



Hands off Cuba!

P Farmer

Almost unnoticed in the Australian media, a war crime is taking place. A nation of ten million people is being literally starved by a superpower that Australia's government says "shares our values." The war crime is a continuation of a longstanding criminal blockade. The USA has been blockading Cuba since 1960, making it difficult for the island nation to trade, receive tourists or borrow money. Now, however, the blockade is turning very lethal. Albanese's 'security partner' is blocking off supplies of oil and aid, and Cubans are dying.

Cuba has long survived the blockade through international solidarity and a socialist system that puts the people of Cuba first. The country has thrived in areas such as medicine, science, and sport. It developed five working vaccines against COVID while under a blockade that made it difficult to obtain the simplest ingredients needed. Cuba has broken records in Olympic achievement and the arts are thriving.

After what looked like a success in Venezuela, Trump has his eye on Cuba. The US President attacked Venezuela's capital unprovoked and kidnapped the Venezuelan President and National Assembly member Cilia Flores. The attack was not as easy as Trump has presented it, with both US equipment damaged and personnel injured, but the result is that the US has a stranglehold on Venezuelan oil. Trump promptly turned off the supply of oil to Cuba and threatened to punish any other nations that supply Cuba with sanctions.

This is having real consequences in Cuba. The Caribbean country has faced major blackouts. The government has had to prioritise essential sectors including water systems and hospitals, but when the power is off completely, people are going to die.

SOLIDARITY

The arrival of the *Granma 2.0*, a solidarity ship bringing 30 tons of aid from the Progressive International and the Nuestra America flotilla, also bringing aid of all kinds, including solar panels has been welcome. *Granma 2.0* is named after the original *Granma*, the yacht that carried Fidel Castro



Speakout for Cuba: Hands off Cuba, Boorloo/Perth, 13 March 2026.

and his comrades to Cuba in 1956. The ship flew both the Cuban and Palestinian flags, showing a connection between struggles for sovereignty in both the Caribbean and the Middle East. Welcome aid has been received from China, Russia, and Vietnam.

In Australia, Australia Cuba Friendship Societies around the country raise funds towards Cuba's 'organoponics' system to help with Cuban self-sufficiency in food.

TOTAL SIEGE

Since late 2025, the United States has intensified its economic sanctions to what many describe as "war by other means."

A series of executive orders targeted Cuba's fuel supply, cutting off vital imports after political changes in South America limited the oil-for-doctors exchange with Venezuela.

This total siege was aimed directly at the Cuban power grid. In January 2026, the US Treasury sanctioned any ship docking in Cuban ports.

Even neutral nations and private companies faced severe penalties if they continued trading with the island.

By March, much of Cuba's power grid collapsed. Sixty per cent of the country was left in darkness for days, and hospitals were forced to cancel non-emergency operations.

The impact went beyond blackouts. Public transport stopped, refrigerated food spoiled, and water pumping systems failed.

The strategy behind this blockade was clear: create social unrest by depriving people of basic needs. In practice, these restrictions have turned energy access, a fundamental necessity, into a weapon of geopolitical control.

MEDICAL MISSIONS

The US is also trying to cut off Cuba's networks of friendship with other nations. For decades Cuba has been sending doctors to other countries to provide free life-saving medical care. The doctors do their work voluntarily and are paid for their service.

They've been helping countries as diverse as Jamaica, Haiti, and even Italy.

Now the US is putting the squeeze on Cuban internationalism, with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who has always been rabidly anti-Cuba, describing the Cuban medical brigades as "human trafficking." The accusation is totally false. Cuban doctors who sign onto the scheme received their regular Cuban salary and extra pay from the host country, with guaranteed holidays and contact with families. Truth has never been an obstacle to the Trump administration.

The US has been putting pressure on other countries to ban the visiting doctors.

In Honduras, in Central America, there were tearful scenes as the last Cuban doctors said goodbye. Those doctors have been treating locals for free for two years, but the Honduran government responded to US pressure and expelled them this February.

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energy access has been turned into a weapon of geopolitical control

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11 Global solidarity with Cuba

There will be no *Guardian* next week, due to the Easter holiday. The next issue will be on the 13 April.

Guardian

Issue 2184

30 March 2026

Cuba in your face

There's a lot of Cuba in this issue of *Guardian the Workers' Weekly*. There's a front page about the current attempt of the US Trump administration to literally starve the country into submission. Page 11 details the global solidarity with Cuba, including the flotilla that has brought aid, solar panels and friendship. On page 14 there's a look at the Miami-Dade expat groups that work hard for the US to harm their country of origin. The paper regularly has ads for the Southern Cross Solidarity Brigades that visit Cuba to support it every year.

Australians might have trouble thinking about Cuba just now. It's a long way from here. Australians are hurting at home. The cost of living is climbing. The looming oil shortage is terrifying and looks to make everything, not just petrol, but all the products that depend on oil, scarce and expensive.

Cuba is a long distance from Australia, but the cause of Cuba's dire situation is very close. In fact, it's the cause of our difficulties too. It's the US – the reason our oil prices are so high, and the reason Cubans on ventilators are dying during power outages. Cuba is very relevant to what's happening here now. Cuba is a promise, a warning, and an example.

With way less resources than Australia has at hand, Cuba has, since the 1959 revolution, delivered free universal healthcare and education, as well as genuine independence. While the US exports weapons and war, Cuba has exported doctors, sending aid to countries as diverse as Haiti and Italy. Cuba has also exported education, sending its Yo Si Puedo (Yes I can) adult literacy model around the world, including to Australia. It has a consultative democracy that runs rings around Australia's money-dominated electoral processes.

The US knows Cuba is the threat of a good example, so they've been trying to make the island a warning to other countries not to step out of line, with a 60 years-and-counting blockade. The US bullies other nations with threats of fines and sanctions for helping Cuba. That's why your Commonwealth Bank app will cut out if you use it there. More seriously, that's why Cuba had to make respirators out of soft drink bottles during the COVID pandemic. Cuba developed five working vaccines by the way.

Cuba has survived the blockade. It defied predictions and flourished after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Things are very tough for the country now, but whatever happens Trump will never be able to erase the inspiration Cuba has been.

Cuba remains an example this country could follow if we had leaders who placed the Australian people ahead of the US and wealthy corporate donors to political parties.

Australia could have universal free healthcare, including dental. Australia could have completely free education. Australia could be a country where housing served the purpose of housing people, instead of a means for the wealthy to become wealthier (see 'RBA' on p3 for more on this). Australia could be genuinely independent of the US. That would be good for the very concrete reason that our "alliance" with the US is costing us almost half a trillion dollars and making us a target.

Cuba's example shows what's possible for a much smaller and poorer nation than Australia. For the inspiration, we thank them. For working class internationalism, we support them.

Long live Cuba!

Hands off Cuba!

Continued from page 1

In a policy of carrots and sticks the US offers support for training and telemedicine to countries that bar Cuban medical aid, with the stick being visa restrictions for officials or their families who take part in Cuban programs. There has been some defiance, with one Prime Minister saying he'd rather never visit the US again than deprive his people. Other countries have done the US bidding and sent Cuban doctors home.

Helen Yaffe, lecturer in Economic and Social History at the University of Glasgow has written that "Sabotaging medical internationalism would devastate Cuba. But it would also leave millions of people around the world without the vital medical attention that they had previously enjoyed."

The US has no problem with leaving millions of people without vital medical attention.

SURVIVAL

With the blackouts and shortages, things look dire in Cuba. There's also the prospect of direct attacks. As Trump's attack on Iran continues to cause a global disaster which is hard for even Trump to deny, it's quite possible the US President will look for what to him is an 'easy' win. Certainly Trump is thinking about it, musing in public that he may "have the honour of taking Cuba." It would be a black day if anything like that happened.

There is also the risk of small scale attacks. Earlier this year, a boat with 10 Cuban expats armed to the teeth, shot at Cuban coast guards who responded. Five of the

attackers were killed. The arms they were carrying could have killed hundreds.

However defeat is not certain. Cuba has solidarity from activists around the world, and has been receiving aid from China, Mexico, and Russia. The Cuban government has been focussing on the needs of the Cuban people since the revolution. Cubans know what the US is doing to them.

YOU CAN HELP

- Join or donate to the Australia Cuba Friendship Society in your state.
- Keep an eye out for actions in support of Cuba and join in. Viva Cuba! 🇨🇺



Quote of the Week

"Intelligence enables military violence"

Professor Richard Tanter Australia's leading academic researcher on Pine Gap on the intelligence facility's role in the war in the Middle East.

Boorloo/Perth

SPECIAL SCREENING

HOW THE WEST WAS LOST

A film by David Noakes

The story of the 1946 Aboriginal Pastoral Workers' Strike.

6:30PM TUES 31 MARCH
LUNA CINEMA LEEDERVILLE

TICKETS ON SALE NOW

AMWU UNIONSWA CFMEU WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Support
the *Guardian*
by donating
to Press Fund

Something
to say?
Write to
the Editor!

Tax rorts hit housing

M Santos

Interest rates were raised again on 17 March, up from 3.85% to 4.1% with next to no acknowledgement of the pain and suffering the decision will inflict on millions of Australians. In fact the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) seems to think most households will be able to manage the pain!

The RBA said there's no sign of mortgage stress. "Most Australian households and businesses have built up financial buffers, although rising cost pressures will impact some borrowers," the Reserve Bank's assistant governor said in a statement after the central bank published its semi-annual *Financial Stability Review*. Depending on the borrower, 'impact' could mean anything from 'annoy' to 'impoverish.'

At the time the Middle East war was in full swing and petrol and diesel prices were surging.

"I personally cannot tell people how to manage their finances but I do understand that it's going to be tough for some people, and this hit with fuel prices and this additional rise in mortgage rates is going to be hard for some people. I do understand that. But it will be much worse if inflation gets built into the fibres and then we will see the costs of everything going up and that will be a much worse outcome," RBA Governor Michele Bullock said at a media conference.

Are millions of Australians just "some people"! The cost of living is going up and the RBA is adding fuel to the fire.

Mortgagees and tenants are facing a massive cost-of-living crisis. Bullock's comments are completely out of touch with the plight of most Australians.

Apart from being the second hike in interest repayments on home and other loans this year, renters also take a hit, during a severe housing crisis. They are the hidden victims in the RBA's focus.

According to analysis by the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), property investors are buying almost twice as many homes as first home buyers, shutting families out of the housing market.

These profit-seeking investors are subsidised by the federal government to the tune of more than \$20 billion through the capital gains tax (CGT) discount and more than \$12 billion through negative gearing.

Yet you never hear media commentators complaining about tax rort blowouts while their claims of alleged NDIS, Medicare, PBS, and social welfare blowouts are never-ending.

HOUSING: A COMMODITY

Housing has become a commodity to be bought and let or sold for profit.

Around 90% of the benefits of negative gearing and the CGT discount for investment property are pocketed by the wealthiest 20%.

Armed with government assistance, investors have been driving up the cost of housing. The average property investor loan is around \$100,000 larger than the average loan taken out by a first home buyer.

"First home buyers are lining up at auctions only to be outbid by investors with bigger loans and generous tax breaks behind them," said ACOSS CEO Cassandra Goldie.

Investors pass on the cost of higher interest rates with rent increases.

The rental crisis is hitting hard. The RBA's focus is on those who might be able to afford to purchase a home. Its rate rises



Public housing, Pagewood, Sydney. Photo: Sardaka – wikimedia.org (CC BY 3.0)

inflict severe pain on millions of people on lower and middle incomes, the most vulnerable who are struggling in the rental market.

The RBA's decision was made at a time of extreme energy and military uncertainty, rapidly rising fuel prices and the prospect of shipping disruptions. These things cause inflation, but the RBA's attempt to curb inflation by squeezing ordinary Australians is in the interests of capital, not the working class.

The RBA does acknowledge the Middle East war, but does nothing to alleviate the inevitable global inflationary outcomes – that is, reduce interest rates. Instead it inflicts more pain.

Greens Senator Nick McKim, chair of a parliamentary inquiry into CGT arrangements said, "The evidence keeps piling up against the most unfair tax rort in the country.

"Instead of supporting productive investment, the CGT discount is now overwhelmingly used to subsidise speculation on existing properties, driving up prices and making home ownership even more difficult for renters."

