

Solidarity

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STOP THE SLAUGHTER IN GAZA

LABOR MUST

CUT ALL TIES

WITH ISRAEL



GAZA

The Houthis and the threat of a wider war

PALESTINE

Hamas and Palestinian resistance

IMPERIALISM

Why capitalism breeds war

Solidarity **WHAT WE STAND FOR**

Capitalism is a system of crisis and war

Capitalism is a system of competition, crisis, and war based on exploitation of workers, producing for profit not human needs. Although workers create society's wealth, they have no control over production or distribution. Through environmental degradation and climate change capitalism has become a threat to humanity's future and life on earth.

Workers power and socialism

The working class has the power to challenge the existing system and create a better world. We stand for socialism, a society based on democratically elected workers councils which would control and plan the economy to produce for human need. The authoritarian states like Russia and China are not socialist but forms of state capitalism where workers have no power.

What about elections and parliament?

Parliament, the army, the police and the courts are institutions of the capitalist state that maintain the dominance of the ruling class over the rest of society. The capitalist state cannot be taken over and used by the working class, it must be smashed. Workers need to create their own state based on workers councils.

While parliament can be a platform for socialists, real change doesn't come through parliament. It is won by mass action in strikes, protests and demonstrations.

We are internationalists

The struggle for socialism has no national boundaries. We oppose everything that turns workers from one country against those from another; we campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose borders and immigration controls, and welcome migrants and refugees.

We oppose imperialism and support all

genuine national liberation struggles. We oppose Australian nationalism.

Australia is an imperialist power established through genocide on stolen Indigenous land. We support the continuing struggles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for land, justice and self-determination.

Oppression and liberation

We oppose sexism, racism, homophobia and transphobia. We fight against all forms of discrimination and the oppression of women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, migrants, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. We oppose discrimination against Muslims and people from the Middle East.

Linking up the struggles

We are active building movements for environmental and social change and economic equality. We are active in our unions and work to build the organisation and self-confidence of the rank and file. We work to bring activists together to strengthen each movement and build a common struggle against capitalism.

Educate, agitate, organise

Socialism cannot be introduced from above, by parliament or parties. The emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself.

Solidarity is an organisation of activists, anti-capitalists and revolutionary socialists committed to socialism from below. We are part of the International Socialist Tendency.

A democratic revolutionary party is necessary to deepen resistance to capitalism and to build a movement to overthrow the system. Solidarity members are beginning to build such a party out of today's struggles against the system.

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

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Melbourne

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Things they say

**Are they stopping the Houthis? No
Will they continue? Yes.**

President Joe Biden on the impact of the US airstrikes on the Houthis

I think that the United States has played a responsible role in the region.

Anthony Albanese backing US airstrikes in Yemen, Syria and Iraq

I love you, Bibi, even if I can't stand you.

Biden expresses his half-hearted effort to restrain Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

We have the opportunity to rebuild and expand the land of Israel. This is our final opportunity.

Haim Katz, Israeli cabinet minister from Netanyahu's Likud party, calls for more ethnic cleansing

Why do we give them water?

Deputy mayor of Jerusalem, Aryeh King, at an Israeli anti-UNRWA aid agency protest

For them to call for a ceasefire is Mr Putin's message. This is what he would like to see.

Former speaker of the US house of representatives, Democrat Nancy Pelosi, attacks pro-Palestinian protesters as somehow connected to Russia

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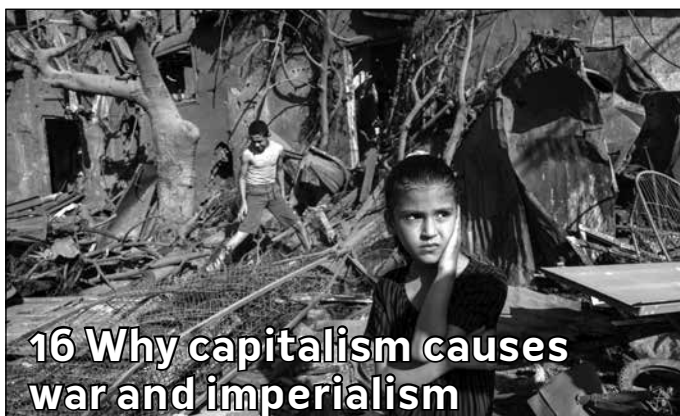
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Israeli army runs racist social media channel

AN ISRAELI Defence Forces (IDF) unit has been confirmed as the source of a macabre, racist Telegram channel that posted sickening videos of death and destruction in Gaza.

Images of the bodies of Hamas fighters were posted with the caption “Exterminating the roaches... exterminating the Hamas rats... Share this beauty.” Another read “Garbage juice!!!! Another dead terrorist!! You have to watch it with the sound, you’ll die laughing.”

One video depicted an Israeli army vehicle repeatedly running over the body of a dead Hamas fighter. A video of a riot of hundreds of Israelis at a medical centre in Tel Aviv, following rumours Hamas members were being treated there, was captioned, “What heroes, they came to screw the Arabs.”

The channel posted thousands of videos and photos that it said were “exclusive from Gaza”. Military officials admitted to Israeli newspaper *Ha’aretz* that the channel was run by members of the IDF’s Operations Directorate.

EY on government climate job while lobbying for gas

CONSULTING FIRM EY has been exposed as working for the oil and gas industry at the same time it was being paid by the federal government for advice on its major climate programs.

EY began working for the Australian Energy Producers (AEP) lobby group, formerly known as the Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association, in October to produce a report that called for “ongoing investment in gas supply” and warned against transitioning away from gas.

It also prepared a submission for it on the government’s gas strategy.

All the while it was also making \$510,000 on contracts for the federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water including on “analysis and advice on emission outputs for oil and gas facilities”.

Last August it was caught working for Santos at the same time as it took a \$67,375 contract for the NSW government on its “future of gas statement”.

Israeli settlers want to colonise Gaza



ISRAELI SETTLERS held a conference last month calling for the re-establishment of settlements in Gaza after the war—with over 1000 people and nearly a third of the government’s cabinet members in attendance.

The 11 cabinet members and 15 members of the Knesset there included a number of those from Netanyahu’s Likud party and well as far right parties.

Israel was forced to withdraw settlements from Gaza in 2005. The conference, titled “Settlements brings security”, promoted a map of Gaza with those settlements returned plus another six new settlements the Zionists want to establish.

Far right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir called for Palestinians to be “voluntarily encouraged to leave” Gaza. Chants of “death to Arabs” could be heard following his speech.

Daniella Weiss, the former far right mayor of a settlement in the West Bank called for Palestinians in Gaza to be starved to force them to leave, declaring, “we don’t give them food, we don’t give the Arabs anything, they will have to leave. The world will accept them.”

Police encouraged autistic child to stage terror attack

ANTI-TERROR POLICE covertly encouraged an autistic 13-year-old’s obsession with Islamic State after his parents sought support, derailing rehabilitation efforts.

As a result the boy was later charged with terrorism offences and spent three months in custody.

The child was an NDIS recipient with an IQ of 71, classified as very low.

A magistrate granted a stay on the charges against him last year, condemning the Joint Counter Terrorism Team and the AFP for conduct that falls “profoundly short of the minimum standards expected of law enforcement offices [sic]”.

After his parents approached police for help they began to manage him “therapeutically”, appointing a psychologist and seeking support from an imam.

At the same time a covert operative began chatting relentlessly with him online, encouraging him to try to make a bomb or kill an AFP officer.

The magistrate found they had also organised, “a deliberate, invasive and totally inappropriate search of [the boy’s] bedroom without lawful excuse”, using “subterfuge” by telling the family they were there to provide support under the Countering Violent Extremism program.

Anglicare rejected Indigenous carer due to same-sex relationship

ANGLICARE SYDNEY refused to consider an Indigenous aunt as the long-term carer for an Indigenous child because she was in a same-sex relationship.

The nine-month-old child is now living with non-Indigenous carers with a view to adoption. The baby’s mother, who has struggled with addiction and an acquired brain injury, entered into a voluntary agreement with Anglicare accepting this as a temporary, but expressed concern the parents were not Indigenous and were not family members. Anglicare did not assess a cousin she suggested as a foster parent and refused to consider the aunt “as per the agency’s policy” on same-sex parents.

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) knew this and had filed a care plan with a court, ignoring the principles of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act.

The decision is only being challenged because a DCJ caseworker filed an affidavit notifying the court that Anglicare had not contacted the alternative Indigenous carers.

AbSec, the peak body for Aboriginal children and families, said it had received a number of calls from Indigenous LGBTIQ+ people who said they had been ruled out as carers in similar situations, saying it was “appalled but not at all surprised”.

Power and toll road profits soaring

HIGHER POWER prices have boosted the profits of energy company AGL, with the company quadrupling its profit for the six months to the end of December to \$399 million. Margins on consumer prices tipped in an extra \$124 million while higher wholesale power prices at its Loy Yang A and Bayswater coal power plants pulled in it \$293 million.

Toll roads operator Transurban has also had a good six months, with profits up to \$1.33 billion before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation over the period. Its revenue was up 6 per cent due to increased traffic levels. While we pay and the cost of living soars, they profit.

