



# BUDGET 2026

## Wealth divide is class divide

M Santos

**“I’ve listened hard for the sound of wealth trickling down but all I hear is the sound of the excluded still waiting”; poet, author and former CEO of the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council, John Falzon. Budgets underpin priorities that have been decided by the government as the political representative of the capitalist ruling class.**

So, despite the rhetoric of “intergenerational fairness,” “ambitious,” and “responsible,” the budget delivered last week by Treasurer Jim Chalmers fails to bring relief to millions of Australians buckling under rising inflation and an acute housing crisis.

Intergenerational unfairness is a real thing, but Chalmers isn't going to fix it. In the name of intergenerational unfairness, he attempts to pit younger Australians against older Australians as if all older people are wallowing in wealth and depriving younger generations of a future. This crude stereotyping conveniently obscures where the real wealth is held – by the corporate 1%.

The “excluded” include renters, the unemployed, the homeless, pensioners, students, low- and middle-income families, first Australians, women, the environment, biodiversity, and in particular people with disability who Chalmers said are “doing the heavy lifting.” This budget is based on social division

### SOCIAL DIVISIVENESS

Chalmers’ “intergenerational fairness” slashes NDIS funding by \$37.8 billion by 2030. It does so by throwing 160,000 participants off the scheme and denying entry to another 140,000. It fails to tackle the



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billions of dollars of roting by profit-gouging providers and intermediaries. True fairness would be achieved by nationalising the NDIS to put an end to the parasitical roting. (See *Guardian* #2188, 04/05/2026)

Millions of younger Australians are struggling to put a roof over their head, put food on the table, and pay for essential services. The budget offers them little comfort or security.

Women over 50 are the fastest growing group of unemployed and they face longer average duration of unemployment. At the same time younger people face a higher rate of unemployment.

The wealth divide is class-based not age-based and is becoming a yawning chasm.

### TAX CON

The government was under considerable pressure to reform tax roting by wealthy investors through capital gains tax (CGT) concessions and negative gearing. (See *Guardian* #2189, 11/05/2026).

The government would have us believe it is assisting younger generations struggling to put a roof over their heads with its reforms to these rorts. Not so.


Negative gearing involves investors making an initial loss on their investments

by paying higher interest rates on borrowings than they receive in rental income. They can subtract this loss from their other income thereby reducing their taxable income.

This budget restricts the use of negative gearing to new builds from budget night onwards but only comes into force from July 2027. The sting in the tail is that those already negatively gearing their investment (rental) properties will be able to continue to do so until they are sold. It will be years before the tax roting is wound back.

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# Guardian

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## Let's get real

Antisemitism is a real problem. We don't need a Royal Commission to know that. Antisemitism has badly and often lethally affected Jewish people worldwide and in Australia for centuries. As this editorial is being written, the news is telling the story of a parent arrested for allegedly shouting anti-semitic abuse at a children's netball game. That's appalling. As well as that, the Royal Commission (RC) on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion is hearing of a multitude of anti-semitic incidents.

Because antisemitism is a real problem, it's too serious to be made worse by being conflated with anti-Zionism or being pro-Palestine. Australia's 'Anti-semitism envoy' Jillian Segal has been making the problem worse by labelling opposition to an ongoing genocide and support for Palestinian people as antisemitism. At the same time, Segal was very quiet about an actual demonstration by neo-nazis outside the NSW parliament. They had a banner with the word 'Jews' on it, you'd think she'd notice.

Segal also ignored her spouse's support for an Australian organisation that actively promotes hatred towards migrants.

How does Segal's Zionist assumption make it worse. Conflating support for Palestine with antisemitism not only cheapens the concept, it's dangerous. It invites the assumption that Jews have to support Israel whatever it does and that the only way to support Palestine is to oppose Jews instead of Zionism.

The Royal Commission has heard moving examples of the effects of antisemitism on Jewish Australians. It has also heard from people who share Segal's ideology and think that a campus bake sale in support of Palestine is some kind of assault. Others feel the same way about a flag or a keffiyeh. The pinnacle of absurdity so far has been former *Age* editor Michael Gawenda complaining that anti-semitism explains his not being invited to speak at the Adelaide writers' festival, helmed by Jewish woman, Louise Adler.

One witness defined anti-Zionism as a hate crime "because it denied Jews a central part of their identity." Judaism predates Zionism by thousands of years. Zionism is a political ideology, not a central or necessary part of Jewish identity.

Behind a lot of the complaints which assume that any support of Palestinian people is equivalent to hatred of Jewish people for being Jews is the ideology of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. This deeply flawed document, adopted by the Australian government and most universities, includes criticisms of Israel as examples of antisemitism. There's an 'example' on 'double standards' that basically requires anyone wanting to criticise Israeli attacks on Palestine to make sure that there are no worse atrocities anywhere else on earth before speaking. One participant in the RC has obviously internalised this. Their experience of antisemitism was Israel being criticised in their hearing while bad things are happening in other countries.

There is an alternative definition of anti-semitism available, the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism. It can't be weaponised to silence criticism of Israel.

So let's get real about this. Antisemitism is too serious to be trivialised by the likes of Segal using it as a cudgel in support of Israel while ignoring real examples of racially-based hatred.

The Communist Party of Australia actively opposes antisemitism and (unlike Segal) all forms of racial hatred. We will not fall for the false choice that the IHRA definition poses between opposing Israel's behaviour and opposing antisemitism. Our support for Palestinian people as they resist genocide is based on facts, not on bias.

# BUDGET 2026

## Wealth divide is class divide

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Public housing is completely and deliberately overlooked with property developers reaping the rewards of assistance to home buyers and investors purchasing new properties. There will be further deregulation of building approvals making it cheaper and easier for developers.