"Right now, people are scared about what lies around the corner. People in precarious work are worried about losing their job, and people receiving income support already choose between eating food and keeping a roof over their head."

"We must not forget that JobSeeker is just 43% of the minimum wage."

Unemployment is already rising, rent increasingly unaffordable with families, not just singles sharing accommodation, and close to a million workers in two or more jobs.

DOUBLE WHAMMY

Households are being hit by inflation and higher interest rates. The higher interest rates feed into costs of production and services as corporations pay more on their loans and pass on the additional costs.

The RBA's stated aim of higher interest

rates is to reduce purchasing power for goods and services – reduced demand results in overproduction and higher unemployment.

In response to media questions Bullock said, "We don't want to have a recession, but if it's hard to get inflation down, then you know we're going to have to deal with that possibly."

The Australian economy is already facing the prospect of a global recession as fuel depots are bombed in the Middle East and the Strait of Hormuz is closed to most shipping. Petrol and diesel prices are soaring; businesses are hiking prices with fuel levies; and shipping has been disrupted.

Rising fuel prices affect shipping, airlines, businesses, and cost of household goods and services. Petrol stations began gouging before the more expensive fuel hit Australia's shores.

Farmers, about to plant winter crops, face fertiliser shortages and extreme weather events. There are predictions of billions of people around the world being hit by famine if the war does not end promptly.

Construction companies are going to the wall as the cost of materials soars.

Australia is heavily reliant on imports, including our own gas which is practically given to foreign companies and imported back into Australia.

POLICY

The Communist Party of Australia is calling for:

- Abolition of negative gearing and capital gains tax concession
- Massive public housing programs by all levels of government
- Rental controls
- Price controls on fuel, essential goods and services to curb inflation
- Government planning and greater role for public sector in critical industries such as pharmaceuticals, energy,

housing, fertiliser, building materials, shipping

- Expansion of public transport to reduce reliance on cars
- Free public transport
- Reforming the RBA Board so that its members reflect the interests of the working class
- Build self-reliance on essentials with a planned economy.

Such programs could be funded by the cancellation of AUKUS and the missile program, ending the multi-billion-dollar fossil fuel subsidies, and redirecting current home loan programs to public housing. ★

Unaffordable housing

- JobSeeker is \$408.75 a week
- Minimum wage \$948 a week
- Single age pension \$550.15
- Couple age pension \$414.70 each
- Full-time adult shop assistant \$1,008.90
- Rent for 2-bedrm unit Sydney \$761.27
- Rent 2-bedrm unit other capitals more than \$600
- Rent 3-bedrm house Sydney \$1,077.07
- Rent 3-bedrm house other capitals \$680 upwards, \$601 in Hobart

(all housing costs are averages)

90% of the benefits of negative gearing and the CGT discount for investment property are pocketed by the wealthiest 20%

New report calls for taxing the super-rich

The average Australian billionaires' wealth grew by almost \$600,000 a day in the last year alone, or over \$10.5 billion collectively, new Oxfam analysis reveals today as the World Economic Forum opens in Davos.

Since 2020, eight new Australian billionaires have been minted. Today, Australia's 48 billionaires hold more wealth than the bottom 40% of the population combined, almost 11 million people. In light of these eye-watering figures, the anti-poverty organisation is calling the Australian Government to tax the fortunes of the super-rich to tackle rampant inequality.

Data crunching also revealed:

One Australian billionaire's wealth increase alone matched the annual average incomes of more than 2,000 Australians.

The growth in wealth of Australia's richest man and largest landlord, billionaire property developer, Harry Triguboff, in the last year alone, is equal to the amount required to fund the construction of 10,600 homes.

Globally, billionaire wealth jumped by over 16% in 2025, three times faster than the past five-year average, to \$27.7 trillion – its highest level in history.

The total number of billionaires topped 3,000 last year for the first time, while the richest, Elon Musk, became the first ever to briefly surpass half a trillion dollars.

Meanwhile, everyday Australians continue to face financial uncertainty as the cost-of-living crisis and rising housing prices persist.

Jennifer Tierney, Oxfam Australia Chief Executive says the surge in billionaire wealth exposes a system that is failing people at home and abroad.

"While millions of Australians are cutting back on essentials, struggling with soaring rents and mortgages, and watching global crises like conflict in Yemen, Sudan and Syria receive dwindling humanitarian support; Australia's billionaires are accumulating extraordinary wealth at extraordinary speed. The gap between those doing it toughest and those benefiting most is stark, and well evidenced," she said.

The report "Resisting the Rule of the Rich: Defending Freedom Against Billionaire Power" analyses how the super-rich are securing political power to shape the rules of our economies and societies, which can be

to the detriment of the rights and freedoms of people around the world. Oxfam estimates that billionaires are 4,000 times more likely to hold political office than ordinary citizens.

Clive Palmer, mining magnate and former Member of Parliament, is a prominent Australian example. He has spent more than \$250 million over five federal elections, most recently reportedly spending around \$60 million to campaign for his party Trumpet of Patriots during the 2025 election.

"When one billionaire can spend hundreds of millions of dollars to shape political conversations, it shows how extreme wealth can translate directly into political power – undermining a fair and healthy democracy," said Tierney.

Across the globe, billions of people are being left facing avoidable hardships of poverty, hunger and death from preventable diseases because the system is rigged against them. Worldwide, one in four people face food insecurity, having to regularly skip meals.

In Australia, over 3.7 million people live in poverty, including 757,000 children under 15 years. One in three households experienced food insecurity last year, meaning they stressed about or struggled to put food on the table.

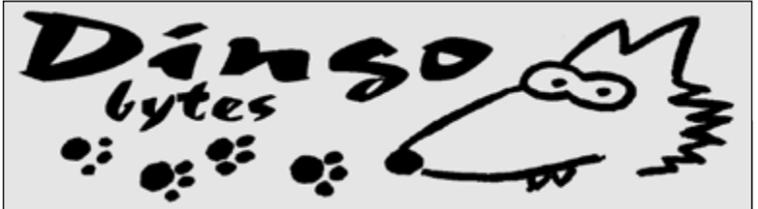
"We have a Prime Minister who talks about creating a kinder and fairer Australia. The government has the tools to act."

Oxfam is calling on the Australian government to take urgent action to effectively tax the super-rich and remove tax breaks that allow them to amass extreme wealth. This is essential to restoring budget revenue needed for reducing inequality and funding essential services. Tax system reforms could include:

A 5% wealth tax on Australia's billionaires just last year could have raised \$17.4 billion, enough to deliver cheap childcare for all families, extend energy bill relief for another two years, and increase the humanitarian budget almost seven times over.

Ending the capital gains tax discount for individuals and trusts, and instead taxing the income from capital gains on investments like we do income from work would bring some fairness to the system and raise enough money to fund a huge increase in bulk billing.

Oxfam 



Anthony Albanese was heckled during a recent event at a Sydney Mosque to mark the end of Ramadan. Albanese and Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke were attending an event at Lakemba Mosque as part of Friday morning Eid prayers.

Some of those attending the event jeered the politicians and accused them of being "genocide supporters." Albanese continued to be heckled as he made his way out of the mosque, with one person shouting, "Get him out of here! It's a disgrace." He was able to escape via a back door, chased by the crowd. Said one, "He wants to come here after shaking hands with the president of Israel, who's got blood on his hands. And that means our prime minister has blood on his hands. To come here and act like nothing has happened is a disgrace."

There is deeply-felt anger within Australia's Muslim community over the government's response to Israel's war on the Palestinians in Gaza, its attacks in Lebanon and rising Islamophobia at home.

In a statement after the event, the Lebanese Muslim Association, which operates the mosque, said, "We understand that emotions are high, particularly given the ongoing suffering in Gaza and the devastation in Lebanon. These are not distant issues for our community."

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: Fossil fuels polluter Santos. Gomeroi Traditional Owners, NSW Farmers, the Country Women's Association of NSW, Unions NSW and the Lock the Gate Alliance have signed a joint declaration calling on the NSW government to withdraw support for Santos' Narrabri gas project, as tensions escalate over threats of compulsory land acquisition.

The landmark declaration warns the project would harm the Pilliga forest, water resources and prime agricultural land, stating any attempt to acquire land for the project's high-pressure gas pipeline would be "vigorously opposed with all available means."

The NSW government approved the gasfield in 2020 despite record public opposition. The proposed Hunter Gas Pipeline is facing concerted opposition from rural landholders and the associated Narrabri Lateral gas pipeline is still awaiting state and federal approval.

In a show of unity, the groups met in north-west NSW to sign the declaration, sending a clear message to Premier Chris Minns over his threats to compulsorily acquire land for the pipeline.

Gomeroi Traditional Owner Karra Kinchela said, "Gomeroi Mob don't want to see hundreds of coal seam gas wells drilled into the sacred Pilliga Forest. We will continue defending our land, water and cultural heritage from industrial gas development and are proud to be joined with unionists, farmers, and country women in defending the land we all love."

Unions NSW Assistant Secretary Vanessa Seagrove said, "We stand in solidarity with the Gomeroi people, who have overwhelmingly voted against the Santos Narrabri gas project because of the harm it will have on the Pilliga forest, people, water and culture."

NSW Farmers President Xavier Martin said, "NSW Farmers is greatly concerned about any projects or activities that may detrimentally effect our aquifers or the Great Artesian Basin."

Country Women's Association of NSW CEO Danica Leys said, "You cannot talk about supporting regional NSW while running over the top of the very communities you claim to represent. This community has been clear with this declaration. It does not want to be an industrialised gas field and it does not want its water resources harmed. That should be the starting point for any decision."

Liverpool Plains farmer Margaret Fleck said, "The Liverpool Plains farming region is one of most productive farming regions in the country. Farmers don't want gas fields and pipelines cutting through waterways, and risking the land and food that feeds the nation."

"The breadth of this coalition sends a clear message to the NSW government that it should stand with us, not with Santos."

Santos' Narrabri gas project is facing a Native Title Tribunal challenge by the Gomeroi people.



Palmer's favoured transport at Wagga Wagga Airport. Photo: Bidgee – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 3.0 AU). Clive Palmer. Photo: Benjamin J MacDonald – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 3.0)

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Sydney: 'Stop the War on Iran – Scrap AUKUS'

Denis Doherty

A combination of peace groups under the banner of Sydney Anti-AUKUS Coalition (SAAC) and the Palestine Action (PA) came together to run a most impressive first rally against the war in Iran. Sydney Town Hall was filled with many protesters from the above groups and many from the expatriate Iranian community living in Sydney.

The aims of the rally were to condemn the outrageous and cowardly attack on Iran by two nuclear-armed countries namely Israel and the US. The attacks are illegal and immoral, yet the Australian government cannot find enough strength to condemn

these acts, saying they are relying on both the US and Israel to decide if they are offending international law. It's a ridiculous statement exhibiting a moral backbone akin to limp lettuce, tantamount to saying a criminal can decide if a crime is illegal.

Israel is currently a state conducting genocide.

Sydney's peace, anti-war and pro-Palestine communities rallied against the US – Israel war on Iran and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and the way AUKUS and the US bases in Australia have been used to drag Australia into this illegal and disastrous war.

Australia by failing to condemn the aggression and joining in has become a villain not one of 'the good guys.'

Australian assets are not fighting for

freedom and democracy; they're fighting for money and power.

The decision by the Albanese government to send elements of the ADF even in low numbers makes us a combatant and puts a target on those ADF personnel who have been assigned to the UAE.

The rally started with a spirited contribution by Abigail Boyd MLC (Greens) who outlined the disastrous decision of the Albanese government compared with the stance of Greens supporting opposition to the war. Dr Alex Wodak called on the world to resolved conflicts without resorting violence. Mitra, an Iranian-Australian woman, talked of her love for her country and relatives still trapped in Iran.

The march demonstrated the breadth of

support from the political parties the CPA and the other parties as well as many from the Iranian

Hosting US bases on our soil does not offer protection as been shown in the Gulf it attracts hostility. We say "US bases out!"

"Every military asset Labor sends to the Gulf frees up US and Israeli assets to continue to the illegal attacks on Iran.