EDITORIAL

Israel launches murderous assault on Rafah as Albanese sits by

WITH MORE than 30,000 dead and much of Gaza reduced to rubble Israel's genocidal assault shows no sign of relenting. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected another ceasefire offer from Hamas, demanding "total victory".

And Israel is now bombing Rafah, where half of Gaza's population, some 1.4 million people, are crowded into a town that held just 270,000 before Israel's attack.

Palestinians were told Rafah would be safe as they fled the death and destruction elsewhere. Asaad Hassan, a Palestinian displaced from Gaza City to Rafah told *Al Jazeera*, "We have nowhere else to go but to the grave."

Rain and flooding have overwhelmed thousands of makeshift tents. People are dying from the cold, hunger and disease.

Plans for the Israeli army to storm Rafah will "exponentially increase what is already a humanitarian nightmare" UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said.

Israeli snipers have shot dead dozens of civilians trying to get to hospitals in Khan Younis and Rafah.

Humanitarian aid has been deliberately withheld. One in ten children are acutely malnourished. At least 300,000 people still in the north of Gaza are on the verge of famine.

Instead of demanding an end to the horror, the Albanese government is complicit.

Israel was humiliated when the International Court of Justice ordered it to "take all measures within its power" to prevent acts of genocide. The preliminary judgement found it was plausible a genocide was taking place, refusing to throw out the case as Israel demanded.



It specifically called on Israel to "take immediate and effective measures" to provide "urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance".

Instead, the day the ICJ handed down its ruling it declared, without evidence, that UNRWA staff were involved in the 7 October attack, demanding its allies withhold aid funding to the largest humanitarian organisation in Gaza.

The Australian government leapt at the chance—withholding \$6 million in funds.

The speed of the Australian government's actions, without waiting

Above: Protesting Anthony Albanese's support for Israel outside the Lowy Lecture in Sydney in December

Photo: Aman Kapur

even for the most basic evidence, again exposed the Labor government's support for Israel.

It continues to back the US and UK bombing against the Houthis in Yemen in retaliation for blocking Israel ships.

The US's airstrikes on 85 separate sites in Syria and Iraq also show the danger of the war spreading further across the region.

Break Australian support

The Labor government is deeply tied to the US alliance, pledging \$368 billion for the AUKUS nuclear submarines and well as billions more for its military build-up against China.

Australia supports the US and Israel as part of the Western alliance. Fighting to break our government from support for the horror unfolding in Gaza will build the pressure on Israel to end it.

Tens of thousands have rallied for Gaza every week since Israel's murderous onslaught began.

But it will take much more to force Australia to end its support for Israel's genocide. The media, schools, universities, and all the major institutions of society are implicated in backing the war.

Teachers have been disciplined simply for wearing pro-Palestine badges and journalists critical of the appalling media coverage have been sacked.

We need to deepen support for Palestine across society by exposing the media's lies and pro-Israel bias. Rank-and-file union groups for Palestine can play a key role taking the arguments into workplaces.

And we need action that goes beyond street marches to disrupt business as usual.

The recent blockades of ZIM shipping at ports in Melbourne and Fremantle and protests at arms manufacturer Ferra in Brisbane have raised the need for sanctions and union bans on companies implicated in the genocide.

We need to break Australia's arms shipments and economic ties with Israel.

Students will join a nationwide strike on 29 February as universities resume. Class walkouts can build towards wider campus action targeting links between Australian universities and Israel.

Student walkouts can also pose the need for workers' strike action—just as unions did during anti-Vietnam War movement.

We need to go all out to force Albanese and the Australian government to stop supporting the slaughter.

Labor's Stage Three plan still lets the rich off easy

ANTHONY ALBANESE'S shift on the Stage Three tax cuts is a result of the outcry from unions and the left at the monumental unfairness of the plan, costing around \$20 billion a year.

Low income earners will now get bigger tax cuts, with everyone on up to \$140,000 a year better off.

But this is hardly a working class policy. The wealthy will still get massive tax cuts, with over \$4500 a year handed to anyone earning \$200,000.

That's three times as much as workers in the middle, earning around \$70,000, who get just \$1400—or \$15 a week. That nowhere near makes up for the surge in the cost of living over

the last year.

Instead of giving them handouts, Labor needs to get serious about taxing the rich. Negative gearing deductions for property investors could cost the government \$100 billion over the next four years. Superannuation tax concessions, which go disproportionately to the wealthy, will cost around \$50 billion this year.

But Labor is too committed to serving the top end of town to contemplate anything like this. Its Stage Three changes are a continuation of its modest, small target approach. We won't get real action on the cost of living without a fight.

.....
It will take much more to force Australia to end its support for Israel's genocide

ZIM, blockades and the unions: Lessons from Webb Dock

By Ian Rintoul and Adam Adelpour

FOR ALMOST four days in January protest action with workers refusing to cross the community picket succeeded in preventing work on the ZIM shipping-line at Webb Dock in Melbourne.

It was another blow against the Israeli government and an indication of the kind of action that can extend the Palestine movement to stop business as usual and the murderous assault on Gaza.

The brutal use of riot cops armed with pepper spray and horses to end the protest was yet another indication of the Australian state's support for Israeli genocide in Gaza.

The wharfies at Victoria International Container Terminal (VITC) showed great courage, refusing to be bussed into work after WorkSafe officials indicated they could be safely escorted by police through the community picket.

But instead of the community picket line building greater solidarity between the workers at Webb Dock, their union and the Palestinian movement, it has produced serious tensions between the protesters and the MUA.

Tensions

The Israeli shipping line ZIM has been the target of protests in Australia and around the world.

In Australia, following the protest in Sydney in November where 23 people were arrested under harsh anti-protest laws, there have been community pickets in both Melbourne and Fremantle. In both cities liaison with MUA officials and rank-and-file workers meant that the wharfies respected the community picket and so refused to work the ZIM ship.

This was possible because of the health and safety issues posed by the picket, which meant the union could legally refuse to work and still be paid. Fremantle pickets, for instance, stopped two shifts on 2 December.

On Friday 19 January, Trade Unionists for Palestine (TU4P) Melbourne declared a community picket, hoping to repeat the success in stopping shifts going in to work on a ZIM ship.

This time, workers' respect for the community picket meant there was enthusiasm for extending the action. Initially the community picket held on the basis of workers' safety concerns.



Above: Protesters outside Webb Dock in Melbourne during the community picket

But by Saturday afternoon, WorkSafe officers had declared that it was safe for police to escort workers onto the dock. The workers had lost their legal safety justification that allowed them to refuse to work.

On Saturday afternoon the company arranged a bus to escort workers through the picket line. To their credit, the MUA workers refused to board the bus. The company responded by standing workers down without pay.

The MUA called to end the picket on Sunday once they could no longer cite health and safety reasons for refusing to work. However this was ignored, damaging the relationship with the MUA and placing a question mark over any future community pickets on the docks.

No shortcuts

To get around the wharfies' reluctance to use the bus, the company organised boats to get them to the dock.

By Sunday morning the ZIM ship was being worked. Unfortunately some people on the picket resisted arguments from members of TU4P to lift the picket line and thought they could continue picketing regardless of the concerns of the workers and the MUA.

The confusion on the picket became more and more obvious. Some openly argued that the role of the picket was to substitute for the workers taking action. On Monday afternoon, much larger numbers of police were mobilised to clear the gates of VITC.

Community pickets are not an end in themselves. They work only for as long as they are supported by the dock workers. But they cannot substitute for industrial bans by the workers, such as the ban by transport workers in Belgium on handling arms exports to Israel.

The strategic aim of the Palestine movement must be to win dock workers and the MUA to refuse to work ZIM ships altogether, just as wharfies banned South African ships during the struggle against apartheid and refused to transport weapons to the Vietnam War.

As Israel wages its bloody assault in Rafah, the need for actions that target the links between Australia and Israel is greater than ever.

The fight against ZIM has continued. On 4 February there was another successful action where three community pickets shut down access to the port to delay ZIM vessel the Alabama in Fremantle.

The same week Palestinians addressed workers at Patrick terminal at Port Botany in Sydney, preparing the ground for future action.

A protest outside Downing Centre court in defence of the 23 ZIM Port Botany arrestees was also addressed by Paul Keating, MUA Sydney Branch Secretary and ASU NSW & ACT Secretary Angus McFarland.

Learning the lessons from Webb Dock and continuing to build strong links with unions and workers will be essential to building the kind of fight we need against ZIM and apartheid Israel.

Wharfies respected the community picket and so refused to work the ZIM ship

Israeli attack on UNRWA aid another genocidal act

By Cooper Forsyth

ISRAEL'S ALLEGATIONS against the UNRWA aid organisation in Gaza have been rapidly exposed as lies.

But the claims that 12 UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees) employees participated in Hamas's 7 October attack saw a swathe of Western governments rush to freeze funding to the organisation—including Australia, the US, Germany, the UK and Canada.

This graphically confirms the Australian government's direct complicity in the genocide in Gaza. UNRWA is by far the largest aid organisation in Gaza, employing 13,000 staff, and is absolutely essential to the population's survival.