The Working Australian Tax Offset (WATO), a tax rebate of \$250 commencing in 2028 for workers who earn enough to pay tax does not help the more than four million people on the lowest incomes in the country, including people receiving the \$409/week JobSeeker Payment, pensions and single parents without paid work. "Around 30% of adults' incomes are too low to pay income tax, and they are most in need with unemployment and cost-of-living rising," the Australian Council of Social Service points out.

An instant \$1,000 deduction for work expenses is available to workers who are paid enough to pay tax. Women, including single parents are the most disadvantaged here.

### CORPORATE WELFARE

"We're helping businesses and manufacturers bolster supply chains, with \$1 billion in interest free loans through the National Reconstruction Fund and incentives to get more freight moving on trains and ships," says Chalmers.

"And we'll introduce loss refundability for start-ups, to help new businesses invest and grow in their first two years. We'll also expand tax incentives for venture capital and better target the

Research and Development Tax Incentive to support more high-impact innovation."

Small businesses will be eligible for permanent instant asset write-offs, instead of allowance for depreciation over time.

"We're making more progress on our Future Made in Australia agenda, supporting mining and processing through our Critical Minerals Strategic Reserve, and investments in domestic smelting and manufacturing," Chalmers declares.

Chalmers didn't mention the billions of dollars of 'defence' (military hardware, drones, missiles, etc) spending funded by the Future Made in Australia agenda.

Military spending is set at \$62.8 billion in 2026-27 – 2.13% of GDP. It is set to rise to 3% of GDP by 2033 in line with demands from US President Trump. Much of this spending is directed to AUKUS – corporate welfare for the military industrial complex in the US and Australia.

### CUTS

There are \$63.8 billion in 'savings' (cuts) including the hit to the NDIS.

The public service will be hit hard with job losses. For example, the Department of Climate Change, Clean Energy, the Environment, and Water will lose more than half its funding as it is slashed from \$5.7 billion to \$2 billion.

The already over-stretched Services Australia is another department facing cuts. Not all military spending is declared, with an unspecified amount being kept confidential in the name of

not harming potential corporate contracts.

The budget fails to introduce a 25% tax on gas exports which would have raised \$68 billion or more by 2030. Compare this to the \$37.8 billion in cruel, punitive cuts to the NDIS over the same period.

Relatively little is set aside for renewable energy production and storage or environmental protection.

This budget is to the backdrop of rising unemployment, a rapidly increasing cost-of-living crisis, rising homelessness and housing stress, and inflation propelled by a war in the Middle East that the government supports.

Any government serious about addressing the cost-of-living crisis, rising inflation, unemployment, and addressing the housing crisis would have slashed military spending, tackled the private profiteers rorting the NDIS, embarked on a program of public housing, taxed gas exports and introduced stronger CGT and negative gearing measures. It would also have raised social security payments to well above the poverty line.

A government serious about climate change would have embarked on a massive program of renewables and energy storage, assisted those on low incomes to shift to renewables, and begun phasing out fossil fuels, instead of approving new and expanded projects let alone handing out \$18 billion a year in fossil fuel subsidies.

More budget analysis in next week's *Guardian* including the capital gains tax changes. 🌟

## Quote of the Week

"The conditions to alleviate suffering exist in our reality; the fact that they are not used in practice is a political choice."

VJ Prashad

Check out the official  
Instagram account of  
the Communist Party of Australia

communist.party.australia

www.instagram.com/communist.party.australia/

www.cpa.org.au

# New report finds discrimination against trans and gender diverse Australians across schools, healthcare, and workplaces

**A new report by the Australian Human Rights Commission has found discrimination against trans and gender-diverse people is widespread – with serious impacts on safety, access to essential services, and full participation in society.**

Released on the International Trans Day of Visibility, 31 March, Equal Identities examines the barriers trans and gender-diverse people in Australia face in having their right to equality, dignity and respect upheld. It draws on 97 submissions as well as Australian and international research.

The review found consistent and distressing patterns of discrimination across schools and universities, healthcare, workplaces, housing and the justice system.

The Equal Identities report makes 19 recommendations for reform, grounded in Australia's human rights obligations. This includes nationally consistent laws that protect against vilification and violence, urgent improvements to data collection so services meet real needs, and system changes that make safety, dignity and equal treatment a lived reality.

"Trans and gender-diverse people are part of every Australian community," said Sex Discrimination Commissioner Dr Anna Cody.

"They contribute to our families and society, and they are entitled to equal respect under the law like anyone else. But too often, their rights are not realised.

"The experiences shared with the Commission show when there are gaps in legal protections, when services aren't designed for everyone, and when data is missing or inaccurate, people are left out. The consequences can be devastating."

The findings are organised around three themes: being safe, being seen and heard, and being able to participate on equal terms.

The Commission noted the review is released amid heightened public discussion around gender, including the spread of harmful stereotypes online that promote restricted ideas about gender roles.

"Gender diversity exists across cultures throughout history. Rigid ideas about gender hurt everyone. They limit people's opportunities to be themselves, and lead to discrimination and exclusion of people who don't fit binary gender stereotypes," Dr Cody said.

"Everyone benefits from respectful, accurate public debate. When false information about trans and gender diverse people is deliberately spread, it fuels fear, undermines rights, and causes real harm. Trans and gender diverse people deserve the same rights and protections as everyone else."

Dr Cody said the report makes clear the need for urgent action.

"The politicisation of trans peoples' lives - including dehumanising trans people - must end," she said.

"Leaders, institutions and media all have a responsibility to promote safety, dignity, and inclusion."

Commission President Hugh de Kretser said the Commission's work is grounded in the equal worth of every person.

"Trans and gender-diverse people experience widespread, harmful discrimination and prejudice. We must address it. We must ensure safety, dignity, and equality for everyone in our society," he said.