The Sydney message was that the war should stop immediately and that Australia should withdraw from the AUKUS military pact and end the US – Australia military alliance. ✳

International women's action campaigns

Bev Hall

In South Australia women have been celebrating 110 years of Women's contributions to global peace and justice as part of International Women's Day. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is one of the oldest peace organisations in the world, and is run solely by women. It began in 1915 with women from many countries around the world who were concerned about the rise of fascism and the impending rise of war joining together in Den Hague in the Netherlands.

Over the years WILPF has been consistent in taking action against militarism and demanding peace and justice for all peoples. They focus on the need to divert the wasting of funds on military expenditure to improve healthcare, education, and climate action. Ten years ago, several of us were fortunate to attend the 100 year celebration at the International Court of Justice in Den Hague and to take part in demonstrations for peace with hundreds of women from around the world.

WILPF this year organised exhibitions against war, armaments manufacture and the militarisation of our economy. These exhibitions were held in several local libraries. For International Women's Day they participated at Burnside, and had a stall with information, leaflets and posters displaying the work of WILPF and concerns over AUKUS and other military adventures. At Tea Tree Gully they had a two-week exhibition displaying WILPF's history over 110 years and a stall advocating the concerns and actions of WILPF. This included a presentation by the co-ordinator to a local audience not only about the concerns of WILPF but AUKUS, and how the root cause of armaments build up, militarism and the devastating effects



Three WILPF members leading a panel discussion.

of climate change imposed on humanity is capitalism.

The vision of WILPF is for humanity to be free from violence, for universal demilitarisation, environmental justice and sustainability, as well as for decolonisation and anti-racism, universal human rights, gender justice and just inclusive economic systems. This is through activism, awareness raising, solidarity dialogues, advocacy, and alliance building.

WILPF further are organising a poster

history and peace exhibition at North Adelaide Community Centre in May and the retelling of WILPF's story on Women's Peace Activism in SA as part of History Week. The talk will include the key campaigns WILPF has been involved in, activities women and their connections with other peace and social justice groups on Sunday 3 May at 2 pm.

The other campaign WILPF is involved in is the 2026 Global Days of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS) from 10 April to 9 May. Actions focus on diverting funds from

military spending to healthcare, education and climate action through rallies, vigils, workshops, divestment campaigns, social media advocacy, petitions and writing to elected officials.

All up, the world dedicates \$2.44 trillion to the military each year. Join the WILPF banner online campaign #warcostsus-theearth. Increasing militarism is a recipe for disaster. Militarism fuels war, injustice and environmental destruction. End this reckless arms race now! ✳

ABC staff take industrial action

ABC staff have voted overwhelmingly in favour of protected industrial action – including a 24-hour strike on 25 March – in a bid to secure sustainable jobs, fair pay and improved working conditions, and to protect the quality news and programming Australians rely on.

Close to 1,000 staff participated in the ballot, with over 90 per cent voting in favour of industrial action. The approved actions also include unlimited stoppages of work, with exemptions in place to ensure emergency broadcasting continues.

Media, Entertainment & Arts

Alliance (MEAA) Chief Executive, Erin Madeley, said the decision reflected deep frustration after months of negotiations with ABC management.

"I congratulate our brave members at the ABC for standing up for secure jobs, fair treatment and quality journalism – but they should never have been pushed to this point," Madeley said.

"ABC staff are taking this step because they want fair pay that keeps up with the cost of living, genuine job security, and working conditions that allow them to continue serving the Australian public with integrity."

The decision to strike followed ABC staff voting no to a revised enterprise agreement offer from management that included limited improvements to job security but no increase to pay or key conditions compared with the previous offer. Management's proposal also included a one-off \$1,000 payment that would not be added to base salaries, would not attract superannuation, and would exclude casual staff.

Madeley said below-inflation pay outcomes and ongoing insecure work threatened the future of public-interest journalism.

"Experienced journalists and

media workers are being asked to do more with less – with fewer opportunities for pay progression, less certainty about their future, and growing workloads," she said.

"This isn't just a workforce issue. When skilled, experienced staff are forced out, communities lose trusted local voices, particularly in regional Australia where the ABC is often the only local newsroom."

Madeley said staff had worked hard to minimise disruption, particularly to emergency broadcasting, but warned that unresolved workplace issues posed a greater long-term risk.

"ABC staff don't want to strike

– they want to do their jobs," she said.

"They want fair pay, secure work, and guardrails around the use of technologies like AI to protect editorial integrity and public trust."

MEAA is calling on ABC management to work with us to agree an offer that properly reflects the value of ABC staff and protects the future of Australia's public broadcaster. "Investing in the people behind the ABC is essential to protecting a public broadcaster that belongs to all Australians," Madeley said.

Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance ✳

Victorian teachers go all out for decent pay

For the first time in over 13 years, public school teachers, principals, and education support staff have stopped work for 24 hours following the inability of the Allan Labor government to put a fair and decent pay and conditions offer on the table.

A reported 35,000 teachers principals, and education support staff took to the streets of Melbourne, marching from Trades Hall to State Parliament in a clear message to the Labor government.

Staff from some private schools took part in demonstrations of solidarity.

Australian Education Union's (AEU) Victorian Branch President Justin Mullaly said there are significant and ongoing staffing shortages affecting schools across the state, as Victorian public school staff continue to be the lowest paid in the country and increasingly overworked.

This is occurring at the same time as Victorian public schools are the lowest funded in Australia, with schools funded in 2026 to the same level they received in 2023, as well as missing out on \$2.4 billion through to 2031 as a result of Premier Allan's decision to delay a full funding deal with the federal government.

"Victorian public schools have a serious workforce shortage because excessive workloads and uncompetitive pay are driving experienced staff out of the profession and making it difficult to attract the next generation," Mullaly said.

"This should be completely unacceptable in any state or territory, let alone for a Labor state



government which prides itself on calling Victoria the 'education state.'"

After more than nine months of waiting for a reasonable offer from the Allan government – and rejecting a "completely unacceptable" deal last week that did not do enough to properly and fairly deliver pay increases and address excessive workloads – teachers, principals, and support staff have been forced to take stopwork action.

"Victorian teachers, principals, and support staff would much rather be in the classroom

teaching Victorian students today, but because of the disrespect from the Allan government, they are having to stop work for 24 hours," Mullaly said.

"If the Allan Labor government really values the work of Victorian teachers, principals, and education support staff, they must come forward with an offer that addresses their real concerns."

A recent survey showed only 30% of staff plan to stay working in public schools long term, while more than 80% say their workloads have increased due to inadequate support.

By October 2026 experienced teachers will be earning as much as \$15,359 a year (\$295 per week) less than their NSW counterparts, a classroom based education support employee starting out would be 10.5% behind, and a Victorian school principal new to the role would start \$27,841 or 18% behind a similar principal in NSW.

"Our students and their families do not deserve to have teachers, principals, and education support staff that are underpaid and undervalued. Instead the delivery of high quality public education requires that they are properly respected

and paid what they are worth," Mullaly said.

"The Premier and the Education Minister need to act immediately on this, and on delivering full funding through an agreement with the federal government which lifts Victoria off the bottom of the funding pile and delivers the resources in full, like other states and territories."

Following this stopwork, Australian Education Union members are ready to escalate their industrial campaign if necessary to ensure that a fair and decent offer is made by the Allan Labor government.

Australian Education Union ✪

Musicians' livelihoods threatened

Musicians across the country have banded together to protect live music in the wake of a decision by West Australian Ballet to scrap live orchestra music from the upcoming Adelaide tour of the award-winning *Dracula*.

WA Ballet, which has had a long-running partnership with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra to perform live at its productions, will instead rely on recorded music for six shows to be held at the Adelaide Festival Centre in April.

Represented by the Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA), more than 500 orchestral musicians from across Australia and New Zealand have demanded that WA Ballet engage musicians for the show.

MEAA Musicians Director, Paul Davies, said the move was part of an emerging trend of performance arts companies devaluing live music, driven by cost-cutting.

"As the union for Australia's media and creative workers, which includes musicians,

MEAA urges the WA Ballet to immediately reverse its decision to scrap live music from its upcoming Adelaide performances of *Dracula*," Davies said.

"The WA Ballet has a responsibility to include live music in its productions, and we will continue to speak out when this doesn't happen.

"It disrespects the audience by diminishing their experience, and at the same time it compromises dancers' ability to practice their art with creativity and integrity and denies musicians the dignity of work."

Adelaide-based violinist Nadia Buck said she would have liked the opportunity to be booked to play for *Dracula*.

"Being a freelance musician, work can be precarious so it's quite disheartening to see the contribution of live music devalued in this way," she said.

"But it's not just about the income – though that's obviously important – it's also about being part of something special and

dynamic, performing live with dancers, feeling their energy and inspiring the audience.

"A live orchestra follows the dancers' steps in real-time, allowing us to be spontaneous and expressive together. For the audience, recorded music just doesn't compare to the real thing."

A motion calling on West Australian Ballet to engage musicians for their 2026 Adelaide run of *Dracula* and make a firm commitment to KEEP MUSIC LIVE, has been unanimously supported by musicians in eight Australian orchestras. Musicians from four New Zealand orchestras also backed the motion.

Davies said companies, particularly those that received government funding, had an obligation to protect and preserve jobs.

"When organisations rely on taxpayer dollars to operate, as the WA Ballet does, it's only fair to expect them to provide meaningful employment for real people, rather than seeking ways to cut corners and undermine

the workforce – musicians must not be seen as optional extras.

"Years of underfunding in the arts can lead companies to make short-term decisions that devalue musicians' and dancers' work and leave audiences missing out. We must all work for a better system to support our public arts institutions, but funding problems are no excuse for bad management choices."

According to MEAA's 2025 musicians survey, almost half of the nation's working musicians are earning less than \$15,000 a year in an industry where income insecurity and chronic undervaluation are commonplace.

"It is critical that our arts institutions uphold their responsibility to support artists and maintain the tradition of live music, which is at the heart of ballet and so many other performing arts."

Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance ✪

New report reveals growing strain on TAFE

TAFEs train Australian workers, but the Australian Education Union's (AEU) 2026 State of Our TAFE report shows that without major new investment, TAFE cannot keep up with growing demand. Enrolments are rising, but so are workloads, staff shortages and retention problems, with

almost two-thirds of teachers considering leaving in the past year.

The report also highlights the increasing pressure on teachers to meet students' mental health, literacy and digital support needs without the staffing, training or resources required.

93% of those surveyed work

additional hours unpaid each week, while 72% reported that the pace and intensity of work has increased in last two years. Over 61% reported an increase in administration tasks. This may be connected to the retention problems – administration tasks are not directly paid for. When admin increases, there is no automatic increase in paid hours.

Shockingly, only 8.5% of respondents said their workload was entirely manageable.

Teachers cited factors such as increased class sizes, widening of duties, and the impacts of reorganisation as contributing to making workloads more intense.

The AEU is calling on governments to urgently invest in the

TAFE workforce, student support, and modern facilities – because without teachers, there is no TAFE. AEU ✪

Sign for peace

Australian naval personnel are now embedded in US nuclear hunter-killer submarines gaining operational training under the AUKUS Security Agreement. Three Australian submarines were on the US nuclear submarine which illegally sank the Iranian frigate, resulting in 140 Iranian sailors dead or missing. The frigate was on a formal visit to India. Australia has thus become complicit in this illegal and criminal action.

Further, Peter Cronau in his article in *Consortium News* titled 'Australia's Deepening Involvement in US War on Iran' claims the US order to torpedo this Iranian ship was most probably sent from Australia, via the Harold E Holt Submarine Communications Facility at the North West Cape. That facility enables command signals to be sent through sea water to submerged submarines in the Indian Ocean.

Currently the path to Australian independence and peace is blocked by AUKUS, the Force Posture Agreement and key US bases such as Pine Gap and

the N/W Cape Submarine Communications station. These bases are constantly drawing Australia into illegal US wars, such as the current war on Iran. These are contributing to the worrying rise in cost of living due to the price rises of fuel, electricity, food, and the global climate crisis.

We need more signatures on the cancel AUKUS and FPA petition.

IPAN, the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network, along with the Australian Peace and Security Forum and a range of progressive organisations, will be holding a public, independent inquiry into the secret AUKUS negotiations and the full impacts for Australians of it and the Force Posture Agreement.