Israel made the allegations in a confidential six-page dossier sent to UNRWA donors the same day the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that its conduct plausibly constitutes genocide.

In just over a week Israel's story fell apart. Channel Four in the UK obtained Israel's dossier and said that it "provides no evidence" for the involvement of UNRWA staff members in the attack.

Foreign Minister Penny Wong has already been forced to backtrack, saying the Australian government "have asked for further evidence".

Despite this, and Israel's history of baseless lies, the employees were immediately sacked. UNRWA has been left crippled, warning it will be have to cease its operations by the end of February unless funding is restored.

Its former spokesperson Christopher Guinness commented that the withdrawal of funding from donor governments "will undoubtedly lead to mass starvation".

This is an outrageous and devastating attack on the millions of displaced people in Gaza. Following Israel's deliberate restriction on aid it is further proof of its genocidal intent.

Among its interim measures the ICJ ordered Israel to "take immediate and effective steps to ensure the provision of basic services and humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza". Instead it conspired to further cut aid off.

UNRWA was established in 1949 to deal with the 750,000 Palestinian refugees expelled from their homes during the Nakba, the ethnic cleansing that established the state of Israel.



Today it supports some six million Palestinian refugees both within the West Bank and Gaza and surrounding countries.

It provides a huge range of essential services in education, health, infrastructure, loans, and emergency and social services.

Its schools have contributed to Palestinians being among the best educated in the region, with some of the highest literacy rates in the world, despite the huge numbers still living in refugee camps, in poverty and under armed occupation.

Since 7 October nearly 45 per cent of Gaza's population have been sheltering in UNRWA schools, clinics and other public buildings. Nearly the entire population now relies on UNRWA for basic necessities, including food, water and hygiene supplies.

Israeli hostility

Israel has long wanted to get rid of UNRWA. After its dossier was released, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said, "We have been warning for years: UNRWA perpetuates the refugee issue, obstructs peace, and serves as a civilian arm of Hamas in Gaza."

The organisation is a thorn in the side of Israel because it represents the inconvenient truth that their state exists only due to the continued exclusion of millions of Palestinian refugees.

UNRWA recognises the Palestinians displaced to Gaza, the West Bank, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan as refugees entitled to education, healthcare and other services until they can exercise their right to return as affirmed by UN resolution 194.

Above: A shipment of emergency food aid in Gaza delivered by the UNRWA

Israel opposes the right of return and wants to see Palestinians in the region assimilated into neighbouring countries. Its ultimate aim is to deny the Palestinians their right to exist as a people and have them disappear.

The size of the Palestinian population, even in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, is a threat to Israel's continued existence as an exclusively Jewish state.

UNRWA has faced constant attacks. In 2018, Donald Trump announced a complete end to US funding, cutting hundreds of millions of dollars later restored under Joe Biden.

Eliminating it fits with Israel's overall genocidal aims in Gaza—displacing the population, crushing resistance and overseeing a new regime under Israel's direct control.

In December the *Times of Israel* revealed a foreign ministry report laying out a three-stage plan to push UNRWA out of Gaza.

According to the piece, "The first involves a comprehensive report on alleged UNRWA cooperation with Hamas; the next stage would see reduced UNRWA operations in the Palestinian enclave, amid a search for a different organisation to provide education and welfare services.

"In the third stage, according to the report, all of UNRWA's duties would be transferred to the body governing Gaza following the war."

Netanyahu has already declared, "I think it's time for the international community and the UN itself to understand that UNRWA's mission has to end." It is the urgent task of the global movement for Palestine to stop him.

Israel opposes the right of return and wants to see Palestinians in the region assimilated into neighbouring countries

Labor extending the life of coal and gas amid climate emergency

By James Supple

THE NSW Labor government is set to lock in more pollution through extending the life of Eraring, the country's largest coal-fired power station. This is all because the government can't see the urgency of action on climate change.

The move comes as January 2024 was confirmed as the world's hottest month on record.

The year since February 2023 was the first 12-month period to breach the safe warming limit of 1.5 degrees, nominated in the Paris Agreement on climate action.

Between \$200 and \$400 million of public money a year will likely be spent to keep Eraring running.

Its closure on schedule is needed to meet the NSW government's own climate targets of 70 per cent emissions reduction by 2035—which were legislated only in November.

As the Climate Council's Dr Jennifer Reyner has said, "Shutting Eraring on time is critical to tackling the climate crisis. The science is clear—there's no room for coal station extensions."

An announcement is imminent, with the ageing power plant scheduled to close in August next year and its owner Origin requesting 18 months' notice to keep it open.

The NSW government says there is a danger of an energy shortfall and blackouts when Eraring closes.

But as energy analysts Tim Buckley and Annemarie Jonson explain, an Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) report handed to NSW Climate and Energy Minister Penny Sharpe in October shows that, "Once federal and state capacity schemes are included, there is no NSW electricity supply reliability gap forecast in any year out to 2033, notwithstanding the on-time shutdown of Eraring next year."

Ample wind, solar and battery storage projects are on track for completion to meet the deadline, they say. Renewable energy already made up 31.3 per cent of NSW's energy supply last year.

Any problems would only be the result of a delay in construction of new expected energy projects. If this looks like happening the hundreds of millions needed to keep Eraring open should be set aside to speed up renewable energy developments.



Above: Protesting Santos and plans for new gas projects in Sydney

Photo: Lock the Gate

There are also plenty of other measures that would reduce power demand and eliminate any danger of a shortfall—and are a far better use of government money.

In January the NSW and federal governments announced a combined \$206 million over four years to fit 24,000 social housing units with solar panels, heat pumps, reverse-cycle air-conditioners and insulation. This will cut power bills and reduce energy use.

With 125,000 social housing units alone in NSW there is far more that could be done.

Demand management measures such as NSW's Peak Demand Reduction Scheme can also be expanded to encourage more household and industrial users to reduce energy consumption during times of high demand.

More new coal and gas

The fossil fuel expansion is still charging ahead across the country. In January the NSW government approved an expansion of the Boggabri coal mine, extending its life until 2036. It will produce another 63 million tonnes of greenhouse gases.

And in early February the Queensland government gave the go-ahead for a new coal mine in the Bowen Basin, Whitehaven Coal's Winchester South coal mine.

The company plans to extract 17 million tonnes of thermal and metallurgical coal at the site every year for the next 28 years. The mine is regarded as the largest new coal mine planned nationwide and will spew out

583 million tonnes of emissions over its lifetime.

It still requires federal government approval to proceed.

The federal Labor government has also re-iterated its support for the massive expansion of gas mining and export planned, including projects off Darwin and WA.

At the end of January Resources Minister Madeleine King flew to Japan and South Korea to make it clear the government was fully behind the ongoing expansion of the gas industry.

The countries are the second and third largest export markets for Australian mining and energy companies, with \$99 billion of coal and gas heading to Japan last financial year and \$47.5 billion of coal, gas and iron ore sold to South Korea.

"Australia will remain a reliable supplier of [gas] for Japan well into the future," she declared.

"This includes ensuring that we bring new LNG projects to fruition—such as the Barossa LNG project and the Scarborough LNG project."

While King has labelled it "radical extremism" to oppose new gas developments, the mainstream International Energy Agency warned back in 2021 that there can be no new coal, oil and gas developments to reach net zero by 2050.

Labor governments state and federal are still ignoring the gravity of the climate emergency we face. The climate movement has to keep demanding an end to new coal and gas projects and urgent action to curb emissions.

.....
The fossil fuel expansion is still charging ahead across the country

US attacks on Houthis risk wider Middle East war

By David Glanz

THE US and Britain have unleashed waves of attacks on Yemen, supported by Australian military personnel.

On 3 February, US missiles and planes hit at least 30 targets across at least ten locations, following two attacks in January.

The bombings are a response to harassment by Houthi forces of shipping heading to Israel in the Bab al-Mandab Strait, the narrow waterway at the entrance to the Red Sea which leads to the Suez Canal.

“If Gaza does not receive the food and medicine it needs, all ships in the Red Sea bound for Israeli ports, regardless of their nationality, will become a target for our armed forces,” a Houthi spokesperson said.

Western powers have refused to lift a finger for the Palestinians suffering untold horrors in Gaza but have leapt into action to ensure their vessels can use the Suez Canal, through which passes about 15 per cent of world shipping traffic.

The Houthi movement—inspired by Shia Islam—controls the west of Yemen, including the capital Sanaa and the Red Sea coast.

They have massive backing for their campaign in solidarity with Palestine, with huge numbers rallying in Sanaa.

While other Arab regimes have done no more than issue pious statements, the Houthis have acted—and it is unlikely that the Western military action will end their attacks.

The *Washington Post* quotes Ibrahim Jalal, an analyst with the Middle East Institute, who “described the Houthis as a nimble militant group hardened by years of guerrilla warfare in Yemen and weathering years of Saudi-led airstrikes.

“They have ‘little in the way of large-scale, permanent military sites’, he said, ‘and instead use mobile launchpads for rockets and drones in addition to networks of tunnels and caves that makes their targeting highly complicated’.”

