlines. A ruling on safe minimum rates is a key way to help stop this deadly cycle," Kaine says.

"These hearings will allow us to publicly show how vital safe minimum rates are for the entire community. For too long drivers and their families alone have had to bear the costs of pressures on the transport industry." ☘

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Nauru sexual assault

Statement
Professor Louise Newman
Professor of Women's Mental Health – University of Melbourne
The treatment of a 23-year-old pregnant rape survivor from Nauru (see page 5) highlights the profound lack of understanding of the psychological impact of rape and trauma. Blaming the victim – assuming that she is misusing the system to come to Australia and is not "genuine" in her request for termination does nothing to help us understand her torment and respond in a compassionate way.

Rape is a significant psychological trauma. Pregnancy as a result of rape is always confusing for the woman who is often unclear about how to proceed and deeply troubled. We know that this young woman has been distressed and withdrawn, not eating and has been suicidal. She has been asking for termination since around 4 weeks into the pregnancy.

She had not been responded to until around 14 weeks and the question of how to proceed became even more complicated. She is still distressed and has stated that she needs time to consider her options. She requests counselling and this has not been provided. Instead she is blamed for her indecision and seen as misusing a care system.

This response on the part of government sets women's rights back 50 years to a time when rape victims were dismissed, denigrated and belittled with huge social and psychological consequences. To treat any woman in this way is wrong; this is magnified when we treat a vulnerable and powerless refugee with such contempt.

From a mental health perspective, this young woman is in urgent need of clinical assessment and care. She needs specialist sexual assault trauma counselling and time to consider her options.

The decision about whether to

proceed with the pregnancy is hers alone and needs to be made with full support and awareness. Disclosure of her medical details and private information in the media is inappropriate.

The risk of not providing mental health support is significant and she has already been despairing and suicidal about her situation. Blaming and shaming by government ministers is something we should never sanction. The prospect of becoming a parent on Nauru and the difficulties of parenting a child who is a product of rape is extremely high risk and should not be ignored for some perceived greater political need.

Compassion for rape survivors is a core Australian value. It has been hard fought for and needs to be protected. Respect for all women regardless of their visa status is a social responsibility and standing in opposition to any violence towards women is at the heart of this issues. ☘

Police aggression against pregnant refugee

The aggressive attempts by the Nauruan police to interview pregnant refugee rape victim Abyan reveal their complete lack of concern for the privacy and welfare of a sexual assault victim.

The actions of the Australian government and the Nauruan police have left Abyan exposed to retribution and vulnerable to further harassment and abuse.

The police and media visit to Abyan's accommodation on Nauru left her in such a distressed situation that she asked if she could be taken into the detention compounds to gain some protection and security.

Such police harassment of a victim of sexual assault would not be tolerated in Australia. "Abyan's safety on Nauru has been further compromised by the actions of the Nauruan police," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

Nor should the foot-in-the-door "journalism" that was inflicted on Abyan and her friend on Nauru, be tolerated. "It is impossible to describe the distress, and even terror, inflicted on Abyan and her friend when they were photographed on Nauru.

"This new round of distress has only been possible because, against all expert professional advice, the Australian government returned Abyan to the place of her sexual assault; something that can only add to the anguish that surrounds her situation," said Rintoul. "It is clear from everything that Abyan has said, and now from media reports from Nauru, that she has never declined having a termination. She continues to be a victim of the Australian government's political agenda.

"It is imperative that the Australian government acts urgently to provide the medical care that she needs. Her mental and physical well-being remains at risk as long as she remains on Nauru.

"She should be brought to Australia, this time, with the sympathy, care and consideration that she was previously denied."

It should be recalled when the then Immigration Minister Scott Morrison declared that asylum seeker Reza Barati was killed "outside the wire" at the Manus Island detention centre.

It was a low point of the former Immigration Minister's career.

Peter Dutton should have paid more attention to Scott Morrison's mistakes before having a Morrison-moment of his own, about the Somali refugee brought from Nauru, declaring that, "The woman has decided not to proceed with the termination."

That is not the case. He has become a victim of his own propaganda.

Peter Dutton took a political decision to remove Abyan without allowing her to consult with her lawyer, and without counselling and without the medical attention she needed.

The Australian government went to extraordinary lengths to remove Abyan to ensure that the decision to remove her could not be considered by a court.

It is Peter Dutton's shameful political agenda that is being exposed.

Service contractors on Nauru are still warning Abyan not to contact Australian lawyers.

On more than one occasion, Dutton has insisted that people who are on Nauru and Manus "will not be coming to settle permanently in Australia".

The people who have been brought from Nauru to Australia have come because they have been brought by the Australian government because there is no proper medical or mental health care on Nauru. For example, some of them have contracted TB at an Australian-run detention centre on Nauru; others have disabilities that render their life on Nauru intolerable.

Peter Dutton and the Immigration Department have treated Abyan abominably. The government's respect for women has been revealed as a sham.

Abyan is still waiting for the medical attention she needs.

Background

After seizing Abyan from Villawood on the morning of October 16, the Immigration Department flew her to Honiara, in an extraordinary and desperate effort to avoid court action that might have prevented her from being removed to Nauru.

A Federal Court hearing in Melbourne convened late that afternoon was told that Abyan was already out the country and that it was intended that she be flown from Honiara to Nauru later that night.

Abyan was brought from Nauru to Brisbane on October 11 in a distressed state. She was then flown from Brisbane to Sydney on October 12.

Despite being told that she would see in-house counsellors, she has not seen any counsellors or received any medical advice. At the time of her removal from Villawood, steps were underway for her to be able to consult with independent counsellors.

"At no time has Abyan indicated to any advisers that she longer intended to proceed with the termination. Abyan has not been properly medically treated since she was sexually assaulted," says Ian Rintoul.

"The department has wilfully ignored the medical advice that Abyan not be returned to the place of her assault. They were in such a rush to get her out of the country they could not even wait for a flight to Nauru.

"I sat with Abyan at Villawood where she made it clear that she wanted to see counsellors regarding the termination of her pregnancy. She has been denied the right to seek advice from doctors. She said she wanted to thank all those who had helped her get to Australia, 'from the bottom of my heart' and hoped to be able to 'regain my health, wellbeing and energy.'

"That hope has been ripped from her, by the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection."

Abyan said at the time, "I cannot go back to where this happened to me; I cannot go to where I was raped. What happened to me there (on Nauru) is what caused me to run away from Somalia. What happened to me in Somalia is what happened to me there (in Nauru)."

"The department's efforts to remove Abyan have solved nothing," said Rintoul "She was brought to Australia because she needed urgent medical care. She has lost 10 kilograms in a month. She must be brought back to Australia, where she can get the treatment and care she needs." ❖



The fascist group carrying out a racist campaign against the construction of a mosque in Bendigo are not locals. The local council and businesses support its construction. In mid-September the group stormed the meeting of Bendigo Council in the Town Hall, causing it to be postponed. The group formed by the locals, Believe in Bendigo, is backed by 130 local businesses. It was formed to demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of the 110,000 Bendigo residents have no objection to the mosque for the town's 300 Muslims. A planned Council meeting prior to the protest was also cancelled as was a major food and wine festival that cost the town more than \$500,000. The Bendigo-based anti-mosque group announced it didn't attend last week's actions because the out-of-town fascists were "too aggressive" for them.