The petition can be signed at ipan.org.au/public-call-to-the-australian-government/

Donations towards the inquiry can be made at <https://chuffed.org/project/173009-public-inquiry-into-aukus>

IPAN ✳



International Peace Day, Walyalup/Fremantle WA, September 2025.

Pharmaceuticals, fertiliser at risk

Dr Vinh Thai professor of logistics and supply chain management at RMIT University says, "While sustainability efforts often focus on reducing reliance on fossil fuels, the reality is that petrochemical components, derived from crude oil and natural gas, underpin more than 6,000 everyday products and high-tech devices.

A prolonged or expanding conflict in the Middle East will inevitably strain the supply of key inputs into Australia.

"Petrochemicals are

foundational to the medical industry, from pharmaceuticals such as aspirin, vitamins and antihistamines to medical equipment like syringes and blood bags, as well as disposable healthcare items including diapers and sanitary products.

"Australia imports around 90 per cent of its medicines, with pharmaceutical products ranking among the country's top 10 imports, valued at approximately \$17 billion in 2025.

"If the conflict persists, the impact could intensify, particularly if exporting countries impose restrictions or bans, making it

critical to closely monitor supply chain risks to ensure continuity of medical supplies.

"With no clear signs of the conflict easing, Australia may face longer shipping times, short-term shortages and temporary price increases for medical supplies as supply chain pressures build.

"These disruptions extend beyond healthcare and we will see the impact in our daily lives across many critical areas. Consumer goods, plastic products, and fertiliser (which will flow into food production) could all be affected."

RMIT ✳

GREEN NOTES

Climate change's indigenous impact

Graham Holton

Important rivers in Alaska's Brooks Range and National Parks are turning bright orange and becoming increasingly acidic as climate change thaws the permafrost across the Arctic. The acidic waters dissolve and mobilise toxic metals, leading to the release of high levels of iron, which turns the water bright orange. As the permafrost thaws, these 'rusting rivers' release toxic metals and sulphide minerals held in the bedrock to water and oxygen, threatening whole ecosystems.

Since 2008 researchers have identified more than seventy-five locations where once clear waterways have turned orange across northern Alaska, some visible in satellite imagery. Scientists warn that because this is so widespread it is largely irreversible, with no easy cleanup solution available. The high acidity, combined with high concentrations of metals like aluminium and cadmium, have been linked to population crashes amongst chum salmon, which threatens food sources for local Indigenous communities.

Jon O'Donnell, an ecologist for the National Parks Service Arctic Inventory and Monitoring Network, said, "Those orange streams can be problematic both in terms of being toxic but might also prevent migration of fish to spawning areas." If rural communities rely on these rivers for drinking water, they would need treatment. O'Donnell said, "As the climate continues to warm, we would expect permafrost to continue to thaw and so wherever there are these types of minerals, there's potential for streams to be turning orange and becoming degraded in terms of water quality."

For many Alaska Native communities, orange rivers are not just an environmental risk, they are a test of whether their sovereignty has any real operational power. Communities such as the Inupiat, Yupik, and Athabasca are sovereign tribal governments who navigate a complex state-federal structure. The sovereignty of tribes in Alaska is unusual compared to the lower forty-eight US states. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) transferred land to Native regional and village corporations rather than establishing large reservation systems. This created a corporate land ownership model, which complicates environmental jurisdiction.

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) protects subsistence rights on federal lands, but enforcement and interpretation are often contested. In Alaska, few tribes have full water regulatory control. Tribes may depend on federal grants rather than exercising full regulatory authority, fragmenting their power of enforcement. Rural Alaska villages often face extremely high infrastructure costs, limited tax bases, and expensive water treatment upgrades.

Even when federal climate resilience funds are available, grant applications are complex and delays can stretch for years. Staffing capacity in small villages is limited. This creates a structural inequality in which the communities most affected often have the least administrative capacity to respond quickly. Many Alaska Native leaders frame this issue as more than a climate justice problem. For them it is a sovereignty issue, and a subsistence rights issue. The recognition of traditional ecological knowledge in regulatory decisions is a problem, with continued tension between development and environmental protection.

The deeper political question becomes who controls adaptation in the Arctic: the federal agencies, the state of Alaska, corporations, or Indigenous governments? There is growing advocacy for Indigenous-led research partnerships, where tribes control data collection and interpretation rather than serving as advisory bodies only. The long-term outcome will depend upon future global warming and the degree to which Indigenous governance is empowered in environmental decisions.



Something to say?

Write to the Editor!

editor@cpa.org.au

Time of monsters – The US lashes out

Jamie & Oliver

This year isn't even three months old and we're seeing constant escalation of wars across the world, primarily from the United States' imperial ambitions. Iran has long been subjected to imperialist interference, first from the British and now by the United States. Ever since the 1979 overthrow of the Shah, Iran has been the target of western imperialism in waves of violence from direct warfare to economic sanctions. Now in 2026, we find ourselves in the midst of "Operation Epic Fury" – an extension of historic meddling in the country and yet another war against sovereignty the US is waging on the whole world.

On 3 January we saw Venezuela's capital being bombed and its democratically elected leader, Nicolás Maduro and his wife kidnapped by US special forces. Donald Trump has continued to trample over international law, committing acts of terror in Venezuela and towards Cuba where the extensive blockade is now preventing nearly any trade with any nation. Trump's administration has continued to pursue constant violence on the world stage and blatantly break international law for the sake of US empire and imperialism.

The United States has continued to escalate the conflict with Iran alongside Israel despite popular disapproval. The US admin is not pursuing war with Iran for no reason, and certainly is not doing it at Israel's whim, although Israel looks set to benefit massively by destabilising the rest of the Middle East and expanding its territory and influence in the region. Neither the United States' people nor Israel's general population will actually gain anything out of the multi-million dollar ordnance being routinely dropped on Middle Eastern military orphanages.

The only group of people that stand to gain anything from a protracted war with Iran are the ruling elites, the capitalist class. As the world economy continues to shift more and more away from the US petrodollar, the US and its corporate elite see their ability to sanction and strangle the world for its resources beginning to slip. These wars are not primarily about oil or 'freedom and liberty' – they are about the US order over the plundering of the world's wealth. This is a new front in an ongoing, world-spanning conflict waged by the US as its ruling class grapples with the implications of a flagging economy and loss of previously unassailable hegemony on the world stage.

Cuba, Venezuela, China, Iran, and Russia are all in the crosshairs, as they all present US capitalists with the issue of markets that do not comply with US power and US economic elite ownership rights. As the US and its capitalist class continue to lose power on the world stage, they will continue to become more violent as their hold over the world economy becomes weaker.

WORLDWIDE IMPACTS

The United States has been a violent force that has imposed its will over large parts of the world. Now they try to cling onto this power in ever more extreme ways. Gramsci's words are apt right now: "the old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be



Protesters at an anti-war rally at Parliament House, Adelaide, March 2026. Sarah Hanson-Young, a federal senator for the Australian Greens, is speaking. Photo: Alison Newman – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

born; now is the time of monsters." Violence like this could very well be the death throes of the United States' hegemony and Iran may be the US Empire's graveyard. As this war with Iran continues, it will become an ever more powerful inspiration of resistance for the nations of the world but arguably more importantly a blueprint for those same nations to do the same.

US inability to quickly stamp out resistance to its global hegemony will embolden future challenges to US imperialism. At some stage US may find many nations starting to distance themselves. The awareness that other nations' respect for it is declining will only push the US further down the path to barbarism or hopefully revolution.

As the power of the United States wanes, it will increasingly resort to military adventurism in a desperate attempt to maintain profit-margins. Time will tell if this war with Iran can truly open the door for more revolutionary actions to take place against the US, capitalism and the hegemonic empire they lead.

The conflict has also seen a breakdown in both the solidarity of the international bourgeoisie and rising tensions amongst the people, as seen in dissension among NATO countries. The US ruling class sought war to expand its imperial reach, yet in their hubris they have exposed their weakness and the unwillingness of subservient "allies" to follow them into the abyss. This may be a sign of cracks in imperial solidarity that the workers' movement can harness to lift the oppressive blanket of US hegemony.

In Australia, there has been a breakdown in "social cohesion" as the tensions between the ruling and working classes have sharpened. While the ruling class currently

represented by the ALP continue blind allegiance to the US empire, public sentiment is not with them. There has been a notable lack of success in manufacturing consent for the ongoing imperial entanglement. People aren't enthused about helping out US imperialism towards Iran. Conflicts within the working class are growing, namely islamophobia and antisemitism. Unfortunately, without class consciousness some members of the working class will view the actions of nation states operating within an imperialist global system along religious and ethnic lines. This is a growing concern that can only be addressed through improving class consciousness – through educating and unifying the working class.

Economically, disrupted supply chains have already exacerbated the cost-of-living crisis. Yet again the capitalist class is racking up a blood-stained bill and asking the working class to pick up the tab. The cost of fuel has surged, tightening the screws on household budgets yet further. As the conflict drags on, the consequences of disrupted production will broaden and deepen into inflationary pressures and place pressure on global food production. With no end to the war in sight, the world is on the cusp of a looming economic reckoning.

Environmentally, we are witnessing an ecological disaster unfolding. From oil-saturated rainwater over Iran to fires burning on the strait of Hormuz, this war is having a disastrous effect on the lives of people and wildlife in the Middle East. Ecological damage from F35s burning over 80 litres of jet fuel a minute, to each Tomahawk missile releasing 800kg of CO2 are contributing massively to the local pollution in Iran. The context of this war being in the Middle East and primarily

fought through controlling the flow of oil to the world markets has led to oil refineries, oil tankers and pipelines being prime targets for military strikes, heightening the risk of toxic oil spills and massive fires releasing even more greenhouse gases.

SOCIALISM OR BARBARISM

In the midst of so much hardship, a seed of hope exists. While the US seems intent in its drive to a barbarous world of repression, exploitation and mass suffering, that is not the only way. The current violence signals increasing US weakness. US inability to quickly impose their will on the world has exposed the limits to its assumed power. In crisis there is hope that a new world can be brought in from struggle and opposition to imperialism by workers and soldiers around the world standing up to their imperial overlords.

For the Australian Working Class, our tasks now must be:

Demand an end to AUKUS and close Pine Gap. Workers must struggle for an independent Australia as an immediate security concern.

Economically oppose Israeli aggression. Through BDS and tactical political and economic agitation, the position of Israel as an 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' for the US is weakened.

Demand energy independence now. Australia must accelerate our transition to sustainable and secure energy supplies to reduce our dependence on the US petro-economy.

We have a world to win – down with AUKUS, down with imperialism! Organise for a socialist future! ✖

As the US and its capitalist class continue to lose power on the world stage, they will continue to become more violent.

The Far Right goes to war against women

Vijay Prashad

Across Latin America, a strange war has been declared. It is fought not only in parliaments and courts but in classrooms, kitchens, churches, and the restless spaces of the internet. Its targets are women, queer and trans people, and the movements that insist life can be lived differently. The contemporary far right claims to defend the patriarchal family, morality, and tradition. But beneath these words lies another project: the restoration of old hierarchies at a moment when the world that sustained them is trembling.

For decades, feminist movements have unsettled the foundations of power in Latin America. From the struggles against dictatorships in the 1970s and 1980s to the massive demonstrations against femicide and for reproductive rights in the twenty-first century, women and sex-gender dissidents have expanded the horizon of what is possible. They have named what was once invisible. They have spoken about the long hours of unpaid labour that sustain society. They have exposed the violence that hides inside the home. They have insisted that bodies, desires, and identities cannot be disciplined by the state or the church. And they have done so in the streets – together. These advances, however, have unfolded under the long, stinging shadow of neoliberalism.

Across Latin America – and indeed the rest of the world – the burden of care still rests heavily on women's shoulders, with women working longer hours for less pay while millions remain without independent income. This reality was recognised in August 2025 at the XVI Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mexico City.

There, the countries of the region approved the Tlatelolco Commitment, which established a Decade of Action (2025–2035) to achieve substantive gender equality and build what the conference called a 'care society' – one in which the work of sustaining life is treated as a collective responsibility rather than a private burden placed on women. As Citlalli Hernández Mora, Mexico's Minister for Women, said in her closing remarks, the commitment is a 'road map' for the coming years. The countries of the region, Hernández Mora continued, will "not accept rollbacks. We do not tolerate impunity, and we will build through our activism and our alliances, a care society as the basis for peace, justice, equity, and the future."