Yemen has a long history of fighting British imperialism, forcing the British to withdraw in 1967. But the Houthi movement is the product of a later wave of struggle, sparked by the Arab revolutions of 2011.

The Houthis began to gain influence when supporters flooded on to the streets of Sanaa in August 2014,



Above: A US fighter jet prepares for a bombing raid against the Houthis

demanding the regime step down, that fuel subsidies cut the month before be reinstated and calling for a more representative government.

With Western backing, Saudi Arabia and the UAE waged a seven-year campaign to crush the movement. It led to 377,000 deaths and four million people displaced by the end of 2021, according to the United Nations.

In December last year, the World Bank ranked Yemen the 31st poorest country in the world—but that was using 2011 data. After years of war, the reality will be much worse.

Despite Saudi conventional military superiority, the Houthis fought them to a standstill and Riyadh is looking to turn a ceasefire into a permanent settlement. Meanwhile China recently brokered a resumption of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

As British Marxist Alex Calinicos writes, “The regional balance of power is shifting against Western imperialism. This is why the Saudis reacted to the US-British airstrikes by warning against ‘escalation’ and Oman said they went ‘against our advice’.”

Iran

The Houthi movement is often described by commentators as an Iranian proxy, but as an article in *The Conversation* put it, “There is limited evidence that Iran controls the Houthis’ strategy.

“The Houthis reportedly ignored

Iranian advice not to take over Sanaa in 2014 and, while the Arab coalition [spent in 2019] between US\$5-6 billion each month on the war, Iran’s spending on the Yemen war has been estimated at little more than several million dollars each year.

“There are also significant doctrinal differences between the Houthis’ Zaydi version of Shia Islam and that practised in Iran.

“Some Houthi activists are even on record stating that the Iranian system could not be implemented in Yemen because Sunni Muslims constitute a majority.”

The attacks on Yemen show that President Joe Biden’s calls for Israel to exercise “restraint” are hollow hypocrisy.

In recent weeks the US has also bombed Iraq and Syria. Israel routinely bombs Lebanon and has also attacked Syria and Iran.

This is the so-called rules-based order—where Western imperialism can act with brutal impunity while the Palestinians are told they cannot fight for their national liberation.

The risk is that attacks by the US or Israel may spark a wider conflagration, such as war with Hezbollah or Iran, with the massive suffering that will involve.

Meanwhile the Labor government backs US and Israeli aggression.

Our task in Australia is to build a solidarity movement powerful enough to force Labor to drop its support for war and genocide.

.....
The attacks on Yemen show that President Joe Biden’s calls for Israel to exercise “restraint” are hollow

DP World workers make big gains on pay but rosters fall short

AFTER MORE than four months of determined industrial action, wharfies at DP World port terminals have won a 25.6 per cent pay rise over four years, while accepting changes to rostering.

The in-principle four year agreement between the company and the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), was concluded in three days of “facilitated negotiations” in the Fair Work Commission (FWC).

DP World’s media campaign, complaining of a massive backlog of containers left on the port and damage to the wider economy, fell flat as the government refused to intervene and suspend industrial action.

All protected industrial action has now been withdrawn. But the deal is yet to be drafted or voted on by the workforce, and local “Part B” negotiations are still taking place about issues relating to individual ports. The MUA is urging workers to vote yes to industrial action in a new ballot, in case the dispute re-erupts in the drafting process.

Wharfies will receive an 8 per cent pay rise in the first year, then in subsequent years 7 per cent, 4 per cent, and 4.5 per cent. There is a \$2000 sign-on bonus, but no backpay.

This wage increase will help workers catch up on inflation and the increasing cost of living, although it is not explicitly linked to the inflation rate as a bare minimum, as at the Patrick terminal.

The package also includes triggers for conversion to the permanent roster, phasing out the “short shifting” practice of late finish straight into an early start, and improvements around delegates’ rights, safety, automation, graduated retirement, termination, selection criteria for promotion and more.

Given the recent history of EBA negotiations dragging on for years, achieving an in-principle agreement in four months is a positive step forward.

This was only possible due to the willingness to take serious industrial action.

Workers took a combination of 24 hour strike days, two hour stoppages at the end of each shift, eight hour delays on vessels, strikes on particular shipping lines, and alternating bans on road/rail and vessel operations.

The union have emphasised the deal as a win for “fair pay, safety and work-life balance”.

The workforce beat back DP



Above: DP World workers during a stopwork in Melbourne
Photo: MUA

World’s desired “five x three roster”, which would have completely changed the existing roster, and cut the rate at which entitlements like annual leave and superannuation are paid.

But roster negotiations in some terminals are still a sore point. In Sydney a 36 hour roster was reduced to 35 hours, but with extra nights and weekend work.

Some workers are still pushing for changes to soften the most undesirable parts of the new roster.

Another concession was that personal leave/sick days will have to be accrued throughout 12 months, instead of granted at the beginning of the each financial year, meaning that workers cannot manage their own sick leave and risk being without paid leave if they fall seriously ill or have to take extended time off for operations or injuries.

Anti-strike laws

The workforce and union were determined to go hard out the gate, knowing that Labor’s new “intractable bargaining” laws would set in after nine months, and the whole dispute could be arbitrated by the Fair Work Commission.

But the union also dropped their goal of signing only a two year agreement, so that workers can fight for improvements more often.

The fact that DP World and opposition leader Peter Dutton tried to pressure the Labor government to intervene and take away workers’ ability to take strike action just shows that every attack on our right to strike will only make the bosses and the right call for more.

Labor made a virtue of refusing to

intervene at DP World, but has maintained laws that help the bosses, like the intractable bargaining laws and the anti-strike laws that restrict strikes to bargaining periods and prevent industrial action across the wharves.

Workers at DP World have shown that concerted industrial action can win big gains on pay.

But winning clear cut victories over the bosses will require a willingness to defy the anti-strike laws, the Fair Work Commission and the threat of forced arbitration.

‘Why we went on st

UNION MEMBERS at the Foundation for Young Australians across the country walked out on strike for Gaza on 25 January, demanding their employer make a statement of solidarity with Palestine.

In Melbourne, strikers joined the Sitintifada—a daily protest outside the Victorian parliament.

Australian Services Union member Lee told *Solidarity*: “The FYA’s core purpose is to uplift the voices of young people and we work with brilliant young Palestinian activists.

“But we weren’t allowed to share the school strike for Palestine or any Palestinian protests at all, even though we work closely with climate strikers and post all the time about all youth-led campaigns.

“We sent the FYA board a request for them to put out a statement on Palestine and after three months had no response.

“We gave them one more chance and when we got no response we walked out.”

Workers at DP World have shown that concerted industrial action can win big gains on pay

Teachers won't be silenced over Palestine

By Lucy Honan

MORE THAN 70 Victorian teachers and school staff attended a forum “Teachers for Palestine: why there’s no ‘neutrality’ on genocide” on 22 January, despite the Opposition Education spokesperson calling for the Education Department to discipline attendees.

In the wake of the forum, more department circulars have warned teachers against displaying “bias” when discussing “current events in the Middle East”.

And yet STEM programs like First Lego League and Beacon are among 35 programs in Australian primary and secondary schools that are funded by global weapons companies like BAE systems and Lockheed Martin, which are profiting from the genocide in Gaza.

The use of these programs is in breach of the Department’s own “inappropriate materials” policy, but the Department makes no visible effort to ensure schools are not using them.

The broader Trade Unionists for Palestine Victoria group has also been campaigning to end the harassment and victimisation of science teacher



Above: Unionists rally in solidarity with teacher Jason Wong who is facing disciplinary action

Jason Wong.

Jason spoke at a weekend protest calling for Education Minister Ben Carroll to end his threats against teachers who have expressed solidarity with Palestine. Jason made the point that many others, including the Secretary General of the UN, have made—that there is a context for Hamas’ violence on 7 October.

The Department of Education is now investigating Jason for misconduct, and the Victorian Institute of Teaching is also investigating Jason’s registration.

More than 500 unionists have signed a petition calling for the Department to end its investigation. When Zionists threatened to mobilise outside Jason’s school, 31 January, Trade Unionists for Palestine called a counter-action.

In the face of this, the Zionists retreated, but a protest of up to 100 unionists outside the Department of Education in solidarity with Jason went ahead.

Members of Teachers and School Staff for Palestine have begun moving sub branch and regional union support for bans on weapons sponsored programs, and in solidarity with Jason.

Victorian Greens MPs, union groups, student groups, parents and Palestinian leaders have made videos calling on teachers to continue to teach for Palestine.

The group is planning another protest outside the Department of Education to launch a campaign for a union ban on weapons sponsored school programs, and resources to support

teachers to teach about Palestine.

Sydney organising

In Sydney 60 teachers and supporters attended a forum with Randa Abdel-Fattah, writer and human rights activist of Palestinian and Egyptian heritage, discussing the repression in schools against support for Palestine.

A day of action on 13 February saw 12 schools so far wear badges, keffiyeh and t-shirts into work. More reports from schools are still coming in.

Fifty attended a rally at Education Minister Jason Clare’s office to finish the day. In some schools staff wore Teachers for Palestine t-shirts all day but in other places signs of support had to be more subtle due to a crack-down against teacher involvement.