In Victoria, the human trafficking of workers by criminal middle-men is a growing problem, according to the state's Industrial Relations Minister Natalie Hutchins. "There's been a growth area of small to medium-sized middle-men that set themselves up as labour hire companies and base themselves on the underpayment of wages and undermining conditions and standards," she said. A survey of 1,000 foreign language job advertisements for work in Australia has found 80 percent paid below the minimum wage or award. This follows the revelations of widespread underpayment of 7-Eleven convenience store workers.

A Senate inquiry into credit card lending has heard that the Commonwealth Bank's Dollarmites campaign which promotes banking to children should be banned from schools because it is a marketing tool used by the country's most profitable bank to lure future credit-card customers. The bank's chief executive Ian Narev resounded to criticism of the influence of the big four banks in schools by calling primary school children as young as five "customers". Labor Senator Sam Dastyari said, "This is like Dracula running the blood bank."

Australia's deputy sheriff war footing in sync with the US was given lip service by new Defence Minister Marise Payne as she tried to stamp her name on the portfolio. She told a high level naval audience, including a representative from China, "While we don't take a position on competing claims, Australia continues to oppose the use of intimidation, aggression or coercion" in reference to China's legitimate presence in the South China Sea.

The removal by the NSW government of all price controls on electricity has resulted in escalating household bills. Research by the St Vincent de Paul Society shows that the retail competition margin of gas and electricity retailers has risen to \$600 per user per year. The myth of complete deregulation – in Victoria and NSW – that it gives people "choice" is exposed by the report. There are a lot of households who cannot "shop around" for the lowest prices on offer. Also, when households move onto a contract it typically runs for only 12 months, so that the household has to seek out a new supplier each year to ensure they don't face price gouging.

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Syria

US & fantasy "stray missiles"

Felicity Arbuthnot

"Any time bombs are used to target innocent civilians it is an act of terrorism."

Barack Obama, February 15, 2013.

Even to those who do not watch closely it has to be apparent that Washington's vast disinformation machine is finally out of control, seriously awry, or desperate. The latest foray in apparent media manipulation was the claim by US "anonymous sources" that four Russian missiles targeting terrorist groups in Syria, landed in Iran.

US Administrations are serial repeaters of untruths. However talking of stray missiles after bombing a Médecins Sans Frontières hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan under a week before – when coordinates of the buildings had been confirmed to US authorities again just prior to the attack – then changing the story as to how it happened four times in less days, is skating on wafer thin ice.

As Bernard Kouchner, co-founder of MSF and former French Foreign Minister wrote:

"Targeting a red cross drawn on the roof of a hospital is ... unacceptable ... a line has again been crossed." Demanding an independent investigation he stated: "It is a war crime." (UK *Guardian*, October 9)

Former US Senate candidate, Mark Dankof, speaking to Iran's Press TV regarding US claims of stray missiles in Iran believes a full-blown psychops operation towards Russia is underway. President Putin's Ministers stating that all terrorists terrorising the people of Syria are targets – thus including the US-backed ones – might be the reason.

Dankof points out:

"... two anonymous US officials (are) a basis for this claim, who in turn are quoting unspecified, uncorroborated, and unverified 'military and intelligence information'." Moreover: "This is laughable ... and underscores the blizzard of lies spun by the American government, Israel, Saudi Arabia, the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council, and Turkey, about what has been going on in Syria, and who is clearly responsible for the 250,000 Syrian deaths, one million wounded, and 9.5 million displaced citizens of that country," he added.

"The blame is clearly on the aforementioned states, who have financed, supported, and introduced the ... extremists and terrorists into the sovereign state of Syria in an illegitimate attempt to overthrow the legitimate and recognised government ... This is not simply evil, but illegal.

"The lies being woven by Zionist corporate media in the West about Russia are an attempt to conceal the alliance of ISIL, Al-Qaeda, and affiliates with American, Israeli, British, French, and Saudi intelligence, and to conceal the obvious fact that the Russian air strikes are hurting these terrorist groups militarily, even as they take place legally because the sovereign government ... of Syria has formally requested Russian assistance."

Invention

Dankof pointed out that on Thursday October 8 the "White Helmets" became CNN's source for their reports on the stray missiles, the network citing them as "an independent medical team" in Syria.

However:

"The truth is that the White Helmets are an invention of state intelligence agencies and NGOs who seek the overthrow of the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. This organisation has special links to the British government in particular, and (also) to the PR firm Purpose Inc, to lobby for military intervention against Assad.

"They are closely linked to the Avaaz NGO which has the same agenda, and is linked to the Open Society Foundation of George Soros ..."

Australian born Jeremy Heimans, co-founder and CEO of Purpose Inc ("We create new organisations and ventures to tackle issues where mass participation and collective action

can unlock big change; Purpose moves people to remake the world") is also a co-founder of Avaaz.

However, back to "stray missiles": a story speedily silent in the Western media. Russian General Musa Kamali told Sputnik News Agency (October 9, 2015): "We have no reports of any Russian missiles crashing in Iran ... those media reports alleging that Russian missiles aiming at Syria hit Iran are blatant lies.

"If the people making those claims had any proof, they would have certainly presented it," he said. Quite.

Of course US expertise excels not alone in stray missiles, but in planned assaults on hospitals and other buildings protected under international laws. Hospitals are specifically protected under Article 20 of the Geneva Convention, amongst other binding international laws.

Intended indiscriminate destruction was demonstrated, in 2003, when: "The scenes of downtown Baghdad in flames (made it) abundantly clear why US officials insisted on covering up a reproduction of Pablo Picasso's 'Guernica' at the UN Security Council during Secretary of State Colin Powell's February 5 (2003) presentation of the American case for war against Iraq." Picasso's painting commemorates a Basque town razed to the ground by a German aerial assault in April 1937 during the Spanish Civil War.

At the onset of their illegal invasion US aircraft were making bombing runs on Baghdad at the rate of 1,000 a day with many parts of the city described as "an inferno". Holocaustal war crimes of enormity. (Holocaust: "Great destruction resulting in the extensive loss of life, especially by fire.")

Further, the US is also no stranger to stray missiles. As *Time* magazine reported in April 2003, just two weeks into America's bombardment:

"... in the past week, three US Tomahawks have gone missing in the rocky plains of south-eastern Turkey en route to Iraq, several hundred miles from the war zone. Five more went astray in Saudi Arabia, and a handful of others have broken up in Iran and reportedly, Syria."

Criminal

Bombing in Iraq, as everywhere "liberated" by America was criminally indiscriminate, Edward Herman cites Fallujah as a chilling example and of war crimes of enormity:

"According to Dr Hafid al-Dulzanni, head of the Commission for the Compensation of Fallujah Citizens, the US assault (of 2004) destroyed some 7,000 houses, 840 stores, workshops and clinics, 65 mosques and religious sanctuaries, 59 schools, 13 government buildings, two electricity stations, three water purification plants, along with several railroad stations and sewage purification plants, among other things. *Hospitals were an explicit target* and weapons like white phosphorus and uranium-loaded projectiles were used, all adding up to massive violations of the laws of war." (Emphasis mine)

Fallujah's illegal destruction both targeted and indiscriminate was a metaphor for all Iraq.

On the day the US military entered Baghdad (April 8, 2003) they declared war on journalists, a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol 1 and a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

First US troops directed a missile at the Al Jazeera offices in Baghdad killing correspondent Tariq Ayoub and seriously wounding several others. It should be noted that: "The attacks came amid broadcasts showing some of the mounting slaughter being conducted by US troops throughout the Iraqi capital."