Australian Human Rights Commission



Photo: Ted Eytan (CC BY-SA 4.0)

**false information about trans and gender diverse people spreads fear, undermines rights, and causes real harm**

## 'Systemic failure' as a baby dies in Wagga

Peter Farmer

**On 6 May, twins were born in a homeless camp in Wagga Wagga, 15 minutes walk from the nearest public toilets or running water.**

Homelessness NSW called the death "a stark reminder that

homelessness is dangerous and often life-threatening" adding that "it should not be happening in a country with the wealth and means to end it."

While it's unclear why the baby died, the problem of homelessness in Australia is very obvious and is getting worse. The waiting list for

"social" housing in Wagga is 700 people, meaning it can take up to four years for someone in need to find a place.

"Social" and "affordable" housing are profoundly inadequate, prone to sudden sales or rent increases. What's needed in this country is a massive investment in

public housing, owned and run by the people, with long term security of tenancy.

Homelessness NSW said it was "profoundly saddened by the death of a baby in a makeshift camp in Wagga Wagga, and extends its deepest condolences to all those affected."

CEO Dom Rowe, responding to what happened in Wagga said that the death of every person experiencing homelessness is a tragedy and "very often a systemic failure."

He's not wrong. What happened is an indictment of housing in Australia. We need public housing now.

## Support Community Radio

3CR's annual Radiothon fundraiser is in June. The theme for 2026 is 'Celebrating 50 Years'. In 1976 the community in Melbourne came together to build a community radio station, 3CR and give voice to progressive issues and people. 50 years later, 3CR is standing strong, and the need for independent, socially-just media is growing. Thanks to the internet, readers around Australia and around the world can check it out, by going to [3cr.org.au](http://3cr.org.au), where you can listen live or choose from a range of podcasts. *Guardian*, *the Workers' Weekly* particularly recommends 'Alternative News,' which goes out on Sunday mornings.

3CR is powered by the community – it's only with grassroots donations and support that it can continue. The station is free from commercial influence and government control, and needs your help to keep it that way. With your support, 3CR can continue to be a radical, independent voice striving for social justice.

In the month of June, 3CR needs community donations to maintain its strong and independent voice. Please help the station be the voice of underrepresented issues and people by donating to the 2026 Radiothon today. Any amount, big or small, makes a real difference – and all donations over \$2 are tax-deductible.

To donate go to [3cr.org.au/donate](http://3cr.org.au/donate) or call 03 9419 8377



# ACT public servants to walk

**As the Guardian goes to press, ACT public servants are set to walk off the job with hundreds voting to strike after months of negotiations with the territory government.**

Housing ACT staff are set to strike after public servants voted up the protected action. More than 95 per cent of Community and Public Service Union members who participated in a ballot voted for protected industrial action as bargaining stalls between the union and government.

The vote covered staff working across health and administration in the ACT government. The public sector union rejected the government's latest pay deal in March, with one member saying rising car park fees outstripped their raises.

ACT union regional secretary Maddy Northam said members voted "overwhelmingly" in support of taking industrial action against the pay offer.

She said members were asking for a pay rise at or above the inflation rate, which is about 4.6 per cent. "These workers don't want to stop work. They care about and value the work they do for our community every day."

"Now, they are asking the government to value their work, too. We know the community understands just how important these jobs are. They rely on them to access government services every day."

Asked about the stalled negotiations in question time, ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr said he could not detail possible further pay offers under discussion by cabinet.

"There is no magic pot of money, sitting out there. If there were, we would access it," he said, conjuring up a fairy tale image.

Hundreds of public servants marched outside the Legislative Assembly on 1 May, with the union saying some non-acute parts of Canberra's hospitals were shut down for several hours due to staff attending the rally.

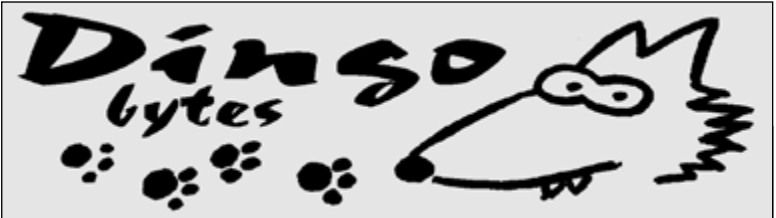
A union representing ACT public hospital doctors has also made the first step in voting on taking protected action after 80 per cent of its members rejected the ACT government's pay offer. The pay deal offered to territory government public servants in mid-March promised a wage increase of 3 per cent every year for three years.

The date of the workforce's superannuation increase of 0.5 per cent, taking employer contributions to 13 per cent, would have been pushed back six months to 1 July 2028, while previously-offered entitlements including more than 12 weeks extra leave for non-birthing parents remained the same.

ACT public servants were previously offered a pay deal in 2025 worth more than 7.5 per cent over three years, which was rejected.

The consumer price index was set to rise by 3.25 per cent in 2025-26 and up to 2.75 per cent the following year, according to the ACT government's budget review, meaning the first pay offer was set to be a below-inflation deal.

The ACT's public sector enterprise agreements that cover most of the workforce expired on 31 March 2026. ✪



The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) says it is aware of a recent ABC report which exposed 'Aussie Gigs' as a sham booking agency that has been defrauding gigging musicians.

The report has uncovered allegations that the booking agency withheld thousands of dollars' worth of performance fees owed to musicians they had engaged.

Unfortunately, incidents like this are not isolated but reflect systemic issues across the industry.

"Musicians should not have to fight to be paid for their work and members are calling for significant reform to an industry that has long been unregulated," the union's Musicians Director Paul Davies said.

"MEAA's most recent survey of musicians has revealed that more than half are earning less than \$15,000 a year in an industry where non-payment, underpayment, and broken contracts are rife.