The delegates at the conference recognised a truth long advanced by feminist movements: that the current system – the capitalist system – survives through a sexual division of labour, in which unpaid domestic and care work, valued at 15.9%–25.3% of GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean and performed overwhelmingly by women, sustains households, reproduces the labour force, and keeps society going.

In 1975, also in Mexico City, the United Nations convened the World Conference of the International Women's Year. The following year, it launched the Decade for Women (1976–1985), which culminated in



Artwork: Rini Templeton

the World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1985. Many of the concerns voiced in August 2025 echoed those heard in Nairobi forty years earlier. Rather than marking clear progress, the 2025 conference was overshadowed by a sense of reversal – visible not only in public policy but also in the language being used to talk about women's equality.

In times of crisis, the propertied classes, quite pleased with the status quo, search for enemies to disrupt the path to progress. In recent decades, the far right of a special type has made what it calls 'gender ideology' one of its central enemies – a phrase repeated endlessly in speeches and sermons, transforming the simple demand for dignity into a cosmic threat.

According to this story, feminism is not a movement for justice but a conspiracy against humanity; diversity is not a human reality but a danger to civilisation itself. In this theatre of fear, the 'family,' defined only as a father and mother with children, is presented as a fortress under siege.

The causes of suffering – austerity, exploitation, and poverty – are carefully hidden and instead the blame for this suffering is directed toward the very movements that seek to transform society for the better. Thus, resentment is redirected, anger is repackaged, and hope is replaced with suspicion.

One of the most visible expressions of this reaction is the campaign *Con Mis Hijos No Te Metas* ('Don't Mess with My Children'). The slogan first appeared in Colombia in 2016 during protests against sex education programmes and quickly spread across Latin

America, carried by evangelical churches, conservative NGOs, and right-wing politicians. Behind those simple words lies a complex network of organisations that mobilise protests, shape legislation, and flood social media with alarming narratives about the supposed dangers of gender equality – all while claiming to protect 'childhood innocence.' Yet what these forces sweep under the rug is the violence that actually structures women's lives.

National surveys from across Latin America show that between 63% and 76% of women have experienced some type of gender-related violence in some sphere of their lives, and one in four women in the region has experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner at least once in her life. Strikingly, in 2023, of the 18 Latin American countries that reported femicide or feminicide data, 11 recorded a rate exceeding 1 victim per 100,000 women – a trend that continues to rise. Instead of confronting these problems, fears of 'gender ideology' are used by the far right of a special type to undermine actual knowledge that teaches young people that the world can be a brighter place.

This movement does not operate in isolation but forms part of a transnational constellation of conservative forces stretching from Washington to Budapest to Brasília. At gatherings such as the Conservative Political Action Conference, far-right politicians, evangelical leaders, and wealthy financiers converge to coordinate their campaigns. In these spaces, feminism becomes a common enemy and the language of 'freedom' is twisted to defend privatisation, exclusion,

and hierarchy. Money flows across borders, strategies circulate, and messages are refined and repeated. And, through digital platforms designed to reward outrage, fear and misinformation travel faster than truth.

As the anti-gender offensive spread across Latin America, it collided with one of the most powerful feminist cycles in the region's recent history (2015–2019). Women filled the streets with green scarves demanding the right to abortion. Communities organised against gender-based violence. International feminist strikes linked the exploitation of labour to the violence of patriarchy, racism, and extractivism.

In doing so, they revealed something fundamental: the struggle over gender is not only about identity or culture, but about the organisation of society itself. The far right seeks an individualistic and privatised order structured by authority, hierarchy, and obedience – a world where the patriarchal family absorbs the shocks of economic crisis by forcing women to devote even more hours to unpaid and unrecognised care work, sacrificing their freedom and life choices while inequality appears as natural.

Feminist movements imagine something else. They imagine a society organised around care rather than profit, solidarity rather than competition, and life rather than accumulation. Between these two visions lies the struggle of our time: capitalist barbarism or life and dignity. Across Latin America, from city streets to working-class neighbourhoods and community kitchens, millions continue to insist on building a brighter world, not one based on fear and hierarchy.

Transcontinental Institute ✦

In times of crisis, the propertied classes, quite pleased with the status quo, search for enemies to disrupt the path to progress.

Letters to the Editor
 The Guardian
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Humpty Dumpty Hegemony

The hegemonic nature of capitalism being unleashed in the Middle East is not new and has been analysed relentlessly.

Antonio Gramsci had some sophisticated

ideas about the way in which power buttresses itself and how it might effectively be challenged. He surmised that hegemonic power is not held primarily through coercion but through culture. We are influenced every day by what is fed to us. It's been this way for centuries with the overwhelming religious paintings and reliquary; the female nudes; the battle scenes showing the victors and the vanquished; the knee bending for the monarchy. Such visual culture is absorbed, as is the propaganda we read every day in our newspapers, and social media.

We've been made compliant and obedient to authority, which is how the 1% got to control the 99%. From the cradle we are prepared for work, made nationalistic and influenced by corporate power, e.g. fossil fuel corporations' soft power – Woodside's little nippers, Wesfarmers support of the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, Gina Rhinehardt practically buying a swimming

team. Corporate propaganda disguises the extractive economic growth causing disastrous climate change. We are the victims of a capitalist system which has outlived its time. It has now reached its fascist zenith and we're living with its extremes of genocidal madness.

Gramsci called this moment, when the old world is dying and a new one waiting to be born, "the interregnum," which is full of both danger and opportunity. Now is the time to form communities to save our world and create a different way of being. In this way we can transform existing institutions of power or get rid of them. However, Gramsci's strategy of leftist participation in the upper echelons of government, education, law and the media as a way of changing capitalism into a system of democratic socialism would never work with the present stranglehold of capitalism in which state enterprise and central economic planning is now so discredited.

The present danger to society is that we have no alternative institutions in place to fend off the other dominating power structures, such as fascism, now appearing and reasserting themselves. What we're trying to do at present is far too polite: it's 'suppliant' politics – writing letters to MPs, complaining on social media, which simply stabilises hierarchical power.

Politely asking the government to change direction and actually do something positive to combat climate change is abdicating our power. No matter how many of us marched protesting the Gaza genocide, we had no effect or influence on our government. So we have to change tactics and find ways that cultivate new forms of power and challenge rather than buttress the old power.

**Eileen Whitehead,
 Boorloo/Perth**



A Life of Respect

On maps of the country
 We must draw points and lines
 to show we have been here –
 and are here today,
 here where the foxes run
 and birds nest
 and the fish spawn.

You circumscribe everything
 demand that we prove
 We exist,
 that We use the land that was always ours,
 that We have a right to our ancestral lands.

And now it is We who ask:
 By what right are You here?

Aqqaluk Lyngé,
 a Kalaallit poet, politician,
 and defender of Inuit rights

Across

- 4. What the Cyprus president called the UK's bases (8)
- 7. how Iran has described Trump's latest bluster (11)
- 8. how Victorian teachers feel (10)
- 9. Intelligence facility that makes Australia part of the war (7)
- 10. what Cuba is getting from around the world (10)
- 11. how Victorian teachers feel (10)
- 12. Trump says he's having them, Iran says not (5)
- 13. sent soldiers to protect another nation from a NATO ally (7)

Down

- 1. might have to do this with fuel thanks to Trump (9)
- 2. Australia has a fraction of what it needs (11)
- 3. What 'boots on the ground' could be for US (8)
- 4. still getting worse while we focus on war (7)
- 5. where Albanese goes for much-deserved heckling (7)
- 6. something the UK tory leader likes for some faiths but not all (12)
- 10. teachers are doing it, the ABC is doing it (8)

The overwhelming force of global solidarity with Cuba

Fifty tons of diverse products arrived from Mexico and Brazil. This was in addition to the aid arriving via the “Our America to Cuba Convoy,” carried by 650 activists from 33 countries, representing more than 140 social, cultural, and solidarity organisations. Chilean legislators and solidarity activists traveled to Havana.

Contributions are also being made by nations such as China, Vietnam, and Russia. Supplies, medicines, food, technology, and solar panels are arriving, essential for the operation of hospitals, cancer and dialysis centres, schools, transportation, public services, and more. This is one of the ways in which the commercial and economic blockade against the island is being confronted.

More than 200 coercive measures have been established by the United States government, including sanctions against countries and companies that collaborate with or seek to have relations with Cuba.

Claudia de la Cruz, an activist with Pastors for Peace in the United States, declared, “We are here to reaffirm something Cuba has taught us: the value, the principle, the ethics of solidarity. We are here to reaffirm that Cuba is not alone and will never be alone.”

British MP Jeremy Corbyn, a member of the UK Parliament, said, “The aid coming from volunteers around the world is primarily medical aid, and that is very important. Simple medications that are needed, but also some of the more complex medicines and equipment for treating cancer and very serious cases.”

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel, addressing all those who arrived on the island with support, noted that their presence constitutes a profound demonstration of friendship, sensitivity, and human commitment to the Cuban people.

In recent days, there has been a powerful demonstration of global solidarity with Cuba, with the arrival of tens of tons of diverse products to support the Cuban people in the operation of hospitals, specialised centres, schools, universities, transportation, food, and public services.

From Chile, legislators Daniel Núñez, Boris Barrera, Luis Cuello and Daniela Serrano, the president of the Communist Youth, Catalina Lufin, and representatives of organisations in solidarity with Cuba traveled on a solidarity mission, bringing medicines, syringes for insulin and rehydration salts, among other supplies.

Senator Núñez stated that “many Chileans are alive, having



Cuba vigil to protest against US blockade, Sydney, 2019.

survived the horrors of the dictatorship, thanks to the support they received from the Cuban people. Hundreds of lives were saved by the solidarity Cuba showed during that period when hundreds of my compatriots were murdered, tortured, and disappeared.” The legislator highlighted Cuban solidarity following the 2010 earthquake and tsunami in Chile, when a Cuban medical brigade provided free care to the victims at a field hospital.

Núñez emphasised the criminal nature of the blockade: “What is being done here is a collective punishment of the Cuban people. This is not an attack on a government, an attack on an authority, an attack on a party. It is the entire Cuban people who are being punished.”

Catalina Lufin leader of the Chilean Communist Youth said that Cuba “has historically been a nation that shows solidarity with Chile and many other countries around the world. It is not surprising, then, that today there are young people willing to lend a hand and support those who have so often helped us.”

‘A CARAVAN OF DIGNITY’

First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party and President of the Republic, Miguel Díaz-Canel said that the presence of international friends constituted a profound demonstration of friendship, sensitivity and human commitment to the Cuban people.

Among those present, he recognised old friends of Cuba, protagonists of numerous battles in defense of the Revolution, along with young people who are joining the cause today.

“That is very encouraging,”

Díaz-Canel declared, “because what we are defending is not only Cuba, but also the just struggles of the peoples of the world.”

In that regard, he emphasised that current debates transcend national borders and encompass causes such as that of the Palestinian people and all nations facing injustice, aggression, and hegemonic policies. He warned of an international scenario in which war and imposition attempt to prevail over multilateralism, and where those who think differently are silenced.

The President also denounced the normalisation of violence in the global media, with daily images of conflicts and massacres against defenceless peoples, which reinforces the need for active and conscious solidarity.

He especially thanked the young people for their presence, whose participation demonstrates the continuity of the international solidarity movement. “Their support strengthens us, fills us with joy, and reaffirms an essential conviction: Cuba is not alone,” he stated.

He also reiterated that, despite imperialism’s attempts to isolate the island – repeating strategies that had already failed since the early years of the Revolution, after the victory in the Bay of Pigs invasion – the support of the peoples of the world demonstrates the enduring relevance of the Cuban cause.

The president extended special recognition to Mexico, President Claudia Sheinbaum, and the Mexican people for their firm and sustained support of Cuba during complex times, reaffirming the historic bonds of brotherhood between the two nations.

“The blockade doesn’t exist.

It’s an excuse of the Cuban government,” some claim; “Ask a Cuban woman or man if the blockade doesn’t exist,” the president said, referring to the arguments put forward against the Caribbean nation.