The surviving Al Jazeera staff sought shelter in nearby Abu Dhabi TV which then also came under US attack. Abu Dhabi TV correspondent, Shaker Hamed, issued an on air call for help reporting: "Twenty-five journalists and technicians belonging to Abu Dhabi television and ... Al-Jazeera are surrounded in the offices of Abu Dhabi TV in Baghdad." Note the



Médecins Sans Frontières hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan.

"surrounded", these were seemingly no "stray" airborne missiles, the tanks were firing from near point blank range. "Kill the messenger" comes to mind.

Hamed called for relevant agencies "to intervene quickly to pull us out of this zone where missiles and shells are striking in an unbelievable way."

Kiss of death

In a now chillingly familiar story, also reminiscent of the MSF hospital in Kunduz: "Al-Jazeera had written to US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on February 23 giving the precise location of its office so as to avoid being targeted." Giving co-ordinates to the US military is, it appears, literally the kiss of death.

Al Jazeera was also attacked by the US troops in Afghanistan at the time of the US invasion, as Iraq, destroying their offices.

Having targeted Al Jazeera and Abu Dhabi TV, the US troops turned their attention to the Palestine Hotel, where two hundred journalists and world wide media were based. They killed Reuters correspondent Taras Protsyuk and Jose Couso of Spanish Telecinco TV. Three other journalists were injured, the hotel was extensively damaged. The US military had of course, been informed that the Palestine Hotel was the media's base.

The previous day, in Basra, Al Jazeera offices were targeted by two US missiles which failed to explode and outside Baghdad on the highway both Al Jazeera and Abu Dhabi TV cars, clearly marked as such on roof, sides and hood were targeted, miraculously no one was hurt.

ITV journalist Terry Lloyd was murdered near Basra by the US within four days of the invasion – also in a clearly marked car. Cameraman Fred Nerac and their Lebanese assistant Hussein Osman in an accompanying car were also killed. French cameraman, Daniel Demoustier, injured in the attack said the US were firing on media vehicles "to wipe out troublesome witnesses".

Given the examples above and the continuing litany of such attacks by US troops (and British) during the occupation, he seems to have hit the nail on the head.

Serial offender

When it comes to war crimes the US is a serial offender. In the 1991 assault on Iraq all water purification plants were deliberately destroyed on the orders of US Central Command, as were clinics, schools, separate

Education Ministry stores, media centres and radio stations obliterated across the country. Over 50 percent of all livestock was destroyed, with farms and herds, chicken farms special targets. Iraq was the world's largest exporter of dates – the US clearly regarded date palms as an enemy and bombarded great ancient, majestic groves too.

The women and children who nightly went to the great, reinforced Ameriyah Shelter on the outskirts of Baghdad were also incinerated – the US had satellites over the Shelter which recorded the women and children entering as dusk fell and leaving at first light.

The factory that made baby milk powder was reduced to rubble and described as a "chemical weapons factory." The machinery was provided, installed and maintained by a company in Birmingham, England – and could only have been used to provide baby milk.

Also destroyed were plants which produced such basic medical supplies as syringes, pain killers and antibiotics. A well worn path followed in other US bombings as a civilian pharmaceutical factory, Al-Shifa ("The Cure") Sudan in August 1998 when missiles also rained down on Afghanistan. Two US embassies in East Africa had been attacked, so as ever, proof-free Judge, jury and executioner, the US randomly bombed.

Barely noticed have been the numerous US attacks on ancient Yemen (population just 24.41 million) before their ongoing proxy attack by current Chair of the UN Human Rights Council, Saudi Arabia.

Ninety-eight US missile and drone attacks struck Yemen between 2002 and 2015; 41 in 2012, 26 in 2013 and 14 in 2014, with other attacks in 2009, 2010 and 2011. The cost in human life is hidden and shaming. In May 2010 alone an "errant" US drone killed five people. In December 2009 a US Cruise missile killed 41 souls.

In 1999 former Yugoslavia was decimated – with stray US missiles landing in Macedonia, hitting Belgrade's media centre, the Chinese Embassy, markets, obliterating train passengers, all "liberated" from life the American way.

The year 2011 brought involvement in Libya's destruction – another metaphor for the monstrosity of lawless might presented as benevolent saviour.

Let us hear no more phoney allegations of stray missiles before the hell of the real ones have been accounted for.

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Fukushima

Throwing radioactive caution to the wind ... and the sea

Cynthia McKinney

In the aftermath of Japan's Fukushima nuclear power meltdown following the tsunami of March 11, 2011, the international community has totally failed in keeping the public properly informed and protected from the fallout.

Scientists and environmental officials continue to express concern, even now, at the unusual events and wonder about the causes. At the same time, the media present the facts, but fail to make any connection whatsoever to the ongoing state of affairs stemming from the tragic 2011 events at Fukushima.

Here are a few recent examples:

Seabird die-off reported around Kodiak, Alaska: A September 2015 audio report from Robin Corcoran, biologist from the Kodiak Wildlife National Refuge, confirms local reports that "emaciated" bird carcasses are washing up on Kodiak Island shores. Corcoran states that the birds were "showing up in places where people don't normally see them ... foraging, trying to find forage fish."

The KMXT (public radio for Kodiak Island, Alaska) narrator quoted Corcoran as saying it was unclear what caused the deaths but "could be related to the birds' inability to catch forage fish," while it was evident "the birds have no fat on their bodies and they don't have any food in their digestive systems which indicates that they starved."

Bird die-off

Corcoran confirms that the last major bird die-off experienced in the region was January through March of 2012. The program concluded by stating that multiple species of birds have declined in number in other Alaska regions, according to surveys taken by the Wildlife Refuge. The next day, KTOO (non-commercial educational radio station, Juneau, Alaska) reported that Corcoran speculated on several causes for the die-off: "flight feather moult," "whale die-offs" or "harmful algal blooms ... related to warm ocean temperatures."

A few days before the Kodiak reports, *The Daily Astorian* headlined: "Scientists Searching for Answers in Bird Die-Off." Julia Parish, speaking on behalf of the University of Washington's Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team, states that the spikes in deaths are two to three times higher than normal. Josh Saranpaa of the Wildlife Centre of the North Coast was quoted as saying, "Every bird we're seeing is starving to death. It's pretty bad." Saranpaa added, "When you see so many starving, something is not quite right out there."

The warming ocean and the toxic algae bloom are offered as possible explanations for the die-offs. Warming oceans, it is explained, cause the fish to swim deeper than the birds can dive while the toxic algae bloom runs from California straight up to Alaska. Parish concludes that it has been a really "odd" year with multiple regional scale events. She says that there is not much that researchers can do except wait and watch.

Julia Reis of the *Half Moon Bay Review* writes with understatement, "There have been noticeable changes in the Pacific Ocean that have caused difficulties for marine life of late."



Birds all over Alaskan beaches.

Gerry McChesney of the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge says that the die-off has him all the more "baffled" because of the strip of cold water in his area full of food for these birds. In my mind's eye, I can see McChesney scratching his head as I read that he considers poisoning, starvation, and El Nino as possible causes for the die-off. The article ends with the following comment by McChesney, "We might have to see some other problem in the ocean before we understand what's causing the die-off."

ENENews.com points to the problem of the massive die-off happening from San Diego to Alaska – all along the West Coast of the US. It highlights in various reports words like "strange", "unprecedented," "crazy", "worst", with this iconic quote from *The Sacramento Bee*: "Our gut tells us there is something going on in the marine environment."