"Predatory practices like this are reflective of the power imbalance between music businesses and working musicians. Exploitation in the music industry is enabled by a lack of minimum standards and protections."

Davies said this latest incident reinforces the urgent need for industry-wide reform to lift standards and protect musicians.

This is why MEAA members have been demanding serious change in the music industry – by working collectively to establish an industry code of conduct and minimum standards like the musicians' minimum fee.

"We want to work with the music industry to set minimum standards that will allow for a safer, more sustainable and more rewarding music industry."

The Australian Human Rights Commission's Commissioners for First Peoples' rights, children and racism are calling on all Australian governments to address racism in Australia's criminal justice system, following a United Nations urgent warning about the treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed "grave concerns" about the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the criminal justice system and the use of harsh adult penalties on children as young as 10 years old.

The Committee identified racial profiling and over-policing as factors leading to higher incarceration rates. They noted that Indigenous children in Australia make up around 65% of those in detention despite being only 6.5% of the child population. Most of these children have not even been convicted of a crime and are being held on remand. It also raised grave concerns about the harsh conditions First Nations children face in detention including "solitary confinement for prolonged duration, ill-treatment, and the use of spit-hoods."

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Katie Kiss; National Children's Commissioner, Deb Tsorbaris and Race Discrimination Commissioner, Giridharan Sivaraman have called for all Australian governments to urgently respond to the Committee's recommendations and implement the recommendations of the "Help Way Earlier" report. They've also called on Australian governments to endorse the National Anti-Racism Framework and implement the recommendations for the Justice sector.

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: is the US and Israel. They are as one, as in response to Francesca Albanese's book *When the World Sleeps: Stories, Words and Wounds* which is a testimony of Israel's genocide against the Palestinians. As a result of her fearless truth-telling about Palestine, Albanese – the UN Special Rapporteur on the Palestinian territories – is banned from entering the US, where her assets have been frozen, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio cynically claiming that Albanese "has spewed unabashed antisemitism, expressed support for terrorism and open contempt for the United States, Israel and the West." The sanctions also apply to her daughter and husband.

## Where the Guardian was



Independent and Peaceful Australia Network vigil, Boorloo/Perth CBD.

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# Unionists gather at US consulate

Arthur Martin

**On 7 May, a group of trade unionists gathered outside the US consulate in North Sydney. The crowd was largely made up of trade union officials and activists representing the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), the NSW Teachers' Federation and the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) in support of the Peace is Union Business campaign that organised the protest.**

Peace is Union Business has been gathering support since its national conference in December 2025. Trade unions have a long history of involvement in international solidarity and standing against war and imperialism. Unions have always had a crucial role to play in opposing war. Working people are the ones sent to fight wars, the ones whose public services are cut to fund them, and the ones who pay the economic price through higher costs and greater insecurity.

This Peace is Union Business rally featured a number of speakers from the represented trade unions in attendance, including Warren Smith, the National Deputy Secretary of the MUA. A major theme of the speeches was the escalation of war in 2026, with US president Donald Trump dragging the world into conflict with Venezuela and Iran while making alarming threats towards Cuba.

Speakers emphasised that these are not abstract developments. The working class are being made to pay for Trump's wars. Impacts on the working class in Australia include:

- devastated superannuation and retirement funds,
- increases to the cost of living directly brought about by fuel insecurity from the Iran war, and
- money taken away from healthcare, welfare including the NDIS, education, and other social programs used to fund AUKUS.

Dr Damien Cahill, NTEU General Secretary said that "workers across Australia are being forced to pay the price for Trump's illegal war on Iran. The war is driving up the cost of living and interest rates and driving down living standards."

Natasha Watt, Deputy President NSW Teachers' Federation said that "teachers work hard every day to educate and provide hope to their students against the backdrop of an increasingly unsettled world impacted by war, increasing military spending and the illegal military action by President Trump.

"All wars are fought against children," she added. "Teachers well know the impact on the children and their families in our community who have close ties to countries where war and genocide are being waged. It is appalling schools in the Middle East have been targeted by Trump and his collaborators."

Arthur Rorris, South Coast Labour

Council Secretary said "Trump didn't only bomb Iran, he is smashing regional Australia as well. The workers of the Illawarra and every region in Australia are paying the price for Trump's wars. Trump's fingerprints are on every petrol pump, supermarket check-out, and mortgage rate rise in the country. He is enemy number one of the Australian worker."

Warren Smith spelled out the cost to Australians, "\$380 billion is being wasted on war-fighting submarines designed to provoke conflict, when the same money could fund a nationally owned shipping fleet 250 times over – a fleet that actually helps us cope with the damage done by our warmongering US ally?

"Real security comes from jobs, housing, food, clean water, education, health care, democratic rights and peaceful coexistence with the peoples of the region." ✪

## Results of Farrer by-election

Maximus M

**The by-election results in the NSW electorate of Farrer are historic. One Nation has won its first seat in the House of Representatives joining Barnaby Joyce, ending the Coalition's seven-decade stranglehold.**

**How did we get here?**

Sussan Ley became the leader of the Liberal Party and Opposition after Peter Dutton's catastrophic defeat in the 2025 Federal Election. Ley's "moderate" stances weren't acceptable to the Liberal Party's right faction, resulting in a leadership spill, with Angus Taylor becoming the new leader of the Liberal Party and Opposition. Ley resigned after her defeat, leaving the seat of Farrer open for an early election.

**What do the results show?**

Obviously One Nation is able to win seats, having also won a seat in the recent South Australian state election. This needs to be kept in

perspective: the Greens have won more seats without being treated as an approaching threat by mainstream media.

Media outlets have been treating the result as some kind of verdict on Labor, who didn't have a candidate. The race in Farrer was between One Nation candidate, David Farley and Independent candidate, Michelle Milthorpe. Both the Liberals and the Nationals preferred One Nation over the Independent candidate.