Teachers participating reported finding new allies, starting new conversations about Gaza, and distributing copies of a booklet the group has produced “We can’t be neutral on genocide” to colleagues. Another 500 colour copies will be distributed to union activists and schools.

Teachers and School Staff for Palestine in NSW is also planning a day of wearing the keffiyeh in schools on Harmony Day on 21 March, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to make support for Palestine visible.

Many teachers have been told nothing about Palestine can be discussed in classes at all unless it goes through the principal.

Teachers standing up to this censorship and repression deserve everyone’s support.

Strike for Palestine’

Union activists have built 50 per cent membership and 90 per cent support through organising around insecure work and other industrial issues.

Last year, First Nations staff walked out of a meeting that was supposed to address issues of systemic racism in the organisation, and unionised staff joined them.

The stoppage started on a Thursday and workers did not return to the office until Monday.

Liyan, the ASU delegate at FYA, added, “The walkout was about the restructure of a team that was mostly black and brown staff. The approach was horrendous.

“We are hired for our commitment for social justice and experience in this space yet our vision for our workplace is consistently ignored.

“Union organising has been the only way for staff to be able to even have a say in the direction of our organisation.”

First Lego League and Beacon are among 35 programs in Australian schools that are funded by global weapons companies

Charges against police possible over Jai Wright death

By George Skinner

CRIMINAL CHARGES are being considered against a police officer over the death of 16-year-old Jai Wright, after the NSW Coroner suspended the inquest into the death of the Dunghutti teenager after two days on 30 January.

This month marks two years since Jai was killed when the motorbike he was riding collided with an unmarked police car, causing head injuries that killed the 16-year-old.

Police had been in pursuit of the motorbike, believing it to be stolen, before they lost sight of it.

Counsel assisting the coroner, Peggy Dwyer, told the court that officers had then been ordered to stay in the area but to not pursue the stolen vehicle.

But in CCTV and in-car video footage played to the court, Sergeant Benedict Bryant could be seen swinging his unmarked police car in front of the trail bike, which then collided with it at high speed. Bryant had not activated his lights or siren.

Confusion over conflicting explanations about the teenager's death from police added to the family's grief, leading them to call for an independent investigation and an inquest into the details of Jai's death.

In June 2023, after the internal police investigation found no evidence of wrongdoing, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) announced that there would be no charges laid in relation to the death.

The Coroner has now asked the DPP to reconsider charges.

The head of Redfern police initially told Jai's father, Lachlan Wright, that the unmarked police car had pulled in front of him, causing the bike to hit it.

But later on the same day an "independent investigator" sent by the police gave a different story, claiming that the police car was parked, and Jai had lost control of the bike and gone airborne into it.

The footage at the inquiry appears to cast doubt on claims the police car was stationary when it collided with the bike.

At Sydney's Invasion Day rally on 26 January, Lachlan Wright spoke about his experience seeking justice for his son, drawing parallels with the case of T.J. Hickey, who died in 2004 after a police chase:



Above: Jai Wright's family and supporters outside the Coroner's Court in Lidcombe
Photo: Aboriginal Legal Service

In footage played to the court, Sergeant Bryant could be seen swinging his unmarked police car in front of the trail bike

"We will eventually get justice. We won't stop. We can't afford to. We've seen it happen in the past with T.J. Hickey in Redfern, and the lies that we heard [from the police] about what happened with him.

"How can that still happen 18 years later with my son? Lying about not pursuing our kids. Coppers telling different stories depending on which coppers [are] coming in to talk to our family on the couple of days after he died."

Winning justice

Jai's parents have expressed hope at the prospect that criminal charges will be considered.

But since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody issued its final report in 1991, the legal system has failed Indigenous communities time and time again.

Since then there have been 559 Indigenous deaths in custody, yet only a handful of charges against police or prison guards have ever resulted, and even fewer convictions.

This year already there have been another two Indigenous people die in custody in NSW alone.

In the one solitary conviction, over the shocking case of Mr Ward, who was left to cook to death in a prison van in 2008, the two drivers were found guilty only of breaching work health and safety legislation and escaped with a fine.

Last year the first correctional officer to be charged with murder was cleared of all charges, after shooting

Dwayne Johnstone in the back as he attempted to flee custody with his wrists and ankles chained.

Even this prosecution would have been unlikely without the Black Lives Matter marches in 2020, which took place just before the coronial inquiry that led to the charges.

When police officer Zachary Rolfe shot 19-year-old Warlpiri man Kumanjayi Walker dead in 2019 there was a national campaign by the right-wing media outlets supporting him. In his trial, text messages showing Rolfe and the NT's police vicious racism were declared inadmissible and the killer was found not guilty.

There are rare moments when the perpetrators of police racism and abuse against Indigenous people are brought before a judge.

But racist, abusive, often murderous cops aren't the exception, but are bred by the system that puts the badge on their chest and the gun in their holster.

The legal system works to reinforce Australia's racist institutions; courts will sooner protect police than deliver any real justice.

We must answer Lachlan Wright's call to "Keep Jai's name in your heart and in your mind", and keep demanding justice.

But we must not for a moment think that a state prosecutor will bring an end to systemic racism or deaths in custody.

That requires a movement capable of fighting racism and holding the police to account.

Mass protests target German AfD as far right on the rise

By Jack Stublely

ABOUT 1.4 million people marched across Germany at the end of January against the far right AfD (Alternative for Germany) party.

The country has been rocked by revelations that leading AfD politicians secretly met open Nazis to discuss organising mass deportations, targeting millions of migrants, asylum-seekers and German citizens of foreign origin.

This meeting was not the first of its kind and signals the increasing confidence of the racist far right. The German political world has reacted with an outpouring of rage. The political mainstream, such as German Premier Olaf Scholz, have condemned the AfD as leading “an attack against our democracy”.

However, it is mainstream parties like Scholz’s Social Democratic Party (similar to our Labor Party) who have helped legitimise such disgusting racism through their willingness to make concessions on refugee rights. This has ranged from allowing the suspension of family reunification rights to signalling support for the outsourcing of asylum applications to African countries.

Last October, in response to pro-Palestine protests in Germany, he was quoted as saying, “We must finally deport on a large scale.”

The policies of neoliberalism and austerity which have been pursued by successive German coalition governments have given oxygen to the AfD, which has attempted to capitalise on the discontent. The current government has doubled the military budget, raised fuel prices and is failing to reach even its own climate targets.

The AfD is currently polling more than 20 per cent of the vote, making it Germany’s second largest party. It has 78 seats in the national parliament and 40,000 members. The party has an organised hard right wing including leading figure Bjorn Hocke with direct links to Nazis.

Rising far right

What has led to the rise of a European far right with so much legitimacy? The mainstream parties’ commitment for decades to austerity policies combined with the rising cost of living has produced deep bitterness with the political system.

Mainstream electoral parties have



Above: Massive rallies against the AfD have swept Germany

also increasingly embraced anti-refugee policies and racist and Islamophobic talking points. This has only legitimised and fuelled the far right.

Suella Braverman, the former British Tory Home Secretary, openly used racism to label asylum-seekers a threat, characterising them as an, “existential challenge for the political and cultural institutions of the West”.

Similarly, Italian fascist Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has struck a deal to process asylum-seekers rescued at sea in offshore detention camps in Albania, after a green light from the European Union. Left-wing critics such as the leader of the More Europe party Riccardo Magi have described this as an “Italian Guantanamo”.

The far right is still on the rise across Europe. Geert Wilders, who was sentenced for hate speech after advocating the ethnic cleansing of Moroccan-Dutch people in 2017, won the Dutch elections in November with his PVV party on a platform of explicit Islamophobia, calling for the removal of “Islamic schools, mosques and the Quran”.

In Slovakia recently elected Prime Minister Robert Fico said in 2016 he wouldn’t accept “one single Muslim” migrant.

In France Marine Le Pen’s National Rally looks set to come first in this year’s European elections, with the total vote for far right parties at 37 per cent, and could win the next presidential election.

The resistance by the European mainstream liberal, centre and centre-left parties has been weak at best and cravenly opportunistic at worst.

French President Emmanuel Macron, in a desperate attempt to avoid being outflanked by Le Pen, has engaged in his own Islamophobic and anti-migrant policy decisions, recently passing a racist and controversial law making it harder for migrants’ children to become citizens and cancelling residence permits on vague grounds of opposing “Republican values”.

This passed parliament only due to the support of the fascist National Rally, which claimed the bill as “an ideological victory”.

French student activists have protested and blockaded universities and union leaders have condemned the law. A few workplaces were able to hold anti-racist strikes but the union leaders failed to mobilise action on the scale needed.

The cowardly opportunism of the French centre under Macron, and the troubling rise of the right as well as the normalisation of its policies and rhetoric, points to the need to build the grassroots anti-racist struggle urgently.

The political mainstream of Europe has both made concessions to the racist rhetoric of the far right and failed to build a fighting alternative on the streets.

It is therefore up to rank-and-file workers, together with left-wing activists and students, to build the mass anti-racist struggle needed.