Tracer elements

Behrens published an open access 2012 model simulation of cesium 137 (¹³⁷Cs) released into the Pacific Ocean as a result of the Fukushima incident and found that after the first two to three years, tracer elements descended to depths of more than 400 metres, reached the Hawaiian Islands after about two years, and North American territorial waters after about five to six years.

Although in decreased rates of concentration from the initial injection, the entire northern Pacific basin becomes saturated with tracer fluids in this simulation. This study finds that the radioactivity remains at about twice pre-Fukushima levels until about year nine when radioactivity tapers to pre-Fukushima levels. This research specifically does not investigate the biological effects of increased radioactivity in the Pacific Ocean.

In 2011, Lozano investigated reports of man-made cesium atmospheric detection as far away as the Iberian Peninsula. Mangano and Sherman take their 2015 investigation of Fukushima radiation exactly into a potentially politically uncomfortable, but essential space: biological effects. They look at "congenital anomalies" that occurred in the US western states after the arrival of radioactive Fukushima fallout. And they found that while in the rest of the US, birth defects decreased by almost four percentage points, on the US West Coast, defects increased by 13 percent.

Even US soldiers are now experiencing Fukushima Fallout with exposure hitting home in health effects and birth defects. The Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution explains how Fukushima radioactivity reaches ocean life from both air and sea discharges. These air, ground, or sea discharges, by the way, continue 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Arne Gundersen of *Fairewinds.org* estimates that by 2015 at least 23,000 tanker truckloads of radioactive water have been released into the Pacific Ocean "with no end in sight."

Profit v prudence

Please tell me whatever happened to the Precautionary Principle in public policy? Is profit more important than prudence? Finally, a 2015 study by Synolakis and Kanoglu finds that the Fukushima tragedy was preventable. They conclude that it was due to design flaws, regulatory failures, and "arrogance and ignorance", and that Fukushima Daiichi was "a sitting duck waiting to be flooded."

With all of this as background, the media provide coverage of marine anomalies mentioning global warming, even El Nino and toxic algae, while the elephant in the room is

Fukushima radiation. It is this silence that is deafening! It makes me wonder who are the beneficiaries of the nuclear power business? Why is the nuclear power lobby so strong when the dangers are clearly so evident? Instead, we are told: "It is fossil fuels that are destroying the planet. Nuclear power is clean and safe." I'm also told that nuclear power is a sign of modernity; it is the future. But solar, geothermal, and wind are rarely given a mention by these same individuals. I'm also told that by posing these questions, I'm fear mongering.

I do want to know why in the face of what appear to be Pacific Ocean die-offs, El Nino is mentioned and not the Fukushima-related elevated levels of radiation. As long as there is a palpable lack of transparency in the mainstream media's ordinary coverage of extraordinary environmental events, that includes what one senses as a reticence to discuss the obvious, I predict that there will be a proliferation of citizen journalists and citizen scientists seizing upon each piece of new data trying to make sense out of a government-approved narrative that just doesn't make sense – again. US President Obama stated, "We do not expect harmful levels of radiation to reach the West Coast, Hawaii, Alaska, or US territories in the Pacific."

We should not rely on government officials to tell us the truth about the full extent of Fukushima's fallout: incredibly, Obama advised the people of the US not to take precautionary measures beyond "staying informed". Canada immediately suspended measurements of radiation around Vancouver. The government of Japan has not been trustworthy from the very beginning about the extent of the tragedy.

RT ✖

The media provide coverage of marine anomalies mentioning global warming, even El Nino and toxic algae, while the elephant in the room is Fukushima radiation.

Turkey

Election turmoil will have global impact

Conn Hallinan

As Turkey gears up for one of the most important elections in its recent history, the country appears, as one analyst noted, to be coming apart at the seams:

- Longstanding tensions with the country's Kurdish population have broken out into open war.
- A Kurdish-led left political party is under siege by right-wing nationalists and the terrorist organisation, the Islamic Front. Independent journalists have been attacked by mobs led by leading members of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.
- Erdogan, his family, and leading figures in the AKP have been entangled in several major corruption schemes.
- The economy has stalled, inflation is on the rise, unemployment is at a five year high, tourism is tanking, and the Turkish lira is plunging, driving up the national debt.

All Turkey lacks these days is a rain of frogs and rivers of blood, but there is still time before the November 1 election.

Some of these plagues are long standing, but most are the direct result of Erdogan's determination to reverse the outcome of last June's election that saw the AKP lose control of the parliament, and the president's grand plan for an all-powerful executive – run by him – died.

In the June 7 election, Erdogan's AKP lost its absolute majority in the legislature. The defeat was mainly due to a breakthrough by the Kurdish-led, leftist, People's Democratic Party (HDP) that took 13.1 percent of the vote and won 80 seats, seats that in the past usually went to the AKP.

Repression, attacks, suicide bombings

Almost before the final tallies were announced, Erdogan moved to prevent the formation of a government and force another election. Key to this has been an all-out campaign to suppress the HDP and prevent the party from getting at least 10 percent of the vote, the required threshold for representation.

And in true Old Testament fashion, he has unleashed the furies.

First, he ended negotiations and a

two-year old ceasefire with the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) and began bombing Kurds in Syria and Iraq. He also charged that the HDP was a front for the PKK and demanded that the HDP's dynamic leader, Selahattin Demirtas, be charged with supporting terrorism. HDP offices have been targeted by right-wing nationalist mobs from the AKP and the extreme rightist National Action Party.

Several anti-Erdogan newspapers and magazines were also set upon, attacks that the government either ignored or belatedly condemned. The kind of suicide bombings that plague much of the Middle East have made an appearance. Some 32 leftist Kurdish activists were killed on July 20 in the border town of Suruc, and on October 10 a peace demonstration in the capital, Ankara, organised by the HDP was bombed, killing more than 100 people and wounding hundreds more.

While the culprit in both cases was likely the Islamic State, paranoia is running rampant these days. Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu blamed the PKK – extremely improbable, given that the rally was protesting the war against the Kurds – and HDP leader Demirtas blamed the government. Others charge it was the work of the National Action Party's "Gray Wolves," a shadowy death squad that killed thousands of Kurds and leftists in the 1980s and '90s.

Not only did the government remain silent for several days after the massacre, Turkish security forces broke up memorial demonstrations in Ankara and Istanbul.

A decade ago, Turkey was at peace with its neighbours, its economy was humming, democracy was flowering, the country's coup-minded military relegated to the barracks, and the 40-year war with its Kurdish population appeared to be over. Turkey, with its efforts to find a peaceful solution to the nuclear crisis with Iran, had also become an international player.

Today, Turkey is engaged in an unpopular war in Syria, its economy is troubled, its people are polarised, its relationships with Egypt and Israel are hostile, the Kurdish peace is shattered, and democracy is under siege. It has alienated Russia, Iraq and Iran, and even failed to get re-elected to the UN Security Council.

What happened?

Much of it goes back to the man who has dominated Turkish politics



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

these past 12 years, and who would like to run the country for another decade, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. He bears limited responsibility for some of this. For instance, the economy is bad, but so are most economies worldwide. But much of what has happened in Turkey – for good and bad – is in large part due to his creation of a moderate Islamic regime that curbed the power of the military and the secular elites who had dominated Turkish politics since the nation's foundation in 1923.

Erdogan and his allies – allies he has since fallen out with – reined in a military that had carried out four coups since 1960. He also made peace with the Kurds, ending a war that took 40,000 lives and cost US\$1.2 trillion. A side benefit for that was that many rural and religious Kurds migrated into the AKP, giving it a significant edge over all other parties in the parliament.