The preferencing has been put down to the Coalition's belief that it would be easier to regain the seat of Farrer in the 2028 federal election against One Nation than against an Independent. Possibly this is based on long-lasting independent candidates elsewhere.

**One Nation, a well oiled machine?**

This is also clearly shown with One Nation candidate, David Farley. Farley is a blatant opportunist. Months before the election he attempted to join the Labor Party

before joining One Nation. He has criticised Barnaby Joyce, calling him xenophobic. It's clear that Farley will not represent working class interests.

One Nation continues to grow, largely thanks to financial backing from Australia's richest person, Gina Rinehart, and being platformed by Australia's legacy media. The upcoming state elections will show if Rinehart, the Murdoch press and others get their wish.

**Conclusion**

The Farrer result definitely shows dissatisfaction with the Liberal Party in the seat of Farrer, as well as some dissatisfaction with life in general. The Liberals giving their preferences didn't decide the election, but they certainly helped. One Nation is not the party that the people of Farrer need. It's the tool of ultra-rich donors like Gina Rinehart, but you can't blame voters for finding the Liberal and National parties uninspiring. ✪

## Julie Bishop resigns as ANU Chancellor

EJ

**Julie Bishop recently resigned as Australian National University (ANU) Chancellor. Bishop is a former politician, Foreign Minister, Deputy Liberal Leader, and former lead lawyer for CSR when that company was opposing compensation claims from workers dying of asbestos diseases. As ANU Chancellor Bishop has played a long term leading role in Australia's national university.**

ANU National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) members have persistently called for Julie Bishop's resignation, including in a vote of no confidence against Bishop and then vice-chancellor Genevieve Bell last year, at the height of "Renew ANU": a vast, chaotic and reputationally damaging university restructure with punishing job cuts, supported by Bishop and implemented by Bell.

Commenting on Bishop's resignation, President of the ACT NTEU Division, Dr Lachlan Clohesy said, "The former chancellor has made two significant decisions which I support: the first was to accept the resignation of the former vice-chancellor, Genevieve Bell. The second was today."

In the Senate Inquiry into University Governance last year, serious accusations were made against Bishop using parliamentary privilege. Bishop's resignation


comes shortly after the release of the Thom Report, an internal investigation by ANU of the allegations raised in the Senate, to members of ANU Council, the highest governing body of the university. In an all-staff email sent on 8 May, ANU Council stated: "the Thom ANU Report made five adverse findings in relation to former Council members in respect of their conduct as Council members." At an ANU Community Meeting, former Chancellor Bishop was identified as one of those Council members.

In the context of Australia's university sector, where corruption is rife and institutions are captured by the private interests of mining and bank CEOs, former politicians and consultants, all opposed to the interests of workers and students, the ongoing overhaul of ANU Council is welcome, and comes in the wake of hard campaigning by NTEU members to push for a more democratic sector.

Further state scrutiny into university governance, represented by the upcoming TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency) and ANAO (Australian National Audit Office) reports into ANU will bring further urgently needed transparency and accountability. The broken, corrupt, undemocratic, corporatised, anarchic management of Australian universities needs to be overhauled. Universities need to be run by workers and students. ✪

AN EXCLUSIVE CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT DÍAZ-CANEL

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THE ISLAND IN THE CROSSHAIRS

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# Kumanjayi Little Baby and Indigenous women and girls

Graham Holton

**The alleged brutal sexual assault and murder of five-year-old Kumanjayi Little Baby in Alice Springs has raised the question of how the police and the government are dealing with murdered and missing Indigenous women and children in Australia. Northern Territory Child Protection Minister Robyn Cahill asked the Children's Commissioner to investigate the case. This is the most recent incident in a long history of missing and murdered Indigenous children.**

The Australian Institute of Criminology found that 476 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were murdered between 1989 and 2023. The 2022 ABC's *Four Corners* investigation identified at least 315 Indigenous women who have gone missing, murdered, or died in suspicious circumstances since 2000.

A major problem is that there is no single, comprehensive national database. A 2024 literature review by Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), concluded that reliable research is extremely limited, and available evidence suggests missing, murdered, and wrongfully incarcerated Indigenous women "number in the hundreds, if not thousands."

Australia has never fully confronted the scale of violence against Indigenous women who experience homicide rates up to seven times the national average. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and families of victims have repeatedly called for a permanent national database and better missing persons protocols. They have also long demanded independent investigations, coronial reform, and a full national inquiry similar to Canada's inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG).

Indigenous women scholars and activists such as Hannah McGlade, Celeste Liddle, and Pat Anderson argue that violence against Indigenous women must be understood through colonisation, intergenerational trauma, economic inequality, over-incarceration, and systemic racism. The

present focus on criminal justice without addressing housing, health, education, and community wellbeing will not solve the problem.

Many Indigenous women leaders find that mainstream systems have failed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women because they are designed without Indigenous community control. Indigenous women must lead the solutions, rather than having policies imposed on them by governments and non-Indigenous institutions.

Djirra, the Aboriginal community-controlled organisation supporting Aboriginal women facing family violence, has pushed for culturally safe support services, stronger legal protections, housing security, trauma-informed policing, and long-term funding for Indigenous-led programs. Many Indigenous women's groups have adopted campaigns similar to Canada and the United States around MMIWG, using slogans such as 'No More Stolen Sisters' and 'Black Women Matter.'

Indigenous women's actions are led by mothers, aunts, grandmothers, and sisters of victims. These gatherings often combine mourning with political demands for justice, better policing, and violence prevention. Indigenous women have organised vigils, marches, memorial events, social media campaigns, and community forums across Australia.