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Mainstream parties have increasingly embraced anti-refugee policies and racist and Islamophobic talking points

HAMAS AND THE POLITICS OF PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE

Hamas grew out of the legitimate Palestinian resistance to Israel’s violence, writes **James Supple**, but its focus on armed struggle has not delivered liberation

HAMAS HAS built wide support among the Palestinian population for resisting Israel’s occupation when other parties surrendered.

That’s because Gaza has faced decades of Israeli violence, occupation, and savagery.

Hamas won the last Palestinian elections held in 2006 with 74 out of 132 seats, and took control of Gaza shortly after.

A survey during the recent ceasefire in late November found 54 per cent of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza saw Hamas as most deserving of leading the Palestinian people, compared to just 13 per cent for its main rival Fatah.

Hamas was formed during the First Palestinian Intifada in 1987 as an Islamic resistance movement. It grew out of the Muslim Brotherhood, which had focused on charitable work in Gaza running schools and welfare services.

Although Islamic, it described itself as a “distinct Palestinian movement” and adopted the traditional approach of the main Palestinian nationalist organisation the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), aiming to free the whole of historical Palestine from Zionist control through armed struggle.

This is a legitimate struggle for self-determination and freedom—both for the descendants of the 750,000 people who Israel ethnically cleansed and made refugees in 1948 and those in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem it has held under military occupation since 1967.

Hamas’ 1988 founding charter spelt out the group’s aims of uncompromising struggle against Israel’s occupation and a rejection of the idea that negotiations and concessions to Israel would deliver justice.

The document also called for an Islamic state and contained antisemitic tracts.

But as Hamas’ support grew it has shifted its views. When it ran in the 2006 Palestinian elections it presented itself as welcoming to Christians and appointed a Christian as one of its government ministers.

In 2017 Hamas released a revised charter, which dropped rhetoric about an Islamic state.

The document also made it clear that it was opposed to Israel and Zionism, not to Jewish people in general. It said, “Hamas does not wage a struggle against the Jews because they are Jewish but wages a struggle against the Zionists who occupy Palestine.”

Hamas support

Hamas won the Palestinian elections in 2006 at the expense of Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), who had led the Palestinian nationalist struggle for decades. This was the result of disgust and anger at their compromises and betrayals.

In 1993 the PLO had joined the Oslo Process, a series of negotiations with Israel that promised to deliver a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. The PLO renounced armed struggle and agreed to accept Israel’s control of the 78 per cent of historic Palestine that it seized in 1948.

It also agreed to collaborate with Israel, policing opposition to the occupation on its behalf. But the Palestinians received nothing in exchange.

Israel refused to offer them control even of the territories it had seized in 1967 as the basis for a state. Instead it continued expanding illegal settlements and taking over more Palestinian land, entrenching the occupation.

Israel has never been interested in peace with the Palestinians, except on terms of abject surrender and domination.

Hamas rejected the peace process

Israel set out to unleash terror on Gaza regularly to keep it in a state of desperation

as a sham from the beginning.

After Hamas won the 2006 elections Israel set out to destroy the new government, working with the US to arm the PLO, which it had beaten, to carry out a coup.

When Hamas took control of Gaza Israel imposed a brutal siege, restricting food supplies to just above levels that would cause starvation and saying it would “keep Gaza’s economy on the brink of collapse”.

This was a war crime that involved collective punishment of the entire civilian population.

Allowing in just enough aid to prevent the collapse of the Hamas government meant the Palestinians were left permanently divided, with the PLO taking control of the West Bank. This suited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu because it provided an excuse for avoiding any kind of peace process or Palestinian state.

Hamas responded with the only means at its disposal—firing rockets into Israel in an attempt to force an end to the blockade.

Hamas offered a long term truce if Israel was willing to end the crippling blockade. But Israel continually refused.

As Israeli historian Avi Slaim has written, “Hamas has an impeccable record of observing ceasefires whereas Israel does not. Every ceasefire brokered by Egypt was violated by Israel when it outlived its usefulness.”

Instead Israel set out to unleash terror on Gaza regularly to keep it in a state of desperation.

Israel launched four major wars against Gaza from 2008 before the current assault.

Every time it deliberately targeted civilian areas. A major investigation by the UN Human Rights Council after the 2008 war described a pattern of war crimes and what it called, “a deliberately disproportionate attack

designed to punish, humiliate, and terrorise a civilian population”.

Hamas has continued to defend the right of return of Palestinian refugees driven from their homes by Israel in 1948 and, at least rhetorically, the goal of liberating the whole of Palestine. Israel has responded with ruthless force at its refusal to offer complete capitulation.

But even before the 2006 elections Hamas had already made it clear it was prepared to accept a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza as the basis for a long term peace.

It has reiterated this several times, including in its revised charter in 2017.

In doing so it was following the path taken by the PLO, and offering a major concession that acknowledged the limited power of armed Palestinian resistance to defeat Israel.

Armed resistance

After over four months of relentless bombing and invasion, Israel has failed in its aim to “completely destroy” Hamas. It is still unable to locate its key military leaders inside Gaza.

In recent weeks Hamas fighters have re-emerged even in Gaza City, despite Israel’s claim it had totally dismantled their fighting capacity there months ago.

In the face of the onslaught from Israel’s far more powerful military, simply surviving would be a victory of sorts.

But Hamas sees armed struggle as a route to Palestinian liberation. In January, it appealed for support saying that “the time has come” for the Arab states to send arms to the resistance, declaring that this was “not the battle of the Palestinian people alone”.

The Houthis’ attacks on Israeli shipping in the Red Sea have had some impact on Israeli trade. But even in the face of genocide, the other Arab states have done nothing to assist the Palestinians.

The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Jordan are even helping Israel get around the Houthis’ attacks through setting up an overland route to deliver food, plastics, chemicals and electronics to Israel.

Their rulers are completely tied into the imperialist system in the region presided over by the US.

Even Hezbollah and Iran, the strongest forces in the so-called “axis of resistance” have been careful to avoid war with Israel. Iran too is more concerned with advancing its own power in the region, and sees an



Above: A demonstration of support for Hamas in Gaza before the war

all out war with Israel as against its interests.

This demonstrates the weakness of armed resistance against Israel.

Trying to match Israel in terms of sheer military force is a dead end. It is the Middle East’s strongest power, with the full backing of the military superpower the US.

But mass struggle by workers and the poor could liberate Palestine. Struggle from below powered the revolt for national independence after the Second World War, and the Arab revolutions in 2011.

Mass revolt can topple the regimes that support imperialism and collude

with Israel in places like Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Workers’ strike action also has the power to cause a crisis for the whole world economy. Workers could shut down the Suez canal, paralysing global trade. They could cut off the flow of oil on which whole national economies depend.

This would end Israel’s importance for US imperialism and force it to re-evaluate its backing for the Zionist state.

Making this a reality requires building socialist organisation across the Middle East, and organising to win workers to the fight for revolution.

Hamas is right to resist occupation

ISRAEL AND the Australian government constantly point to the Hamas attack on 7 October in an effort to justify the genocidal onslaught on Gaza.

But Palestinians have a right to resist Israeli violence and occupation—including through armed struggle. Israel is an occupying power that has dominated and oppressed Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza for over 50 years.

Israel is responsible for all of the violence that has resulted.

Palestinians face humiliating restrictions on movement imposed by the Israeli military, which controls roads and checkpoints. Permits to work in Israel are frequently revoked, robbing Palestinians of jobs.

Israel has built over 150 official settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem that house 700,000 settlers, through slowly seizing

Palestinian land and property. Since 2009 over 10,000 Palestinian homes and buildings have been demolished.

It runs a system of apartheid where Palestinians are denied all political rights.

While it evacuated its settlements in Gaza in 2005, Israel continues to control all movement in and out of the strip and has turned it into an open air prison.

Regular military raids terrorise the population, with 507 Palestinians including 124 children killed in the West Bank alone in 2023.

Israel uses extreme violence to crush all forms of dissent. During the First Intifada in 1987 then Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin ordered the military to break the bones of protesters. Today it prefers to shoot people in the knees to cripple them for life.

Resistance is fully justified.

WHY CAPITALISM BREEDS WAR AND IMPERIALISM

Isabel Ringrose explains that imperialism is about more than major countries dominating the smaller ones

BRUTAL, VIOLENT and deadly. That summarises the system behind the Israeli assault on the Palestinians.

This is a genocide unfolding not on the fringes of the world system, but with the full backing and supplies of arms from the world's major power the US, as well as European nations and Australia.

Many people use the word imperialism to describe the structure that produces such horror—and that's right.

But the term is used in many different ways. One common usage is to describe the process whereby bigger states bully and oppress smaller ones.

Another is the way great powers seek to extract or control the raw materials and other resources of weaker countries.

Both of those are features of imperialism.

But for Marxists imperialism is a specific phase of capitalism that emerged in the years before the First World War—and led to the most terrible bloodletting in history up to that point.

Imperialism is a product of a system based on ruthless competition for profit. Capitalism sees economic competition between rival companies produce vast sums of wealth, which is concentrated into the hands of a tiny minority at the top of society.