But things began to go off the rails in 2010, when the Arab Spring took the Middle East by storm and Turkey made two fateful steps: backing insurgents trying to overthrow Bashar al-Assad in Syria, and supporting the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

The first step trapped Ankara in a quagmire, wrecking its relations

with Russia, Iraq and Iran, and the second was a bad bet: the Egyptian military, bankrolled by Saudi Arabia, overthrew the Brotherhood in 2013.

It is all this *sturm und drang* that makes these elections so critical for the AKP, and Erdogan in particular. A failure to win an outright majority will be seen as a repudiation of the Kurdish war and Ankara's Syria policy, and may resurrect the corruption changes that the AKP has managed to dodge so far.

"For him, this is existential," one former Turkish official told the *Financial Times*. "There is still accountability in this country and he knows it."

This "existential" nature of the November 1 vote is the reason why Erdogan has pulled out all the stops, but polls show that the outcome is likely to be much like last June's election. The AKP may pick up a percentage point or two, but it will fall far short of the majority it requires to push through its constitutional changes and create an all-powerful presidency.

If the polls are correct, Turkey will have a divided government, and that will create its own dangers.

Dangers loom

First, there is the president's increasingly authoritarian strategy.

Erdogan, for instance, says he is no longer bound by the constitution because he is the first directly elected president in Turkish history. He won that post with 52 percent of the vote in 2014. Presidents are normally appointed by the parliament and are supposed to be non-partisan.

Second, the AKP may form an alliance with the ultra-right-wing National Action Party, which would almost certainly mean an escalation of the war against the Kurds and put into positions of power an organisation that celebrates violence and is openly contemptuous of democracy. While the merger would still not give the AKP the 400 seat super-majority it needs to amend the constitution, it

would have a chilling effect on political activity.

There is also the possibility of a "grand coalition" government with the secular People's Republican Party, the second largest in the parliament. But that would require sharing power, not one of Erdogan's strong suits.

There are, however, strong counter-trends.

In spite of Erdogan's flirtation with authoritarian rule, Turkey is still a democracy, and its military shows no interest in intervening in civil affairs. Indeed, there is some unrest in the military over the Kurdish war, and the government has been denounced at several military funerals. The military has also made it quite clear that they have no interest in getting involved in the Syrian civil war.

Of course, the allies' discomfort is a reflection of the fact that while the AKP government draws no distinction between the Islamic State (IS), the PKK, and the latter's Syrian offshoot, the Kurdish Democratic Union, the allies consider the Kurds their most reliable and effective forces against the IS. The Turks recently complained to Russia and the US about their arming of Syrian Kurds, a complaint that neither country is likely to pay much attention to.

The next few weeks

The next few weeks will be fraught with danger. The AKP and the ultra-nationalists will try to suppress the vote, particularly in Istanbul and the Kurdish east and south. The PKK declared a ceasefire for the election.

In less than two weeks, the Turks will vote in an election that will have major regional and international implications. Its outcome may decide whether the Middle East slides deeper into war and chaos, or begins to move in the direction that the Arab Spring originally envisioned.

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Portugal

President re-appoints minority right-wing government



President of Portugal, Anibal Cavaco Silva.

Emile Schepers

On Thursday, October 23, the President of Portugal, Anibal Cavaco Silva, re-appointed Pedro Passos Coelho as Prime Minister, rejecting an offer by the majority in parliament to form a centre-left government.

Cavaco Silva and Passos Coelho both belong to the Social Democratic Party, which, in spite of its name, is a right-wing party in Portugal. Passos Coelho's coalition, which pairs the Social Democratic Party (PSD) with the also conservative CDS-People's Party (CDS-PP), came to power after the 2011 elections in which voters punished the incumbent Socialist Party for having signed onto harsh austerity measures demanded by the "Troika" of the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Commission (the executive of the European Union).

Unsurprisingly, the right-wing coalition government went ahead and imposed harsher austerity on the Portuguese people, with a typical program of privatisation, budget cuts, cuts in wages and pensions and attacks on labour rights. Portugal currently has a 12 percent unemployment rate and a 20 percent poverty rate, with a much worse situation for young workers, many of whom have been forced to emigrate. Yet it still carries heavy debt.

In the October 4 elections, the governing coalition got 38.6 percent of the popular vote and 107 seats in the 230 seat parliament, a considerable loss since 2011 and not a majority but still a plurality. The Socialists gained ground, getting 32.3 percent of the popular vote and 86 seats in parliament.

Parties to the left of the Socialists made significant advances: The Portuguese Communist Party and its Ecological Green Party allies got 8.3 percent of the popular vote and 17 seats in parliament (one more than previously), and the Left Bloc swept forward with a popular vote of 10.2 percent and 19 seats in parliament, nearly doubling their previous representation. So among them the Socialists, Communists-Greens and

Left Bloc have 122 seats, as opposed to Passos Coelho's 107.

In Portugal, the president is supposed to work with the representatives of the parties in the legislature to put together a workable government. In theory he should be a facilitator and not a partisan. But Cavaco Silva signalled, early on, that he wanted to see the current austerity policies continued.

He first tried to get Prime Minister Passos Coelho to form a governing coalition with the Socialist Party, but Socialist Party Secretary General Antonio Costa complained that the prime minister wanted to do this on a "take it or leave it" basis without making any concessions on austerity. So Costa turned to the Communist-Green alliance and Left Bloc, and worked out an agreement with both whereby they would guarantee support for a Socialist Party government, only on condition that the Passos Coelho government be ousted, and that stronger efforts be made to turn back austerity.

Both the Communists and the Left Bloc are in favour of Portugal leaving NATO and the Euro currency zone, but did not make this a condition of their support for Costa and the Socialists.

Costa then presented Cavaco Silva with this agreement, whereby he would form a new government with Communist-Green and Left Bloc support. Cavaco Silva angrily rejected the offer and re-appointed Passos-Coelho's coalition as a minority government.

The President called for parliamentarians from the Socialist Party to dissent from their party's instructions and support this government. Almost immediately, Costa announced that he would present a motion in parliament to bring this government down. He will certainly have Communist-Green and Left Bloc support for such a motion. He must make sure, however, that his own parliamentary caucus holds firm.

Cavaco Silva said that the plan for a government of the Socialist party, supported by the Communists, Greens, and Left Bloc, was undemocratic because the PSD-PP coalition had got a plurality in the elections,

even though the socialists and their allies actually had a majority in parliament and a small majority in the popular vote.

A big objection was that the Communists and Left Bloc want Portugal to get out of NATO and out of the Euro currency zone. This is true, but they had explicitly told Costa that this would not be a condition for their supporting his government, so it is a pretext. Cavaco Silva saw withdrawal from NATO as a betrayal of Portugal's honour. The Portuguese government brought the country into NATO under the vicious "New State" regime of dictator Antonio D'Oliveira Salazar.

Cavaco Silva's reason for defying the parliamentary majority and reappointing the Passos Coelho government reflected his own right-wing and anti-communist political views, but also pressure from European Institutions. In the weeks after the election, the Troika had demanded that the Portuguese government present a budget for its review right away, to make sure austerity measures were strong enough. Portugal is not in as bad shape as Greece, but the Troika still has some power to do this. Portugal also signed onto the European Stability Pact, which requires that members of the European Union adhere to very strict limits on running budgetary deficits. Jeronimo de Sousa, the Secretary General of the Portuguese Communist Party, has called this drastic instrument the "pact of death" because it forces harsh austerity measures on poor countries like Portugal.