The impact of family and domestic violence in Indigenous communities was examined by the Senate's Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee and the findings released in August 2024. The response was tabled in Parliament in November 2024, with the government committed to supporting First Nations communities. A \$4.7 billion package would address the recommendations of the Inquiry and the development of the 'Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026–2036,' the first national plan of its kind.

The plan sets out a pathway for change over the next ten years. It calls on governments, communities and organisations to work together to create a safer future, where there is respect and strengthening of culture, kinship and connection to Country. ✨



Tjala Women's Collaborative, Museum and Art Gallery of The Northern Territory. Photo: Geoff Whalan – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

## 'Mali' betrays corrections officers

**Peter Malinauskas' recent decision to privatise the Adelaide Remand Centre (ARC) is a betrayal of hard-working corrections officers across the country, says the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU).**

While Labor governments around the country have been busily bringing prisons back into the public sector, most recently the Minns government with Junee and Parklea prisons last year, Malinauskas has decided to continue Liberal government policy.

The ARC was privatised by the Marshall Liberal government in 2019.

The contract for the ARC expires in August and the Malinauskas government was expected to return the prison to the public sector.

The ARC has well-reported problems with drugs, violence, and chronic understaffing.

This May, the McKell Institute delivered a scathing assessment of the privatisation of the ARC, concluding the experiment has failed on cost, safety, staffing, and accountability grounds.

Federal Secretary of the CPSU, Stewart Little, says Malinauskas' move is a betrayal of corrections officers around the country. "Staff at the Adelaide Remand Centre

play a pivotal role in the South Australian criminal justice system," said Little.

"This decision will ultimately lead to more assaults and a continued upswing in violence in the South Australian prison system.

"Corrections staff are an integral part of the criminal justice system.

"They are no different to the police or the courts, they do a difficult and dangerous job protecting the community.

"Clearly South Australian Labor are in bed with big business and Serco.

"The same company is trying to bring in foreign 457 Visa workers to work in centres elsewhere across the country including

Clarence Correctional Centre in Grafton, the biggest private prison in Australia. Aussies don't want to work there because the pay and conditions are so poor.

"They have a track record of failure and of reducing pay and conditions for working people, today's decision is an absolute disgrace.

"Peter Malinauskas should hang his head in shame.

"He will have blood on his hands for this decision."

CPSU ✨

## Massive carbon bomb

**Greenpeace Australia Pacific has branded Woodside's Browse gas report as being "so ludicrous it reads like satire" and a dangerous distraction from the urgent action needed to save Scott Reef and address soaring emissions.**

The report asserts that Woodside's Browse offshore gas drilling project at Scott Reef would have no impact on Western Australia's net zero targets, as the state was on track to miss them anyway.

Hannah Schuch, Senior Campaigner at Greenpeace Australia Pacific, called Woodside's report "nothing but the self-serving tosh

expected from a multinational gas corporation exploiting the global energy crisis to drill for more expensive, volatile, and polluting gas to export for profit.

"Claiming a massive carbon bomb would somehow help the net zero transition is delusional. If Woodside's reckless Browse gas project went ahead, it would be one of the most polluting projects in the country and turn one of Australia's last pristine oceanic reef systems, Scott Reef, into an industrial gas zone.

"The WA EPA already made an initial finding that Woodside's plan to drill at least 50 wells near Scott

Reef, home to nesting sea turtles, endangered pygmy blue whales and other endangered species, and posed unacceptable risks to the environment."

Most recently, independent scientific experts demonstrated that Woodside's amended plans do nothing for the survival of these key threatened species found at Scott Reef but just tinker around the edges. Schuch said it was "frankly insulting" for Woodside to flaunt these plans as a win for net zero.

"Woodside continuously fails to deliver gas to West Australians. According to the DomGas Alliance less than 4 per cent of gas from

Woodside's Pluto facility has been supplied to the local market – far short of the 15% requirement."

The global energy crisis has laid bare the dangers of fossil fuel dependence. WA has access to world-class renewable energy resources, which modelling shows could power the state's homes, hospitals and key industries with clean, cheap and affordable energy. WA has a choice: displace gas with renewables, or displace renewables with gas.

Schuch says Federal Environment Minister Murray Watt has a responsibility to protect the environment and "put an end to

this dangerous project once and for all." She added that Minister Watt and the Albanese government's environmental credentials ride on protecting Scott Reef from Woodside's dirty gas for good.

"Greenpeace is calling for Murray Watt to listen to the half a million Australians that have asked him to stop this nature and climate-wrecking project and protect Scott Reef for generations to come."

Greenpeace Australia ✨

# First climate case reaches the High Court

**On 13 May 2026, the High Court of Australia heard the nation's first ever climate change case to reach our highest court – a landmark moment that will set a binding national precedent on whether Australian planning authorities are legally required to consider the local climate impacts of fossil fuel project approvals.**

The case, MACH Energy Australia Pty Ltd v Denman Aberdeen Muswellbrook Scone Healthy Environment Group Inc (DAMS HEG), was brought by a grass-roots Hunter Valley community group challenging the approval of a major expansion of the Mount Pleasant open-cut coal mine near Muswellbrook. The NSW Court of Appeal ruled unanimously in July 2025 that the mine's approval was unlawful – finding that planning authorities are legally required to consider the specific local climate impacts of a project's downstream

emissions. MACH Energy has asked the High Court to overturn that ruling.

The case arrived at an extraordinary moment. Just 12 hours before the NSW Court of Appeal's ruling, the International Court of Justice in The Hague delivered its own landmark advisory opinion, finding that fossil fuel-exporting nations bear legal responsibility under international law for the climate harm their exports cause. Australia had argued to the ICJ that it bore no such responsibility for emissions from its coal and gas exports. The ICJ rejected that argument.

That's really important. For years, Australian governments have been using a variation of the 'drug dealer argument' – if we don't sell this stuff somebody else will – as well as pretending that what people in other countries do with our fossil fuels is not Australia's problem. The International Court of Justice has rejected that.