In his speech, he stressed that the daily life of Cubans is marked by the limitations imposed by the blockade: “things that we could have in a better situation always clash with the limitations imposed on us by the blockade.”

In response to those who label socialism and the Cuban model a failure, the Head of State asked: “And what about the enormous social work of the Revolution, which has been sustained with an economy operating under wartime conditions and subjected to such a criminal blockade?” He recalled that, despite these circumstances, Cuba has guaranteed free education and healthcare, and sports and culture as a right of the people; “everything done in Cuba is done in consultation with the people and with the people’s participation.”

In his analysis, he addressed the recent US statement that labels Cuba a threat to its national security. “Cubans haven’t attacked anyone. What Cubans send to the world are doctors and teachers with a Cuban literacy method, ‘Yes, I Can.’” He recalled that Cuba declared itself a territory free of illiteracy in the early years of the Revolution and that four Latin American countries later achieved that status with the island’s help. “Is it a threat to the world, to a country, for another to send doctors or teachers?” he asked.

The President highlighted the work of the Cuban medical brigades, the health programs, Operation Miracle, and the presence of doctors

in places that were epicentres of COVID-19, such as Italy. “That’s why we are a threat,” he declared.

Michele Curto, president of the Italian Agency for Economic and Cultural Exchange with Cuba (AIEC), said of the Convoy, “this is the internationalism we talk about. Without internationalism, there is no Left. Without internationalism, we do not exist, and Cuba has reminded us of this for over 60 years. That is why we are here, to defend it.”

Mónica Valente, executive secretary of the São Paulo Forum, also expressed her support, and affirmed that Brazil is making every effort to provide solidarity aid to Cuba. Proof of this is the shipment of approximately 20,000 tons of food, medicine, and medical supplies as well as a fundraising campaign for photovoltaic panels and solar-powered irrigation systems.”

Colombian parliamentarian María Fernanda Carrascal called on the international community to stand with Cuba at a time when local elites are acting in collusion with foreign interests.

Claudia de la Cruz of US NGO Pastors for Peace said that participants had come to affirm that “Cuba is not alone and will never be alone.” She added that “the enemies are the same ones who seek to stifle the dream, the collective construction of this socialist project called Cuba. Those enemies of Palestine, those enemies of Haiti, those enemies of Puerto Rico, and enemies of the people of the United States.”

El Siglo 🇺🇸

“Cubans haven’t attacked anyone. What Cubans send to the world are doctors and teachers with a Cuban literacy method.”

Ho Chi Minh city to redirect remittances

Like many countries with a large diaspora population, Vietnam receives a substantial amount of income from remittances, payments from Vietnamese living abroad. Ordinarily, remittances go to day-to-day expenses and consumptions items.

Now Ho Chi Minh City has a plan to channel the funds into innovation in science and technology.

Under the plan, the city will build a transparent and sustainable remittance-based financial ecosystem, tapping resources from overseas Vietnamese not only in finance but also in knowledge and technology. Capital will be directed into priority sectors such as high technology, processing and manufacturing, green energy, and digital transformation.

Two key instruments underpinning the initiative are a remittance-backed science and technology investment fund, and green and technology credit programmes. The fund will have a minimum initial size of 50 billion VND (1.9 million USD), focusing on innovative startups and high-impact technology projects.

Meanwhile, financial products such as green technology certificates of deposit will be introduced to mobilise long-term capital, forming a basis for preferential credit packages for enterprises investing in technological upgrading and digital transformation.

Under the roadmap, the city targets mobilising at least 500 billion VND from remittances and social resources by 2026, while supporting at least 100 enterprises in accessing preferential credit. By 2027, the figure is expected to reach at least 1 trillion VND, with the number of supported firms doubling, including at least 30% of projects in green technology, energy efficiency, and emissions reduction.

By 2030, Ho Chi Minh City aims to establish a comprehensive financial ecosystem for science and technology, with remittances becoming a sustainable funding channel. The city also plans to develop its Science and Technology Development Fund into a public-private partnership (PPP) model involving overseas Vietnamese, private enterprises, and international organisations to support key technology and green transition projects.

To attract overseas Vietnamese investors, financial products will be designed to ensure transparency, safety, and competitive returns, alongside incentives in interest rates, taxation, and disclosure. Independent supervision, auditing, and professional fund management will also be strengthened to boost investor confidence.

Courtesy of the Australia Vietnam Friendship Society 🇺🇦



Graphic: CCO

Chad warns Sudan it will retaliate

Chad's president has ordered his country's military to retaliate against any future attacks from Sudan.

This comes after at least 17 people were killed and several others injured while attending a funeral in the border town of Tine.

President Idris Mahamat Deby called an emergency meeting of his security cabinet, where he placed the military on maximum alert.

President Deby also ordered

the "total closure" of the border with Sudan.

The president described the attack on Tine as "outrageous and a blatant aggression" and a breach of Chad's territorial integrity.

He said the attack had taken place despite warnings to the two sides fighting each other in Sudan and a previous closure of the border.

Residents of Tine said the victims of the attack were mourners, with one quoted by the Reuters

news agency as saying they had gathered at a house for a funeral ceremony that involved reading the Koran.

A Chad government spokesman said his country had now "strengthened the posture of its defence and security forces" and was ready to pursue its rights inside Sudanese territory "in strict compliance with the rules of international law."

The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which controls

most of the western Darfur region bordering Chad, is suspected of carrying out the attack.

The RSF denies any involvement and blames Sudan's army, which, in turn, has blamed the RSF.

The Sudanese government has often accused Chad of supporting the RSF with weapons and mercenaries, claims which N'Djamena denies.

Fighting between the Egypt and Saudi Arabia-backed Sudanese

military and the United Arab Emirates-supported RSF broke out in April 2023.

The fighting has killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced more than 13 million, nearly one million of them to Chad, according to the United Nations.

Morning Star 🇺🇦

Pakistan-Afghanistan conflict – China mediates

Pakistan has continued cross-border attacks against Afghan territory since 16 March, a provincial information director said, reporting that artillery shells, mortar rounds and tank fire have struck several districts in eastern Afghanistan.

Zia-ur-Rahman Spin Ghar, director of information for Kunar province, said the Pakistani military fired 121 artillery projectiles and mortar rounds and carried out tank attacks in various districts over a 24-hour period.

The bombardment in Kunar, a mountainous province along the Durand Line border

with Pakistan, wounded at least six civilians, though no deaths were reported.

About 7,500 families have fled their homes and are living under tarps in parks and along riverbanks, according to the Kunar Department of Refugees.

"Our schools and villages have been attacked. The international community should ask why Pakistan is bombing us," said Zarin Khan, a displaced resident.

The Pakistani government declined to comment on the latest offensive but issued a diplomatic rebuke to India after New Delhi condemned the strikes.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Tahir

Andrabi rejected India's criticism of Pakistan's operation in Afghanistan and defended the attacks as security measures.

"India must refrain from supporting and sponsoring terrorist groups operating from Afghan soil. In this regard, New Delhi should cease its misplaced lament over Pakistan's successful counterterrorism measures," Andrabi said.

Pakistan justifies its cross-border offensive as a necessary response to insurgents threatening its internal security. Afghanistan and India maintain that Pakistan should address its own internal problems.

The Chinese government has been actively

working through diplomatic channels to reduce tensions and encourage peaceful negotiations. Yue Xiaoyong, China's special envoy for Afghanistan, has been traveling between the two countries as part of mediation efforts aimed at preventing further escalation. Chinese officials have stressed that Afghanistan and Pakistan are neighbouring countries that cannot change their geography and therefore must find ways to coexist peacefully.

Telesur/Kabul Times 🇺🇦

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communist.party.australia

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www.cpa.org.au

Colombian VP calls for closer ties with Africa

Peter Farmer

Colombia's Vice President Francia Marquez has called for Global South unity in a speech to a forum of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and African countries (CELAC-Africa.)

Marquez told the forum that "colonialism did its job of isolating us." She called for more Africa, Latin America, Caribbean connections and said that progress in this area would involve "eradicating the mental barriers imposed by colonialism that make us see ourselves as negatives, as if we have nothing to offer each other, as if there is nothing we can do together."

"We were always made to believe that we were very far apart, but in reality we were very close" Marquez concluded.

CELAC is a bloc of Latin American and Caribbean states, seen as an alternative to the Organization of American States, the OAS, which has a history of being dominated by the USA and is headquartered in Washington.

CELAC was created in 2011 with the explicit goal of reducing hegemony in Latin America and the Caribbean and increasing integration in the region. It was proposed by the Mexican government in 2008 and helped into being by Venezuela's then-President Hugo Chávez.

The forum was also addressed by Brazil's President Lula who said that for Latin American and African countries "facing our colonial legacy together is the most meaningful tribute we can offer to our shared history." ✳

Ho Chi Minh Trail at Sea commemorated

In March 1968, with approval from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the Chinese city of Fangchenggang launched the construction of a port under the codename "Guangxi Project 322" to support

combat operations. The project opened a 35-nautical-mile secret sea route that pierced the US naval blockade, delivering vital supplies during Vietnam's resistance against the US.

During 1972-1973, the route

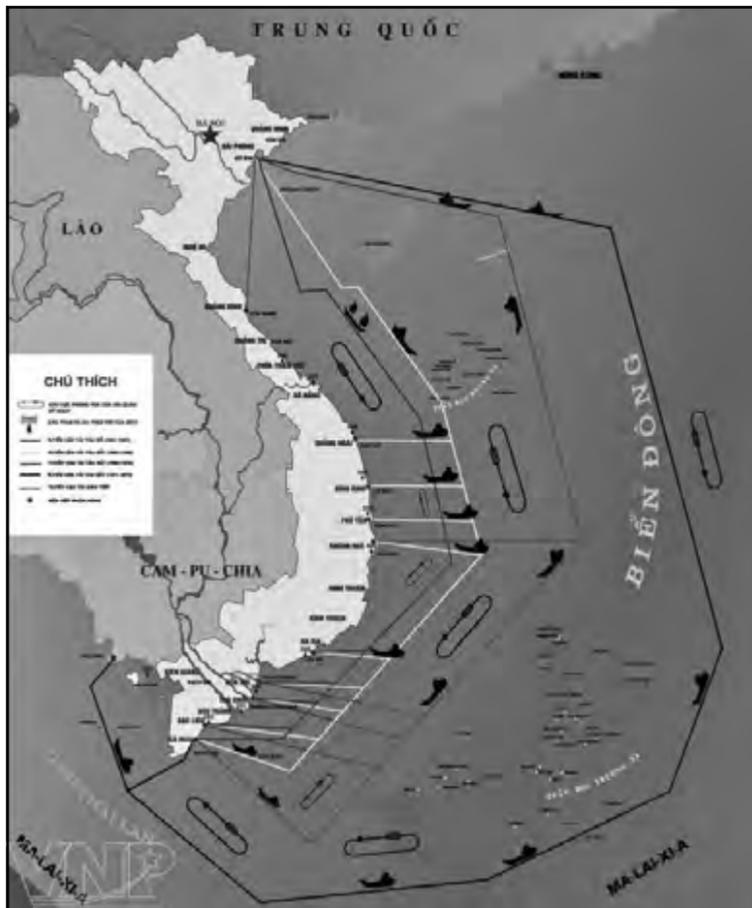
facilitated the shipment of 161,800 tonnes of aid to Vietnam through more than 1,000 ship voyages. Regarded as a maritime lifeline during Vietnam's resistance war against the US, it earned the Vietnamese designation Ho Chi Minh Trail at Sea.

This year as part of the 10th Vietnam - China Border Defence Friendship Exchange, the two sides visited an exhibition wall highlighting the starting point of the Ho Chi Minh Sea Trail. The Ho Chi Minh Trail at Sea site, located at Fangcheng tourist port in China's Guangxi, was built on 30 April 2015, in the shape of a lighthouse and features bilingual Chinese-Vietnamese inscriptions. Ministers also laid wreaths at a monument to fallen soldiers of the Vietnam and China people's revolutionary forces.

Secretary of the Fangchenggang municipal Party Committee Huang Jiang briefed the ministers on the port's transformation from a wartime logistics hub to a modern open foreign trade facility. She expressed hope that the exchange activities would reinforce border and maritime security and stability while advancing bilateral cooperation and wider international linkages.