It and the other austerity mechanisms have been the focus of recent mass labour and people's protests in Portugal and other European countries. The rhetoric that Cavaco Silva used emphasized the need for Portugal to keep its commitments to "Europe", lest it face fiscal and economic disaster. So both the president and the prime minister are on a collision course with a considerable sector of the public.

In Portugal there is a presidential election in January 2016, in which Cavaco Silva's actions will surely be an issue.

People's World ☛

Cavaco Silva's reason for defying the parliamentary majority and reappointing the Passos Coelho government reflected his own right-wing and anti-communist political views ...



Region Briefs

Vietnam's National Assembly (NA) held its 10th meetings in Hanoi, discussing a new law to supervise activities of the NA with the People's Councils. Most NA deputies supported the law, as it asked the NA, its Standing Committee and People's Councils to hold question-and-answer sessions during meetings. Deputies, such as Huynh Nghia, suggested that chief officials should answer questions during the sessions, not by their subordinates. The NA will review the outcomes of the 2011-2015 national development programs and new development programs for the period of 2016-2020. It will also discuss the implementation of 2015 state budget and estimate the budget for 2016.

Parents of students from six public junior high schools in the Japanese province of Shiga were angry about the Self Defence Forces' (SDF) new recruitment advertisement, as the provincial SDF PR department had donated toilet paper to the schools which were printed with cute characters and QR code saying "SDF personnel wanted: please feel free to inquire". One parent said children might believe that their schools encouraged them to join the SDF. Local assembly representative, Moriwaki Toru, stated that the schools were irresponsible, as they did not consider the impact of the distribution of the toilet paper. Moreover, the Japanese Education Ministry planned to ban high school students joining in political activities within school clubs, even during after school hours or on holidays. High school students across the country recently participated in an increasing number of political movements, expressing their opposition to the government's war bills.

China's top political advisor, Yu Zhengsheng, attended the fifth Congress of Society for Promotion of Guangcai (Glory) Program, meeting with private entrepreneurs who contributed to poverty alleviation. The program was founded in 1994, aiming to alleviate poverty with the help from private business. Yu urged entrepreneurs to take social responsibility that benefit the people, reduce poverty and boost development in rural areas. He also asked all sectors to support and guide the program.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee recently published new rules on discipline, aiming to better manage its 88 million members. The new rules include 53 old articles that members were forbidden to do and added eight new articles that emphasise moral ethics building. The rules asked members to strengthen belief in communism and socialism with Chinese characteristics, serving the people wholeheartedly and keeping the Party's good traditions. The rules state that members should separate private interests from public interest, put the public interest first, uphold simplicity and fight against extravagance. The new rules are also stricter.

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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

"Climate change hurts people"

A drought-affected New South Wales farmer, community leaders from Indigenous Australia and Kiribati, and Oxfam Australia's Chief Executive Dr Helen Szoke joined more than 20 Australians from all walks of life at Parliament House to meet with key decision-makers to urge substantially stronger action on climate change.

The meetings coincided with the start of the last major UN climate change meeting (in Bonn) before the Paris (November 30-December 11) negotiations, where the world is expected to agree on a comprehensive new climate agreement.

As an international development agency, Oxfam is seeing the world's most vulnerable people facing greater droughts, floods, hunger, homelessness and disease. The coming year is expected to be particularly bad, with the added effect of El Nino on top of the hot and dry conditions that many regions are already experiencing linked to climate change.

From extended drought in parts of Australia, to our Pacific neighbours facing more destructive cyclones and food and water shortages due to changing weather patterns, climate change is hurting people. The press conference will outline how this is happening.

The group of Australians from all walks of life from throughout the country are taking their strong messages of concern to those in power who need to hear it most.

We're at a crossroads. The government must choose whether Australia will be part of a sustainable, prosperous future, or whether it will abandon our poorer neighbours and future Australians by continuing to swim against the tide of international action on climate change.

Real action on climate change means upping our weak emissions

reduction targets, committing new funding to support developing countries, like those in the Pacific, to meet the challenges of climate change, and phasing out coal from our energy supply.

Angus Hohenboken
Oxfam Australia

Who pays?

If the consumer wants a service outside normal working hours why can't the business or the provider pass on the cost directly to the consumer.

If the consumer doesn't want to pay the extra cost then they won't use the service outside normal working hours.

If the consumer really wants and needs a service outside normal working hours then they should bear the cost not the employee.

Rebecca Rankmore

Penalty rates are just

I am a nurse working in the public hospital system in eastern metropolitan Melbourne. Nurses and



Sydney

Vigil demanding that the USA stop the blockade on Cuba

54 YEARS IS ENOUGH

Tuesday November 17 at 5.30 pm
Outside the US Consulate in Martin Place

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

doctors must work weekends, evenings, nights and public holidays.

Penalty rates are just and serve to keep our health system viable.

There is no other way the community can expect a hospital to keep emergency services, intensive care, acute and specialist medical units functioning. Aged care and community care services also require 24 hour on-call-work hours.

Mental health services also

lack enough funding to care for our communities, and very vulnerable people, along with 1 in 5 of us who will experience mental health issues. Health is an economic buttress, and we need to strengthen this system, not dismantle it.

Alternatively, nurses could be paid better base wages overall, which would compensate unsocial hours.

Catherine Saniga

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Hypocrisy riding high



Local Kumeyaay Indians opposed to the canonization of Father Junipero Serra gathered at the Mission Basilica San Diego de Alcalá for a prayer. (Photo: KC Alfred)

During his recent American visit, Pope Francis thrilled a lot of Hispanic Americans by canonising a Hispanic American priest, one Father Junipero Serra. Serra earned his Catholic brownie points by converting lots of California's Native Americans in the later 18th Century. But California's Native Americans are less than ecstatic at Serra's being elevated to Sainthood.

There have even been protest demonstrations. Louise Miranda Ramirez, tribal chairperson for the Ohlone Costanoan-Esselen Nation in Monterey, California, said: "I hear people saying 'Oh, he loved the Indians.' I don't think so. ... His goal was to remove our culture. 'You have to beat 'em, torture 'em, remove them from their homeland'."

Valentin Lopez, Chair of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, went so far as to write a letter to California's Governor Jerry Brown, in which he labelled Serra's methods of converting the natives as "especially coercive and cruel". In an interview Lopez said it was Serra who developed the tactic of the Mission system, which effectively meant the capture and enslavement of Native Americans.

"Once they came into the Mission compound, they could not leave. The men were separated from the children and from the women. They were kept in separate compounds. ... At night, the [Spanish] soldiers would go in and repeatedly and continuously rape the women." This was apparently part of Serra's tactics, since he believed that the only way the Indians could be "controlled" was "with blows".

California's coastal Indian communities

were the most densely populated native lands north of Mexico City. "California's Monterey Bay once had 30,000 Indians living there", said Lopez. "At the end of the mission period, there were fewer than 100."

Lopez pointed out that when the Pope was in Bolivia on a recent trip, he apologised to Indigenous communities, in these words: "Some might rightly say, 'When the Pope speaks of colonialism, he overlooks certain actions of the Church.' I say this to you with regret: many grave sins were committed against the native people of America in the name of God."

Lopez found it hypocritical of the Pope to then go on and Canonise Father Serra. "What they did in [South and Central America] is exactly what they did in California. So how can it be a sin in all the Latin American countries, but not a sin in California?"

How indeed?