Four of the world's leading climate law and science institutions have been granted leave to intervene in the High Court in support of DAMS HEG – from the Universities of Cambridge, Columbia and Melbourne, and the Union of Concerned Scientists. The case is being watched internationally as a test of whether domestic law can hold fossil fuel producers accountable for the local consequences of dangerous climate change.

The case directly affects 18-plus coal proposals in the NSW planning pipeline, and other fossil fuel developments under consideration across Australia. It will provide a foundation for other major climate cases including the Pabai Torres Strait appeal, the North West Shelf challenge, and future climate litigation across Australia and internationally.

Climate Media Centre 



The Hague delivered its own landmark advisory opinion, finding that fossil fuel-exporting nations bear legal responsibility under international law for the climate harm their exports cause. Photo: rawpixel (CC0)



**Something to say?**

**Write to the Editor!**

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## GREEN NOTES

### When forests are bad news

Graham Holton

One of the most visible ecological responses to global climate change is the increased forest density and spread of boreal forests, or taiga. These are forests in the northernmost parts of the world, places like Russia, Sweden, and Iceland. Taiga have a lot of pines, spruce and birches.

The taiga is the world's largest land-based geographical region, forming a massive, green belt across northern North America, Europe, and Asia, above the 50 degrees latitude North. Boreal forests contain 25 per cent of the world's wetlands and store more carbon in their soils and peatlands than tropical forests, making them essential for mitigating climate change. The taiga is expanding northward, colonising Arctic tundra areas that were previously too cold for forest growth. This 'Arctic greening' is due to longer growing seasons and increased CO2 stimulating plant growth through increased nutrients.

The Arctic is warming nearly four times faster than the global average. Longer growing seasons and milder winters allow trees to survive further north. The melting of permafrost, which contains twice as much carbon as the atmosphere, increases climate change. The taiga is dominated by evergreen conifers (pine, spruce, fir) and some deciduous trees (birch, larch). This region contains vast areas of wetlands, lakes, and peat deposits acting as a massive carbon sink. It is home to animals with thick fur (moose, wolves, lynx, caribou) and numerous migratory bird species.

Boreal regions are experiencing larger and more frequent fires, resulting in deeper-burning peat fires releasing massive carbon pulses. Tree growth insulates soil in winter. Conifer needles are adapted to retain water and shed snow. These form dark canopies that trap heat. When forests expand less sunlight is reflected and more solar energy is absorbed ensuring regional warming intensifies.

The 2023 Canada wildfire season converted boreal forests from carbon sinks to carbon emission. Melting permafrost releases carbon stored in the frozen soils for thousands of years and methane is emitted from the waterlogged ground. The result is land subsidence-formed thermokarsts (gigantic sinkholes) and altered rivers, wetlands, and landscapes. In the long term, the tundra ecosystems are shrinking dramatically, disrupting indigenous livelihoods based around reindeer herding and caribou migration.

There's a short term benefit for animals that live in the taiga. Moose and wolves have more country to feed and roam in, and some birds have more choice of breeding zones. However these changes impact indigenous cultural relationships with the tundra. Environmental changes affect caribou migration routes and reindeer grazing areas, impacting traditional hunting, trapping patterns, and disrupting traditional land use.

Indigenous planning in response to expanding boreal forests and Arctic climate change is increasingly land-based and sovereignty-focused: governance, culture, and long-term survival planning. Many First Nations, Inuit, and Sámi governments are mapping traditional territories using oral history and mapping software to identify culturally critical areas such as caribou calving grounds, berry sites, and sacred places.

The Sámi reindeer herders are negotiating forestry restrictions to preserve migration corridors. Other groups are adjusting seasonal hunting calendars based on observed changes. With changing forest boundaries and altered migration routes communities are monitoring caribou herds using GPS and traditional tracking. This adaptive management is rooted in lived observation.

Indigenous groups have created Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) to set their own forestry and wild-fire management standards. They maintain traditional ecological knowledge, recent research, and climate modelling. Indigenous people are adapting to a global problem not of their own making.

The northern regions that hold the expanding taiga are a long way from Australian climate and experience, but the consequences of carbon emissions from changes in the north feed into the increased fires and floods here. The Albanese government needs to stop putting the needs of fossil fuel corporations ahead of the interests of working people both here and worldwide.

# Revolutionary women: Helen Macfarlane

**Helen Macfarlane was the first person to translate the Communist Manifesto into English.**

Though she knew Marx and Engels well, hers is no longer the version used today and sadly neither does she get the recognition which her efforts on that and in other fields deserve.

Besides her venture into early communism she was a leading Chartist, though she would end up buried a Christian having married an Anglican minister. A remarkable life for a woman denied formal educational opportunities.

Born in 1818 to a prosperous calico printer in Barrhead, outside Glasgow, Macfarlane was the youngest of 11. Her gender shamefully limited her education, which seems to have largely been through others in the family.

However, as her life would show she was obviously very bright and a gifted linguist.

Disaster though befell her and the family in 1842 when her father's business collapsed, driven under by new technology with which he was unable to compete.

The family home in a leafy part of central Glasgow was sold along with business and mills. Helen found employment as a governess, initially in England before moving to Vienna.

There's some suggestion that she had already gained some knowledge of German through her father's business with German machinery and products. She obviously immersed herself in the language in Austria not just within the family she was working for.

Living in Vienna in 1848, she experienced the revolution and tumult which convulsed not just the city but far more widely in Europe.

That appears to have had a profound effect upon her even if her radical sympathies were mainly back in Scotland. But a spark had been lit within her by those events, as with many others, and she was excited by the different world which now seemed possible.