Later the same morning, at Fangcheng Port in Guangxi, ministers from both countries attended the launch of the 40th joint patrol and a joint training exercise in the Gulf of Tonkin between the Vietnam People's Navy and the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy.

Friends of Socialist China ✳



A chart of the Ho Chi Minh Sea Trail. Photo: File/ vnnet.vn



Global Briefs

INDIA: India's anti-terror agency has arrested seven people for allegedly training and supplying weapons to insurgents in Myanmar. Six Ukrainians and a US citizen were taken into custody on charges of "illegal entry, weapons and drone warfare training, and importing drones from Europe".

SRI LANKA: Sri Lanka refused to provide ground access to two US fighter jets. "They wanted to bring in two warplanes armed with eight anti-ship missiles from a base in Djibouti to Mattala International Airport and we said no," the Sri Lankan president told parliament. "We want to maintain our neutrality despite many pressures. We won't give in. The Middle East war poses challenges, but we will do everything possible to remain neutral," he added.

MIDDLE EAST: A global food crisis is looming amid Middle East war. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has stopped a major part of global fertiliser exports. It could lead to a global food crisis. Persian Gulf countries account for 30% of global nitrate fertiliser exports and 20% of phosphate fertiliser exports. Since the war began, nitrate fertiliser prices have risen by 30%. Countries like Sudan, Sri Lanka, and Australia are among the most affected by the disruption.

CUBA: Two Russian oil tankers are sailing towards Cuba. The tanker *Anatoly Kolodkin*, sanctioned by the US, the EU, and the UK is sailing under a Russian flag and estimated to carry about 730,000 barrels of crude oil. This amount of crude could be processed into about 180,000 barrels of diesel. A second shipment is on the *Sea Horse*, which sails under a Hong Kong flag.

SPAIN: Doctors across Spain entered a second week of strikes in just two months. They protest against the National Framework Statute, which sets the working conditions for doctors and other health professionals. About 175,000 doctors have gone on strike so far and there are plans to have strikes every month till June. While emergency care and critical treatments will keep running, routine appointments and non-urgent procedures may face delays.

IRAQ: NATO announced the full evacuation of its military mission in Iraq. It is removing all personnel to Europe, as Germany and Poland simultaneously pulled their troops from the country. The withdrawals come amid escalating hostilities between the United States, Israel, and Iran.

SLOVAKIA: Slovakia could hike diesel prices for foreign drivers or limit the amount of fuel they can buy in order to curb "fuel tourism" – a new term for getting cheaper fuel from your neighbours. Representatives from oil refiner Slovnaft have told the government that cheaper diesel in northern districts along the Polish border sparked increased purchases by foreign drivers, which leaves "gas stations literally dried up."

CHAD: Chad has closed its eastern border with Sudan, citing repeated incursions by armed groups involved in the ongoing civil war in Sudan.

IRAN: Iran has proposed setting up a Middle East security structure with the participation of regional countries. "In order to ensure peace in the region, we propose to create a security structure in the Middle East, which will include Islamic countries, in order to achieve peace, stability and security," Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said, adding that Middle Eastern countries do not need the presence of "outsiders."

CZECH REPUBLIC: A protest group called "Earthquake Faction" set fire to an industrial complex in the Czech city of Pardubice, 120km east of Prague which produces drones for Ukraine and Israel. The factory is owned by Czech arms maker LPP Holding. The fire service reported there were no injuries.



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The Cuban Miami-Dade Diaspora: money and power

Graham Holton

The Cuban-American community in Miami-Dade Florida controls billions of dollars in businesses, real estate, and finance. Since the Cuban Revolution, these exile communities have opposed the government of Fidel Castro and later Raúl Castro and Miguel Díaz-Canel. The Cuban diaspora hardliners favour maximum political and economic pressure and a rapid regime change in Cuba, therefore opposing negotiations or any talk of reforms. They consist of a network of politicians, organisations, media personalities and companies, longtime exile organisations, and activists who are politically powerful. Their influence is spread across politicians, NGOs (non-government organisations), media outlets, donors, and informal networks.

The most influential members are Marco Rubio (Secretary of State), Ted Cruz (US Senator) and Bob Menendez (US Senator). They support tightening the blockade on Cuba. They oppose diplomatic normalisation, and campaign to increase sanctions that target the Cuban people in an attempt to foment discontent and, subsequently, regime change.

The diaspora's best-known organisation is the Cuban American National Foundation, one of the most powerful exile groups, strongly anti-communist, advocating stronger sanctions and the political isolation of Cuba. It is politically influential, but has limited financial backing amounting to an annual budget of a few million dollars, mainly funded by wealthy donors and business people. Brigade 2506 was formed by veterans of the Bay of Pigs Invasion. It is symbolically important to hardline identity and supports uncompromising opposition to the Cuban government.

The hardliners' messages are transmitted through Radio Martí,



ACFS Perth action outside US consulate 17 March 2026.

extreme elements of the diaspora advocate direct intervention, or an uprising

which has received hundreds of millions of dollars in recent years. Exile-run YouTube channels and Spanish-language talk radio and influencers call for mass protest and regime collapse. They reject engagement with the Cuban government and frame the conflict as an anti-communist struggle. They collectively receive several million dollars annually.

Street-level activist networks in Miami-Dade, seen in the media banging their pots and pans, have been visible during the present oil sanctions and power outages. They demand immediate regime change, and support political and economic intervention. The extreme elements

of the diaspora advocate direct intervention, or an uprising, and draw ideological inspiration from past militant actions. Despite their political influence, these groups have no credible military capability, relying on the possibility of US military intervention and the potential return of anti-Revolution right-wing terrorism.

Political funding of tens of millions from Cuban-American donors contribute to the political support of Marco Rubio, and influence lobbying networks. They influence US foreign policy toward Cuba and support politicians who advocate the diplomatic isolation of Cuba to weaken the Cuban state

economically and politically. Exile organisations document alleged human rights abuses, lobby the Organization of American States and push for international condemnation and sanctions, to 'prove' the Cuban government lacks legitimacy.

Unlike the attempted invasion at the Bay of Pigs, when the US government used Cuban exiles to attack the country, these organisations have no large-scale exile-led armed insurgency group or paramilitary capacity to overthrow the Cuban government. Nor have they formed a political group which could take over the running of the Cuban government, and be accepted by its people.

Nevertheless, they are dangerous, by influencing US politics towards making the unjust blockade harsher. The recent attack on Cuba by ten armed gunmen in a speedboat has not been conclusively tied to the Miami-Dade diaspora, but it would be surprising if they hadn't influenced it.

President Trump's talk of "taking" Cuba would need a US military invasion. At the moment, the US military is tied up with an unprovoked war on Iran. The Cuban government, nor the people, will not hand over power to the US no matter how dire the situation becomes. ✚

Canada: Students build a movement

Lenny Devereux

"Students choose nursing because we care about healthcare and the dignity of our patients," Sierra Punched of the Canadian Nursing Students' Association told the crowd outside the Ontario legislature on 4 March. "But our passion doesn't pay our debt."

Four thousand protesters crammed into Queen's Park's snow-narrowed walkways to fight back against Ontario Premier Doug Ford's latest assault on education – lifting the 2019 tuition freeze for 2 per cent annual increases and capping student assistance (OSAP) grants at just 25 per cent, forcing students to cover the rest through loans.

The Conservative government claims this will "preserve student access to education for decades to come." But as Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) president JP Hornick told the rally, the only "access" being preserved is that of militarism to Ontario's public budget. "They always find money for resource extraction, kicking Indigenous people off their land, and militarism. When it comes to education, students are asked to foot the bill." Condemnation echoed through

the park: "Shame!" – shame on the Ontario government, shame on Doug Ford.

Ford's claim that students are using OSAP to get "basket-weaving" degrees is inaccurate and tone-deaf; it's also blatantly racist. High schoolers from Etobicoke School of the Arts point out, "basket weaving is an Indigenous practice." Weavers select materials with care, sustainably harvesting local plants with thanks or prayers to the Earth. The design carries culturally important meaning, represented through the weavers' careful work.

Students expressed real fears that they will be unable to afford post-secondary education, and they underlined a class distinction between OSAP recipients and the politicians cutting it. "I think it contributes to the fact that Ford was able to cut OSAP without thinking about it, because he's been in such a privileged position his whole life," one student explained. "He doesn't understand that cutting OSAP will cut the number of people who go into healthcare, pharmaceuticals, education – all the other things we need to keep society running. I also don't think he understands how impactful student loans are, considering the fact that his father funded whatever he wanted to do."

One student described her family's class journey across generations. "My grandparents weren't able to access education. My parents were because they had the privilege of free education [in Brazil]. They were able to give me a life where I don't have to worry about having food on the table."

Ben McCarthy, an OPSEU member who grew up in a quarry town, sees Ford's cuts through the lens of communities left behind. Ford talks about the "brain drain," but Ben explains this government is driving it.

"The money being taken out of those communities is from people not able to do the skilled work required to make those economies grow. It's a confusing thing because if you look at per-student funding across the country, Ontario is the most poorly funded." This remains true despite the Ford government's promised \$6.4 billion to education funding over the next four years. "We're one of the wealthiest provinces in the nation, and we're being told that we can't afford to fund education. I think there's a false sense of scarcity that this government wants to put around."

That "false scarcity" hides real abundance – just not for working people. "In 2023-2024,

the college system was \$2 billion in the black," Ben said. "From one year to the next, they're doing record-breaking layoffs – 12,000, maybe the highest in Ontario history."

This is capitalism in action: COVID was used to justify cuts, then colleges made record profits.

Limiting higher education accessibility, and therefore subsequent job prospects, in rural communities draws a straight line between community poverty and lack of government investment. Governments provide poorer regions with lower quality infrastructure, housing and food options (rural communities are often "food deserts"), and public services like schools, hospitals and transit. As a result, higher education is a privilege for a lucky few, who then leave in droves for the big city and wealthier neighbourhoods.

Uri, a member of the Young Communist League (YCL), sees Ford's cuts as part of a longer war. "This is a continuation of what Ontario governments have been continuously doing on both sides of the political spectrum since the 90s," he explained.

People's Voice (edited for space) ✚

USA: 4,000 meatpackers strike in Colorado

Tracy Ross

Thousands of union workers employed by the largest meatpacking company in the US have gone on strike, calling for higher wages and safer working conditions at the JBS facility in Greeley, Colorado.

Before sunrise, with the temperature hovering around 20 degrees, hundreds of employees, some with blankets draped over their shoulders, walked a picket line carrying signs asking people not to patronise the company.

The union, which represents 3,800 workers at the plant, has accused JBS of trying to squeeze more out of staff while reducing hours and creating an unsafe work environment. Kim Cordova, president of United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) Local 7, said the plant has increased the speed of the production line, processing 420 animals per hour, up from 390. As well as higher wages, workers want reimbursement of protective gear, which can cost hundreds of dollars.

"This is an historic moment in time to see workers come out like this," Cordova said while standing with workers on the picket line. "It's a real showing of worker power."

Strikers booed cars turning into the plant and a passerby shouted "Si, se puede!" ("Yes, you can!") as people huddled in small groups. Union reps yelled "keep walking" to strikers that stalled on the line.

The union has filed a handful of complaints with the National Labor Relations Board alleging retaliation

and change to terms and conditions of employment by JBS, also known as Swift Beef Company.

JBS spokesperson Nikki Richardson said in an email that the company has spent the past eight months in discussions with union members over a new contract.

"Over the past eight months, JBS USA worked diligently to reach a balanced and responsible agreement with UFCW Local 7. Instead of continuing constructive dialogue, the union abruptly ended negotiations and unilaterally cancelled the existing contract," Richardson said. "Their decision has created unnecessary disruption for team members who were never given the chance to review or vote on the company's proposal."

Cordova said JBS's proposal to raise wages by 60 cents an hour in the first year and 30 cents annually for the next two years is similar to a national agreement the company made with unions in other states last year, but that it does not cover Colorado's higher cost of living.

"JBS is trying to force us to take the national agreement," she said. "But the health care costs increased 22 cents an hour (so) those folks got an 8-cent increase. That's not gonna work for us."

Richardson previously called the latest offer "strong, fair and consistent with the historic national contract reached in 2025 in partnership with UFCW International."