Speaking of hypocrisy, Washington's aggregation of ultra conservatives, frustrated at not being able to ride roughshod over the peoples of the world whenever they wish, are once again clamouring for Russia to be stripped of its power of veto on the UN Security Council. All five permanent members of the Security Council namely Britain, China, France, Russia and USA have the power of veto. The Security Council deals with the serious matter of peace and war. If the USSR hadn't had the power of veto, the USA in the decades after WW2 would have used the UN as a shield for its own plans to "roll back Communism", as it in fact did over Korea.

When the US puppet regime in South Korea staged a provocation against the Socialist North, it was conveniently (by accident or design) timed to coincide with a Soviet boycott of the proceedings of the Security Council in protest against other US diplomatic provocations. This not only allowed the US to obtain a UN vote condemning North Korea but also allowed the US and its allies to invade the Korean Peninsula as a "UN force" engaged in a "police action" to restore peace.

After the USSR resumed its place on the Security Council, US attempts to widen the war, even to use nuclear weapons (US Supreme Commander Douglas MacArthur wanted to use them against China), could not now get Security Council approval. If the power of veto had not been there, the second half of the 20th Century would have seen the USA using the UN to advance imperialism's agenda of aggression and oppression all over the Middle East, SE Asia, Africa and Latin America on an almost unimaginable scale.

Now Washington is once again claiming that "Russian vetoes" are jeopardising the Security Council's legitimacy. That's diplomat's speak for "the US can't get its own way – boo hoo!" US author and syndicated columnist Stephen Lendman, writing in *Global Research*, says that Russia's veto power "challenges [Washington's] hegemonic agenda, blocking efforts to authorise war on Syria among other important actions."

The US envoy to the UN, Samantha Power, is described by Lendman as "one of numerous neo-cons infesting the Obama administration."

He also calls her "an advocate of endless wars dressed up as humanitarian intervention." Power herself has used the supposed problem of Russian vetoes to float the idea of the US pulling out of the world body (she calls it "forum shopping"). She declared: "If a particular body reveals itself to be dysfunctional, then people are going to go elsewhere." Presumably to NATO and the like.

Finally, here at home, we have the hypocrisy of Malcolm Turnbull, hypocrisy so gobsacking that even Liberal Party members, couldn't cop it with out jeering. On October 10 Turnbull addressed the Liberal Party Council and, apparently forgetting that he was talking to insiders, told them that the Liberal Party was "not run by factions".

Elvis Kipman, who was there, relates what happened next: "The response from the Liberal true believers was, on this occasion, not to believe. He received bursts of jeering laughter. ... Turnbull became quite flustered, caught unawares that a partisan audience could let him down by not feigning that they were being told the truth...."

"We have not heard an explanation from Turnbull himself apart from, 'Well, you may, you may, you may dispute that, but to tell you by my experience, we are not run by factions, nor are we run by big business or by deals in back rooms' (more laughter from the audience)".

The Libs not run by big business? Now why would that make anyone laugh? ☘

Progressive cinema in Toronto

Bill Mayer

TORONTO, Canada: Still one of the largest film festivals in the world, and growing, the Toronto International Film Festival is now boasting around 400 films in a 10-day jam-packed extravaganza of celluloid, or should I say digital data. Film production, funding and distribution are changing drastically, and it was apparent at the festival that the trend is away from movie houses. The convenience of online streaming is replacing the traditional way to watch films in a dark theatre with strangers. DirectTV, Amazon, iTunes, Netflix and Starz are changing the filmic landscape, with many watching films on iPads, computers and even cellphones.

Funding is also moving away from the big expensive Hollywood blockbusters toward crowd-funded independent films, with final credits rolling endlessly, listing every supporter who gave money online. And as for production, there are now even feature films that are made entirely with an iPhone! Movie making has reached the masses!

However, the thrill of cinema and the smell of celluloid are apparent everywhere in Toronto where hundreds of celebrities appear with their films and participate in panel discussions before enthusiastic packed houses. I was able to see only about 45 of the 400 choices, but this is still enough for me to give you a heads up what might tickle a progressive's fancy.

Michael Moore took centre stage after his lengthy hiatus from filmmaking since his 2009 blockbuster satire, *Capitalism: A Love Story*. His newest, *Where to Invade Next*, is nothing like the title implies. It's a much happier and gentler Moore, far from a treatment of America's endless empire building.

It was one of the few major films that came to the festival without a distributor – and it left that way. Moore reportedly turned down enticing offers from Netflix and other online sources, preferring to save his film for theatrical release. Not surprising, considering the love he has for his theatres up in Traverse City, Michigan, the State Theatre being one of the most successful in the country. For him, nothing matches the excitement of a communal sharing of art in a large darkened room with bouncing lights on a giant screen.

But it wasn't long before the film was picked up by a new distributor

excited to promote the film properly, starting out with a Midwest premiere in Chicago on October 23 followed by the Philadelphia Film Festival and eventual theatrical release this year.

It's often obvious from even the titles, what films would be of interest to progressive viewers. *Trumbo* is about the Hollywood communist writer Dalton Trumbo, *Truth* is about Dan Rather's last hurrah at CBS, *Je Suis Charlie* documents the mass killings at the satirical newspaper Hebdo's headquarters in Paris, *Nasser* is a doc that covers the span of the great Egyptian leader, *A Young Patriot* is a Chinese doc that spans five years in the life of a young man dedicated to Mao's communist teachings, and many more titles which will be reviewed in future columns.

Of course the host country usually figures prominently in a film festival, and there is no lack of great films here in Canada. Long known for inspiring cinema and great talent, Canada is also known for its great tradition of creating thought-provoking documentaries, many of them produced and distributed by one of the world's greatest national cinema funds, the National Film Board of Canada. Torontonian Avi Lewis, along with his wife Naomi Klein, produced probably the most progressive film at the festival, *This Changes Everything*, based on her sizzlingly critical book about climate change.

Alan Zweig (*When Jews Were Funny*) offered *Hurt*, a penetrating and honest portrayal of a tragic hero of Canada, Steve Fonyo, who ran across Canada with one leg, a year after the more famous Terry Fox was unable to complete his journey. But Fonyo immediately fell from glory, into drugs and crime, and spent the rest of his life dealing with the demons of being once-famous and barely alive. Another penetrating Canadian doc is *Guantánamo's Child: Omar Khadr* which tells the tale of the Canadian Muslim imprisoned in America's torture chamber on Cuban territory.

Music personalities figured prominently in this year's Festival, with insightful films covering the lives of Janis Joplin (*Janis: Little Girl Blue*), Keith Richards (*Under the Influence*), country singer Hank Williams (*I Saw the Light*), Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble (*The Music of Strangers*), Palestinian singer Mohammad Assaf, winner of the Arab Idol contest (*The Idol*),

jazz trumpeter Chet Baker (*Born to Be Blue*), and almost a doc on R&B singer Aretha Franklin (*Amazing Grace*), which was withdrawn at the last minute by the artist. It was the year of withdrawals as another film, *London Road*, based on a musical about the murder of London sex workers in 2006, was taken out of service by the director over contractual disagreements with the producers.