There are now around 2600 billionaires globally who hold \$18 trillion between them. The world's top 1 per cent hold 44.5 per cent of global wealth.

This ruling class and its hangers on are prepared to use force to defend their wealth and privileges if necessary—not just against the workers they exploit but against each other.

Ferocious capitalist rivalry has caused appalling levels of armed conflict and suffering for people across

the world.

Imperialism is inseparable from the competition that also develops between rival capitalist states that struggle for domination economically and often militarily.

The Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin wrote his short book *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* in 1916 to explain the economic underpinning of the war and the features of a global system of conflict between capitalist states.

He wrote, "Imperialism means the partitioning of the world" and "High monopoly profits for a handful of very rich countries."

Some at the time thought that the terrible destruction war unleashes, and the chaos it would cause for capitalist profits, meant the rich and powerful would increasingly avoid war.

Contrary to those who argued that bosses and states would cooperate with each other and become a force for peace, Lenin said that any balance of power between the contending imperialists could only be temporary.

When the economic weight of one state or group of states shifted new bloody struggles burst out, destroying any agreements peacefully to divide the world market made previously.

The early stage of capitalism sees relatively small firms competing with each other mainly inside a domestic market.

But the process of competition sees some crush their adversaries. The victors emerge bigger, more powerful and ready to expand internationally.

As they move beyond the home market, they demand their state backs them to ensure smooth profit-making. Sometimes they also want armed force to batter down barriers to trade or to clear out "unhelpful" rulers.

.....
Imperialism is inseparable from the competition that develops between rival capitalist states that struggle for domination
—————

The gunboat blasting away on some foreign shore became a key symbol of the British Empire because of this method.

Imperialism is the fusing of economic and geopolitical competition. And states' warmongering also reacted back on economic systems.

Shifting balance of power

Fifty years before the First World War Britain was the dominant industrial power. But in the run up to the war, Germany was challenging it as the second biggest economy.

Germany and other states challenged Britain militarily, and economically.

At some points, such as at the Congress of Berlin at the end of the nineteenth century, all the powers could agree to divide up Africa between them—without involving any Africans, of course. But when almost all such sharing of the spoils was exhausted, any new expansion could happen only by taking away from some other state.

No state was content to "freeze" its areas of domination and control. Instead their economic accumulation led to world war.

Victory for Britain and its allies in 1918 pushed back others for a time. But it could not indefinitely block the rise of other European powers like Germany and, in particular, the United States.

As Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky wrote, "During the war, the enormous economic preponderance of the United States was developed and revealed in its full proportions.

"The emergence of that country from the stage of an overseas provincialism suddenly forced Great Britain into second place."

This mismatch of political structures, economic power and interna-

tional control was the basis of the Second World War. And that war intensified the rise of the US and its imperialist rival the USSR.

As late as 1939 the US lay at number 19 in the league table of military power—behind Portugal.

But between then and its entry into the war in late 1941, the US increased its armed forces eightfold to 1.5 million people.

A changing world

Imperialism has constant features, but it also shifts and changes in very important ways.

In one phase a “multipolar” world saw six or more imperialist countries slug it out.

After the Second World War, two great blocks confronted each other. The US forced states to bend to its will either through economic pressure or by violence. It fixed elections, eliminated leaders who seemed a threat, and sent troops to ensure domination.

The US, for example, overthrew the Iranian government of Mohammed Mossadeq in 1953 because he nationalised the country’s oil industry.

It fought years of war in Vietnam, murdering 1.5 million Vietnamese people and hundreds of thousands in neighbouring Cambodia.

Meanwhile the USSR invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968 and backed its friends when they crushed workers’ uprisings.

State capitalism in Russia and capitalism in the US drove each to produce more industrial output and grab more geopolitical influence than the other.

The Cold War between the two blocks at points threatened to become a hot war—fought with nuclear weaponry. Workers and the poor everywhere lost out.

That’s why the political tradition *Solidarity* comes from put forward the slogan “Neither Washington nor Moscow but International Socialism.”

At the end of the Cold War, the US was the dominant superpower but this was far from the “end of history” as some supporters of neoliberalism predicted. Economic power has continued to shift.

In 1980 Russia produced 14.8 per cent of global manufacturing output, about half the US share of 31.5 per cent. Thirty years later Russia accounted for just 3.2 per cent of world gross domestic product, and the US share had fallen to 22 per cent.

The rise of Japan, China and



others has squeezed US economic dominance, so it massively stepped up its military spending to compensate.

But the other problem for imperialism is that its victims have rarely accepted their fate without resistance. People across the world rose against the British, French and Spanish empires, even when they were outgunned by the imperialists.

And eventually they won, either by defeating the empires or by sending enough fear through them to prompt their withdrawal.

The US lost in Vietnam, just as the French had done in an earlier period. Despite mounds of dead and the destruction of a whole society, the US lost in Iraq and then in Afghanistan.

US President Joe Biden humiliatedly withdrew US forces from Afghanistan in order to concentrate on the rivalry with China.

Today the rival imperialist powers of the US and Russia are again fighting each other through a proxy war in Ukraine. Russia is trying to show that it can still act on the world stage.

And, through the NATO military alliance, the US has marshalled its allies to pour in weapons to boost the Ukrainian forces.

Revolt against war

It is possible to win a world without war. But the solution isn’t to back one

Above: Israel’s military power is the result of the role it plays in serving the interests of Western imperialism

imperialist against the other—it’s to tackle the system that produces war and competition head on.

That means solidarity and support for the oppressed peoples and nationalities that revolt against imperialism.

This can weaken the imperialist power overseas and also at home, giving more space to revolutionary movements.

It means backing liberation movements and turning the fight against imperialism on our leaders.

Australia is locked into an alliance with the US and backs it whether it comes to killing Palestinians or sending troops and money to Ukraine.

A blow to the ruling class here can mean a blow to imperialists across the world, and be a spark for revolt. The First World War came to an end through revolutions in Russia and then Germany.

This encouraged the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements everywhere. Fighting for a free Palestine seeks to strike a blow to imperialism—smashing Israel and its backers.

That could detonate wider uprisings in the Middle East and internationally. But ridding the world of imperialism also means widening the battle and striking at the very capitalist system that causes war and competition in the first place.

Socialist Worker UK

MYANMAR'S GENERALS FACING MILITARY DEFEAT

A new armed offensive poses a major challenge to Myanmar's military dictatorship after years of resistance, writes **Vivian Honan**

IT HAS been three years since Myanmar's military, the Tatmadaw, seized power in a coup in February 2021. Since then, the regime has brutally repressed any resistance, indiscriminately bombing villages and killing at least 4468 civilians, while 20,000 are still held as political prisoners.

In dramatic developments since October, however, armed ethnic groups have led an offensive against the regime, successfully re-claiming several regions.

The Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), Arakan Army (AA) and Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), collectively known as the Three Brotherhood Alliance, launched the offensive, Operation 1027, in the northern Shan state. They have overrun up to 200 military posts, capturing border crossings and roads carrying most of the overland trade with China.

Significantly, in a rare level of unity against the regime, the offensive has been joined by the People's Defence Force (PDF, the rag tag army of the National Unity Government, NUG), and the Communist Party of Burma's People's Liberation Army.

In November, PDF forces humiliated the regime when soldiers raised white flags surrendering Kawlin, a district capital in central Myanmar.

Overall, thousands of Myanmar soldiers have surrendered or fled, including 400 who fled into India in January as the AA seized Paletwa, a key border town in Chin State.

The AA now controls all roads and water transport to the Indian border and has extended their offensive into the Rakhine state, from which hundreds of thousands of Rohingyaans have been ethnically cleansed since 2016.

Following the coup in 2021, strikes and mass protests across the country challenged the junta's rule. But the resistance was brutally repressed; unarmed protesters were shot in the streets of Yangon and Mandalay.

Thousands of young people left the cities and took up arms. The generals responded violently, razing villages, bombing camps and cracking down on dissidents, protesters, politicians, artists and journalists.

Now, however, the resistance controls much of Myanmar, although their zone accounts for a relatively small proportion of Myanmar's GDP. The junta is still in control of most of Myanmar's airports, banks and big cities, including the capital, Naypyidaw.

Nonetheless, the dictatorship has suffered a major setback and is still suffering military defeats.

Military rule

Myanmar has a long history of military rule as well as movements against it.

Myanmar was established as a British colony in the 19th century. After a brief Japanese occupation and re-occupation by the British, Myanmar declared independence in 1948. Colonisation left it ethnically divided and with little infrastructure or industry.

The first elected government was unstable and faced opposition from ethnic minorities and communist insurgents. In 1962, military commander Ni Win seized power and established one-party rule.

By the 1980s the attempt at state-led development had failed and the economy was deeply in debt, dependent on foreign loans and aid. In 1987 the regime demonetised most of the currency, destroying people's savings overnight.

Subsequent demonstrations and strikes turned into the 8888 uprising in August 1988.

Buddhist and Muslim communities marched together, united in opposition to the regime. Despite being gunned down, huge numbers kept coming out.

Strike committees were set up, as were citizens' committees, organising the strikes and protests as well as dis-

Myanmar has a long history of military rule as well as movements against it

tribution of food and other supplies.