This is the first strike for the meatpacking industry since a national strike at Hormel Foods in Minnesota in 1985.

Colorado Sun 🇺🇸



Classical liberal

'Classical' sounds so classy, which is probably why 'classical liberal' is such a popular label amongst right-libertarian ratchet-jaws who've heard about Locke, Hume, and Adam Smith. Classical liberals can be found in their multitudes on social media, usually using an old statue or a picture of some classy looking long-dead European intellectual.

The latest citing of this term is found in the *Australian Financial Review*, where John Kehoe is citing a 'report' by right-wing think tank 'The Centre for Independent Studies' as proof that vouchers are better than funding childcare. Like Kehoe's earlier claim that it'd be better if we just gave up on COVID protection and let old people die, this one should be taken with a large helping of salt.

Scant

This is a great weasel word, because it doesn't commit you to a specific quantity, but implies that the quantity is small and not good enough. John Kehoe, still on his anti-childcare rant says there is "scant evidence that institutionalised care is good for young children's development, wellbeing and education." It didn't take us long to find eleven well-researched academic studies which disprove his claim, but then again we don't have Kehoe's ideological bias against state-run education. Bonus weasel word here, Kehoe called childcare centres "institutionalised" meaning they aren't run by mothers who have given up working.

Hard (decisions)

'Hard' is just a regular word and we all know what it means. 'Hard' is weaselly when it's used to steal someone else's difficulty. Treasurer Jim Chalmers has said he's going to have to make hard decisions in the May budget. What he means is the decisions might not be universally popular and he finds that hard. Working people who have to put up with the consequences of Chalmers' decisions will be getting out the smallest violins they can find to play a sad song for him.

Reckless

Unless you're a freewheeling action movie hero, it's generally bad to be reckless. A reckless person just does what they feel like without worrying about the consequences. It's also a word Prime Minister Albanese doesn't seem to understand. He's called Iranian attacks on nearby countries that host US bases "reckless," as though Iran had either no reason to do it, or had a lot of better options.

"Reckless" is also what Albanese does not call unprovoked US and Israeli attacks on Iran. They've obviously really thought it through.

Refocusing and reallocating resources

Really trips off the tongue doesn't it, this technocratic weasel phrase? It sounds like a rational and reasonable thing to do, but really what it means is cuts for people in the NDIS who really need help.

Proceeding, not

What to do when you've broken an election promise because you care more about a media scare campaign and what the Liberal Party think? Minister for Multicultural Affairs Anne Aly has the solution. Labor had promised a grant to a Shia Muslim mosque in Melbourne before the Murdoch press got wind of a memorial for the recently-assassinated Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was, among other things, a Shia Islam scholar.

Aly announced that she was "not proceeding" with the grant due to "social cohesion concerns" (also weaselly).

Signal (sending)

Should Australia tax gas at a flat rate of 25%, or should we continue to pretty much give it away? No surprise, Shell Australia thinks we should continue with the second option because imposing a levy on gas exports would "send the worst possible signals for investment." We're not sure about the 'worst possible' bit. At the moment, we're sending the signal that Australians are suckers when it comes to natural resources.



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Guardian

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 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
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Editor:
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Published by
Guardian Publications Australia Ltd
 74 Buckingham St,
 Surry Hills, NSW, 2010

Printed by
Independent Newspaper Solutions Pty Ltd
 Level 5, 219 - 223 Castlereagh Street
 Sydney NSW 2000

Responsibility for electoral comment
 is taken by **T Pearson**,
 74 Buckingham St,
 Surry Hills, 2010

Iran: collateral cultural damage

Katayoun Shahandeh

Following joint attacks by the United States and Israel on Iran on 28 February, the country has come under repeated strikes. These attacks, which were ostensibly supposed to target Iran's nuclear and missile capabilities, have also caused massive civilian casualties and damage to cultural sites.

Air strikes near historic districts in Tehran and Isfahan have damaged monuments that have survived for centuries. The losses highlight how war can endanger not only lives but also the historical memory embedded in cities and landscapes. As an Iranian art historian, watching these events unfold in my country is deeply and doubly painful.

Iran contains one of the world's richest concentrations of historic architecture and urban heritage. The country has 29 UNESCO world heritage sites, spanning more than two millennia, from ancient imperial capitals to Islamic urban ensembles and desert cities. Yet monuments that have survived centuries of invasions, political upheaval and regime change remain vulnerable in modern conflict. Even when heritage sites are not deliberately targeted, nearby explosions, fires and shockwaves can damage fragile masonry, glazed tiles and decorative interiors.

In the capital, Tehran, air strikes have damaged two important historic sites: Golestan Palace and the Grand Bazaar.

The Tehran bazaar, meanwhile, is far more than a commercial district. Like many historic bazaars across the Middle East, it functions as a living urban organism linking trade, religious institutions and social life. Historically it has also played an important role in Iran's political movements (being influential in the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79 with the support of the bazaar merchants for the eventual leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini) and economic networks.

Damage to such spaces therefore affects not only historic architecture but also the social and urban structures that shape everyday life.

Strikes have also affected Isfahan, one of Iran's most important historic cities and the Safavid capital during a golden age of art, architecture and trade. Under Shah Abbas I, the city was transformed into an imperial centre of culture and urban planning, anchored by Naqsh-e Jahan Square, the monumental complex of mosques, palaces and bazaars that earned the nickname Nesf-e Jahan – "half the world."

According to cultural heritage officials, blast waves affected several historic buildings including Timuri Hall, the Jebe-Khaneh building, the Rakib-Khaneh (Isfahan Museum of Decorative Arts), Ashraf Hall and the Chehel Sotoun palace complex. Damage reportedly included collapsed ceilings, broken

doors and windows, and shattered glass at nearby monuments such as Ali Qapu Palace.

The damage in Isfahan is especially concerning because the city occupies a central place in Iran's architectural and cultural history. The city flourished as the Safavid capital in the 17th century and remains one of the most important historic cities in the Islamic world. Even limited damage in this historic city raises serious concerns. Decorative elements such as tile work, murals and mirror mosaics are among the most fragile components of Safavid architecture and are extremely difficult to restore once lost.

International heritage organisations have also expressed alarm. The US committee of Blue Shield, an international NGO that works to protect cultural heritage during war and disasters, warned that disregarding international conventions protecting cultural property in wartime could lead to violations of international law. Blue Shield also referred to recent damage at sites including Chehel Sotoun Palace in Isfahan and Golestan Palace in Tehran.

The vulnerability of Isfahan also highlights broader risks facing Iran's cultural heritage. Sites such as Persepolis, the Achaemenid ceremonial capital; Pasargadae, home to the tomb of Cyrus the Great, and the historic desert city of Yazd represent different layers of Iranian civilisation, from ancient imperial history to Islamic urban culture.

Why does cultural heritage matter to Iranians?

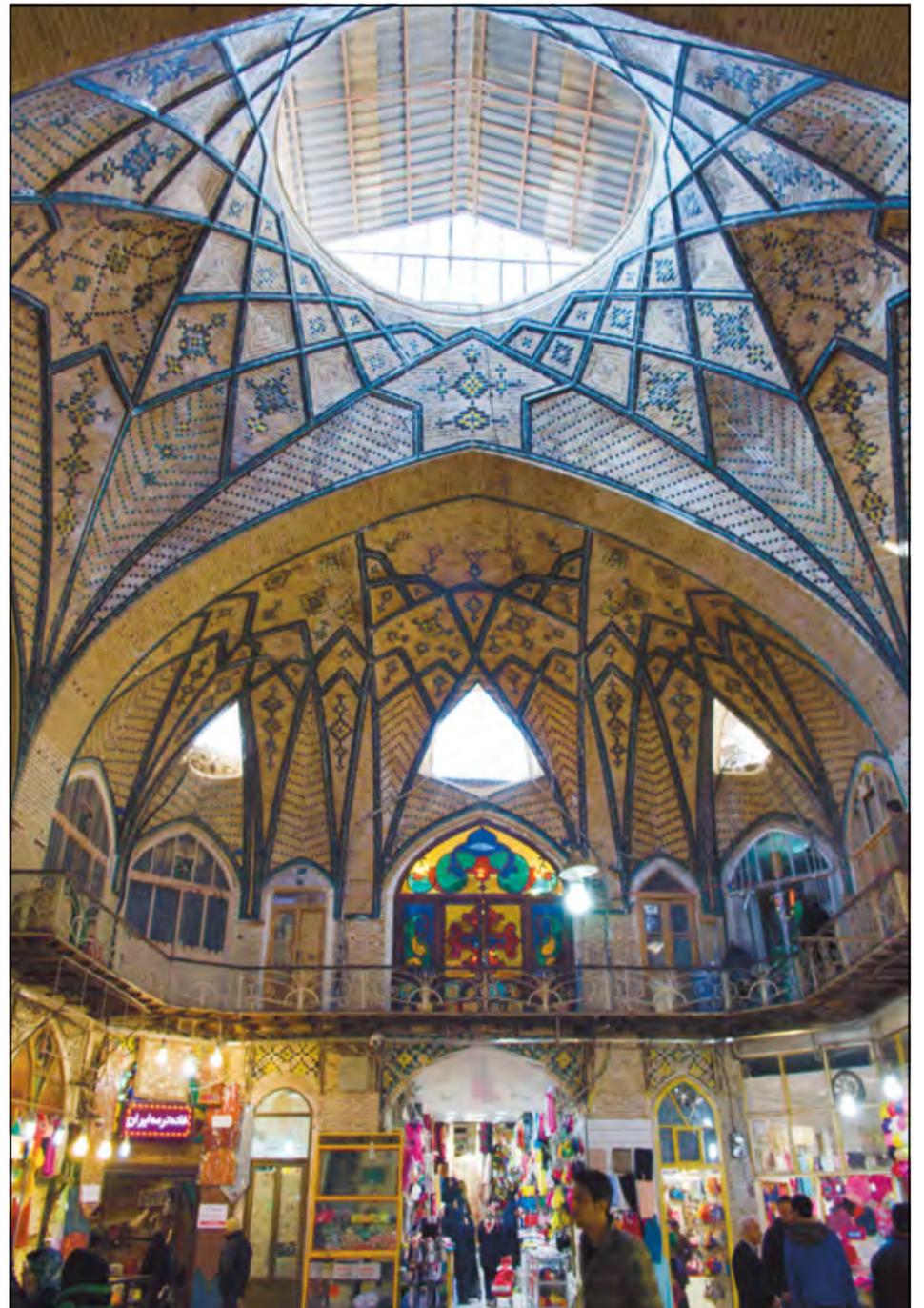
Iran's historic monuments are not simply archaeological sites or tourist attractions. They form part of a cultural identity shaped by thousands of years of artistic, literary, and architectural traditions. Cities such as Shiraz, Isfahan and Yazd are closely intertwined with the poetry of figures such as Hafiz and Ferdowsi. Their works continue to shape Iranian cultural life today.

For many Iranians, historic monuments symbolise a sense of continuity linking the ancient Persian past, the Islamic period and the modern nation.

At the same time, concern for damaged monuments has provoked strong reactions online. On social media, posts lamenting the destruction of historic sites often draw angry responses arguing that human lives are more important than buildings. For many Iranians this contrast raises difficult questions about whose losses receive attention.

Some have also asked why the international community showed little concern when Iran's ecosystems were being damaged over many years through environmental mismanagement. Lake Urmia, for example, which was once one of the world's largest salt lakes, has lost most of its surface area due to dam construction and agricultural water diversion.

For many Iranians, these overlapping crises – environmental degradation, political



Tehran grand bazaar. Photo: Eliabbasi – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

repression and war – form part of a broader landscape of loss affecting both people and cultural memory.

When war damages historic monuments, more than architecture is lost. Fragments of cultural memory that have endured for centuries disappear with them.

Many of Iran's historic sites have survived invasions, revolutions and political upheaval, yet today's conflicts pose new risks when historic cities lie close to strategic targets.

Once destroyed, these monuments cannot truly be replaced.

Protecting cultural heritage in times of conflict is therefore not only about preserving buildings, but about safeguarding the memories and histories that connect societies across generations.

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Iran's historic monuments ... part of a cultural identity shaped by thousands of years of artistic, literary, and architectural traditions.



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