Famed American documentarist Barbara Kopple, after starting her career with award-winning political docs (*Harlan County*, *American Dream*) has recently made biopics about music celebrities including Woody Allen (*Wild Man Blues*), the Dixie Chicks (*Shut Up and Sing*), and now the soul singer fighting cancer, Sharon Jones. Although they all carry an obvious political progressive message, the biopics feel like high-end infomercials, especially the recent *Miss Sharon Jones* and her previous study of the iconic news-magnate, editor Katrina vanden Heuvel in *Hot Type: 150 Years of The Nation*. In both of these she follows the lead figures, Jones and vanden Heuvel, wherever they go, with cameras in their faces, often in close-up nostril shots, with angles straight out of glamour magazines. But then, who wouldn't want to hire one of America's greatest documentarists to promote your image? Tragically Jones's cancer has returned, halting her plans to travel with the film.

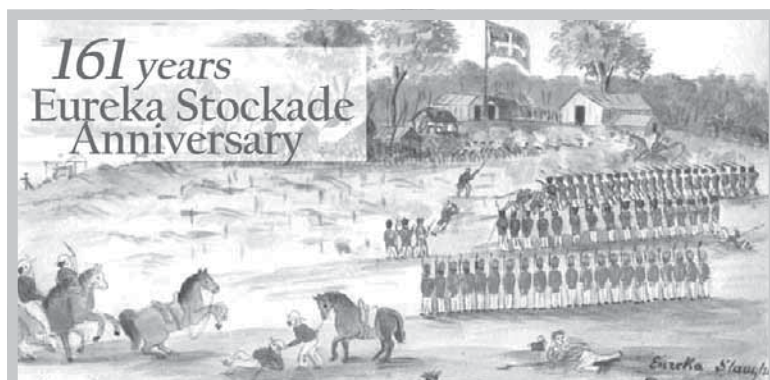
TIFF has become a major film market, with buyers and sellers dealing with the new realities of the digital age. But the city still goes all-out to provide the greatest film experiences for film lovers. Artistic Director Cameron Bailey, who started out with the festival as a programmer for the Planet Africa section, reflects, "I learned film is an art and it's also a business. And some people treat film as a product. And occasionally you get invited for breakfast with Agnes Varda and you remember why it's all worth it."

Festival planners offered one of the best gifts to film aficionados for closing night, a free screening of Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, considered by many critics as one of the greatest films ever made. And to top it off, this newly restored digital version was shown in Toronto's premiere venue, the Roy Thomson Hall, with members of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra playing the award-winning Bernard Herrmann soundtrack live. It doesn't get much better.

People's World ✪



Michael Moore's *Where to Invade Next*.



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October 29

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN SCHOOLS: IS OUR MOST IMPORTANT SOCIAL INSTITUTION SUSTAINABLE? WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GONSKI PLANS UNDER ABBOTT & SHORTEN?

Raewyn Connell, Prof, Education Department, University of Sydney; Maurie Mulheron, President NSW Teachers Federation;

November 5

THE COMMONWEALTH HOMELESSNESS BILL – PROGRESS, RESISTANCE AND RHETORIC: WHY NEITHER SIDE OF POLITICS UNDERSTANDS THE URGENCY

Katherine McKernan, CEO Homelessness NSW; Mary Perkins, Shelter NSW;

November 12

THE ONGOING SAGA OF OPPRESSION OF TIBETANS: WHY CHINA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD CONTINUES TO DECLINE

Tenpa Dugdak, Free Tibet Movement; Karen Collier, CPACS;

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In the death throes of a racist dream

Susan Abulhawa

In 1845, Lieutenant Colonel George Gawler submitted a report detailing the potential for Jewish colonisation of Palestine. The obstacles he foresaw had to do with resources and the feasibility of convincing Jews to immigrate to Palestine. No consideration was given to the native Palestinian population already living there for centuries.

Decades later, in deciding the fate of Palestine, then a so-called British mandate, Lord Balfour declared: "We do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country." But faced with a Palestinian revolt, the British retreated, realising the mistake of ignoring the will and humanity of the indigenous population. Then, when Zionists made their first conquest of Palestine, expelling over 80 percent of the native population, David Ben Gurion (the Polish-born David Grunn) predicted triumphantly that the native population would surely disappear. "The old will die and the young will forget," he said.

He too was wrong, and many decades later, as this Zionist fantasy did not materialise, Israel hypothesised that brute force and complete colonisation of the land would at last achieve the eradication of Palestine's indigenous society. Army chief of staff, Raphael Eitan put it most honestly when he said: "When we have settled all the land, all the [Palestinian] Arabs will be able to do about it will be to scurry around like drugged cockroaches in a bottle."

Again, faced with the same mistake, Israel simply escalated its brutality. "We have to kill and kill and kill, all day, every day," explained an Israeli professor; and a prominent Israeli lawmaker raised this call to genocide to include the murder of Palestinian mothers and their babies, whom she called "little snakes". And now, like a petulant spoilt child who did not get his way on the Iran deal, Netanyahu gathered his gangsters, stomping their feet on holy ground to bring down the house, an epic tantrum for President Obama, as if to say look what I can still do.

The new escalation to eradicate Palestine now is to enlist the civilian population of Israel to arm itself and join their military thugs against our unarmed civilian population. Videos and news of recent random executions, stabbings, and the roaming bloodlust of mob vigilantes abound on the Internet.



And yet. We remain.

Our ancient society, though fragmented and brutalised, stands defiant, persistent, passionate and steadfast. Though traumatised and leaderless, we remain, rebellious, brave and resolute. No matter where we are, occupied or displaced and scattered around the world – Gaza, the West Bank, Jerusalem, refugee camps of Lebanon or Syria or Iraq, exile in a Diaspora that reaches every corner of the world – we continue to act in concert, bound by a collective wound, one that Jews ought to understand.

How surprised they must be. How utterly demoralised they must feel to have such great military might and somehow stand weak and small against our rocks.

How breathless you, Israel, must feel. How devastating it must be to fail so miserably at one task, year after year, decade after decade. To have repeatedly intensified tactics of death and cruelty but still not managed to crush us. To cart off small children by the thousands, and still find that thousands have taken their place the next day, hurling rocks at your tanks

and guns. To imprison them so young as they cry with fear, scream for their mothers, only to grow up unbroken, defying and fighting you still. To demolish homes and whole towns, only to find that we rebuild and multiply faster than you. To see us dance, study, marry, and have babies through your endless siege, occupation, and slaughter campaigns. To see us live after you have shredded our hearts with grief and loss. To bomb and destroy our schools, prevent children and teachers from reaching their classrooms, and still face our literacy rate that rivals your own.

How frightened you must feel that we still do not fear you; that in the recesses of our being, we are a triumphant people and instead, it is you who is frightened. How profoundly disappointing it must feel to destroy our villages, dig in Silwan, under Al Aqsa and Al Shakhra decade after decade and still come up without forensic evidence to support your narrative, and simultaneously be faced with the multitude of Palestinians whose native claims are present, obvious, written, well known and undisputed.

How frustrated you must feel that those

of us you barred from our homes, whom you thought would forget, continue to write, create, protest, and expose you abroad, gathering more and more momentum for the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions campaign that is breaking the back of your lies. How defeating it is to spend millions of dollars to harass us abroad in order to silence us, only to find our voices grow louder.

Israel has made and remade the mistake of every colonial enterprise before them, because colonialism always arrives with a sense of supremacy that does not look upon native peoples as human. That is why Israel has always underestimated us. They do not understand, nor do they appreciate that we possess the most impulsive human lurch toward freedom; that our instinctive tendency is firmly toward dignity.

I see Israel's dilemma. I see their fear. The pain of a racist dream that came so close but not quite. And I can understand that the way they thrash about now – violent, ugly, insanely insecure and incomprehensibly cruel – is the throes of Zionism's death.

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