The general strike committee, however, did not realise their own power and instead called for the regime to form an interim government. The generals brutally suppressed the movement, killing thousands.

Having re-established control, the regime ditched state-led development and turned to the global market, with the Tatmadaw establishing and owning the major corporations.

The regime tried to contain opposition by signing ceasefires with the ethnic rebels.

Following the suppression of the 1988 movement, the regime promised elections. The National League for Democracy (NLD) had just been formed.

Despite the arrest of many of its leadership, including Aung San Suu Kyi (daughter of the so-called "Father of the Nation"), the NLD still won the majority of seats in the 1990 election. It was a huge victory against the army-backed National Unity Party.

But the Tatmadaw refused to concede power. They continued to rule but were once again challenged by mass protests in 2007. Led by monks, the movement was dubbed the Saffron Revolution after the colour of the monks' robes.

The people were struggling with the rising cost of basic commodities while the generals were becoming immensely wealthy. The military once again forcibly suppressed the resistance.

The underlying crisis remained and people continued to find ways to resist, including a strike wave in the garment factories in 2009-2010.

The pressure from below as well as the desire to attract foreign investment led the regime to make some changes. In 2012 Aung San Suu Kyi was released from prison. New labour laws permitted unions and strikes (at least on paper).

The reforms enabled the NLD to participate in the 2012 by-elections and the 2015 general election. They

again won an absolute majority and this time the regime recognised the outcome.

Myanmar had its first non-military president since the 1962 coup but the military maintained effective control. The 2008 constitution ensured the military were appointed a quarter of the seats in the legislature, effectively giving them veto power over constitutional changes.

Tragically the NLD failed to challenge the military's political and economic power. Poverty and corruption remained widespread. Worse still, persecution of ethnic minorities continued. In late 2019, Suu Kyi shockingly appeared at the International Court of Justice in the Hague defending the military's ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya.

The NLD remained popular though and again secured victory in the 2020 elections.

On 1 February 2021 the military launched another coup, using the pretence of electoral fraud. Calling themselves the State Administration Council (SAC), they seized power from Suu Kyi's elected government.

In the aftermath of the coup, Suu Kyi was imprisoned and her party, the NLD, dissolved.

The National Unity Government (NUG) was formed in exile by members of the NLD who had been elected in the 2020 general election.

The People's Defence Force largely supports the NLD, but many also have criticisms of the NLD's conservatism and willingness to compromise with the army when they were in government, such as Suu Kyi's support for the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingyas.

Many of the ethnic organisations have also come out more explicitly against the regime, resulting in greater collaboration and unity among them than in previous periods.

The collaboration between the urban opposition and ethnic armed organisations supporting Operation 1027 marks a significant development in the opposition to the military regime. The Brotherhood Alliance says their ultimate goal now, like that of the NUG, is to overthrow the military government.

The Tatmadaw have been weakened by the offensive. Their numbers have fallen with desertions, casualties and lack of recruitment.

The offensive has given confidence to the NUG. Its president told reporters, "If we can all cooperate to strengthen the central region, we can threaten Naypyidaw [the military-built



Above: Fighters from the Brotherhood Alliance pose a major challenge to Myanmar's military junta

capital of Myanmar]. That is our goal."

China

China casts a long shadow over the possibilities for fundamental change in Myanmar. China is a major arms supplier and ally of the military as well as Myanmar's biggest trading partner. Its infrastructure projects, including a billion-dollar rail line and a natural gas pipeline, and its trade routes to the Indian Ocean are threatened by the fighting.

China has recently attempted to negotiate ceasefires between the military and rebel armies but these have been short lived.

China's relationship with the military has been strained by tensions over smuggling and online scams based in the border regions that have targeted Chinese citizens. It has been the rebels that have recently cracked down, arresting the scam bosses and handing them to Beijing.

The NUG has also re-assured China that it will not interfere with its projects in Myanmar and that it wants to do business with China in the future.

India is also concerned about the recent rebel gains. The Arakan Army has claimed control of Paletwa, a town close to the Indian border that is part of a multi-million-dollar development project backed by India.

But China and India are only concerned to protect their economic and strategic interests in Myanmar. Neither are friends of the fight for democracy.

Fundamental change will take more than toppling the military dictatorship and getting the military out

of politics.

About two million people have been displaced; the economy has shrunk; and there are shortages and increased poverty in the cities.

For fundamental democratic change, including democratic control of the economy to produce for the needs of the people of Myanmar, the struggle will need to spread to the cities.

There has been a huge increase in the urban working population. The effect of the strikes in 1988 and in 2021 showed the significance of its industrial power. The workers' movement has the power to seize and control production.

A more radical struggle in Myanmar can find millions of potential allies in the working class of neighbouring India and China. But the movement from below will need to recognise the right of minorities to self-determination.

Rohingyas must be allowed to return and the 1982 law that denies citizenship to Rohingyas will have to be scrapped.

There are signs of a wider political understanding emerging in the ranks of the PDF, for more radical change than that on offer from the old leaders of the NLD.

As one PDF fighter put it, "In the past, I neglected to know about the [other] ethnic groups, their suffering and losses, and I acted like it wasn't my business ... I also didn't notice that I was privileged as a Bamar [the dominant ethnic group that has historically comprised the ruling elite in Myanmar]."

A united struggle by urban and ethnic groups could not only topple the military but pose an alternative to the way capitalism has cruelly exploited the workers and rural poor of Myanmar.

OFFSHORE DETENTION CRIMES— LABOR CAN'T HIDE

By Ian Rintoul

THE LONG-AWAITED review of Australia's offshore detention by former ASIO boss, Dennis Richardson, was finally made public on 12 February. However Labor's Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil has been sitting on Richardson's report since October last year.

It is no coincidence that the report was only made public after PNG Prime Minister James Marape addressed the Australian parliament last week. Corruption remains endemic in the arrangements between Australia and PNG to provide services for the 55 refugees and their families still stranded in PNG.

Labor last made a payment to PNG in July 2022, but the refugees have been left destitute since services were cut off in October 2023. Refugees have no income, no food vouchers, no electricity, no access to health care and have been threatened with eviction. But Labor has done nothing to support refugees in PNG or evacuate them to safety.

The PNG Chief Migration Officer, Stanis Hulahau, has stood aside while an investigation takes place into manifest corruption of the PNG humanitarian program that has left refugee service providers owed hundreds of millions of kina.

Corrupt history

Corruption in offshore detention arrangements is not news. In January 2017, the government's own National Audit Office issued a scathing report into the first five years of detention on Manus Island and Nauru saying the Immigration Department (now Home Affairs) had spent \$2.2 billion without proper authorisation.

Spending of \$1.1 billion was approved by departmental officers who did not have the required authorisation and for the remaining \$1.1 billion there was no record at all of who had authorised the payments.

The 2017 report complained that contracts were signed, "in great haste to give effect to government policy decisions and the department did



Above: Refugees protest in detention on Nauru in 2016

not have a detailed view of what it wanted to purchase".

The report was also scathing of the conditions in the camps, saying the chief medical officer had drawn attention to, "increased risk of infections and disease due to vermin and pests; water pooling; extensive mould and inadequate cleaning of wet areas; inadequate food hygiene; and overcrowded accommodation."

In January 2019, the *Financial Review* reported that Paladin Group was one of the biggest government contractors in Australia, having won tenders worth \$423 million for its 22 months of work on Manus Island. The company's registered headquarters was a beach shack on Kangaroo Island.

Five years later, the Richardson report shows that Paladin Group's founding director, Craig Thrupp, is estimated to have personally made more than \$150 million from contracts worth more than \$500 million over four years to run offshore processing on Manus Island up to 2019.

Paladin is facing an Australian Federal Police investigation into allegations that it paid bribes in 2018 totalling \$3 million to PNG officials to secure the contracts.

The Richardson report very carefully only blames public servants for the widespread corruption revealed by the inquiry. The "left arm did not know what the right arm was doing",

he said. But the corruption was public and well-known; the politicians, Liberal and Labor, did know.

Labor's Home Affairs Minister is pointing the finger at Peter Dutton. He deserves to be condemned. But corruption is an inevitable part of offshore detention, just part of the price paid for entrenching human rights abuses.

Labor bribed both the governments of PNG and Nauru to establish offshore detention in 2013, paying PNG almost \$500 million in increased foreign aid just to agree to open Manus Island.

Now Labor has turned a blind eye to the corruption and to the refugees left behind in PNG. Labor is paying MTC, a notorious US detention company, \$420 million for just 30 months to keep offshore detention operating on Nauru. Fifteen refugees are being held on Nauru with no concern for their human rights after arriving on two boats in September and October.

Eight others who arrived with them, including a child, were sent back to their country of origin.

Ultimately the Richardson report is a white-wash. Labor can't hide its responsibility for offshore detention. The refugees in PNG must be brought to Australia. Those already in Australia on temporary bridging visas, after being medically evacuated from PNG and Nauru, must be allowed to settle here permanently.

Paladin Group's Craig Thrupp is estimated to have personally made more than \$150 million

Solidarity