The continent settled down

and those early attempts at radical change in Europe faltered. Macfarlane's contribution to the cause would be through her writings, which she set to with a will on her return to Britain. Many other European revolutionaries would also join her in heading there, including none other than Karl Marx.

A brief stay in Lancashire then saw Macfarlane move to London where her literary works soon started to appear in radical papers. Her early work showed a grasp of Hegel unusual at the time and she found common ground between 'red republicanism' and the teachings of Christ.

It was no doubt an exciting as well as challenging time as a fledgling movement sought to develop and organise. The push for democracy and the franchise under the wider ambit of reform came to include socialism. Marx had written the *Communist Manifesto* with its German edition first published in February 1848, just as the revolutions erupted.

As with her lack of a formal education the all-pervasive sexism of the time saw her required to use the male pen name of Howard Morton for her contributions. Her groundbreaking translation of the *Communist Manifesto* appearing in the aptly named Chartist Paper "*The Red Republican*," over four editions in November 1850.

Much of her text is the same as the standard edition that appears today. But her introduction has been changed, and it would now perplex many though it had a basis, as well as logic, at the time.

The opening clarion call of "A spectre is haunting Europe, a spectre of Communism" was narrated by her as "A frightful hobgoblin stalks throughout Europe. We are haunted by a ghost, the ghost of Communism."

Nowadays "hobgoblin" is more likely to conjure imagery of Harry Potter or other such novels, but back then it was a phrase which had been used by the Chartist leader Feargus O'Connor. Given ongoing debates, including between physical

and moral force Chartism, it may well have seemed apt to MacFarlane, and its use and context would certainly have been understood by the readership. Some things though never change down through the ages and Macfarlane's translation was denounced by *The Times* (for its content, rather than style).

Marx was not her only venture into the world of translation and she would also be the first person to provide an English edition of Hegel. Interpretation into a different language is never easy even with the simplest of works and to have completed two such heavyweight philosophers as Marx and Hegel is really quite outstanding given her lack of formal education. She also wrote extensively quoting widely from literary and philosophical works. Confirming not just her appetite for literature and learning but her intellect and talent.

Her involvement in the Chartist movement was to prove all too brief when she had a falling out with George Harney, the editor of *The Red Republican* as 1850 ended. Little's known about the reason though it appears to have been an argument between MacFarlane and Harney's wife. It saw her cease contributing to the paper and end her political activities, something which Marx was to regret and chastise the editor for.

Her later years were to be marked by tragedy. In 1852 Macfarlane married Francis Proust a radical exile from Belgium. They decided to move to South Africa where some of her family had gone. But there was to be no new life together as her husband and their eight-month old daughter died before the ship had even departed British seas.

Understandably given those tragedies she never settled in South Africa, returning to Britain where in 1854 she met and married an Anglican vicar. He was a widower with 11 children, and they had two children together as she settled down to the role of a vicar's wife in the small town of Nantwich. It seems to have been a happy marriage, but didn't



last long. Contracting bronchitis, MacFarlane died in 1860 and is buried in St Michael's Church there. Her headstone reads "Sacred to the memory of Helen, wife of the Rev John W Edwards, who fell asleep in Jesus, March 29th 1860, aged 41 years."

MacFarlane had written of Christianity's basis in communism as well as fulminating against the established church. She had stressed the communist aspect of Christianity, writing:

I think one of the most astonishing experiences in the

history of humanity was the appearance of the democratic idea in the person of a poor despised Jewish proletarian, the Galilean carpenter's son who worked probably at his father's trade till he was 30 years of age and then began to teach his idea, wrapped in parables and figures to other working men.

Macfarlane's writings don't seem to have been collected, but a collected edition of *The Red Republican* is available for free online. *Morning Star* (edited for space) ★

# Unpaid overtime? Look to Marx

CJ Atkins

**Legally, the working week in Japan is 40 hours, but good luck finding anyone who puts in less than 46 hours on the job. For workers in some industries, like construction, the double duty adds up to as much as 38 hours a month – the equivalent of a full extra week of labour.**

Most of that surplus work is unpaid – something Japanese employers call *sabisu zangyo*, or "service overtime." It's so bad that many workers are literally toiling themselves into an early grave. The Japanese have a term for that, too. It's the phenomenon of *karoshi* – "death by overwork."

Combined with decades of economic stagnation and limited opportunity at home, the lack of anything resembling a work/life balance is helping drive increasing numbers of Japanese youth to leave

the country, with some observers starting to use the word "exodus" to describe what's happening.

It's no wonder then that the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) is laser-focused on the question. Shii Kazuo – the chair of the party's Central Committee and a 33-year veteran of the Diet, Japan's parliament – has made it the topic of his latest book, *Disposable Time and Capital: Learning from Marx*, which was recently published in English translation.

Karl Marx's 1867 volume, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, sometimes has a reputation for being full of dry calculations of fixed and variable capital ratios or hard-to-follow theorisations about the nature of commodities. Shii believes such a view of that classic work misses the big picture.

At the heart of Marx's analysis of capitalism, he argues, among all the explanations of how surplus value is produced and appropriated,

is the demand that workers should have more command of their own time – and thus, of their lives.

Shii shared his thoughts in a wide-ranging conversation with students, activists, and journalists at an event hosted by the Department of Sociology at York University in Toronto on 4 May.

Shii quoted Marx's definition of post-capitalist society as one where "the full and free development of every individual forms the ruling principle." But, he asked, "how can people develop their potential fully and freely when they don't have enough free time to use as they wish?"

That's the central question of his book, which is built around a concept Marx called "disposable time" – the time left over after workers have completed the labour necessary to sustain themselves and their families.

*People's World* (edited for space) ★



Photo: Brianhe – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

# India and the myth of Gen-Z

Vijay Prashad

**In India, over 123 million people voted in the four states of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal (home to 290 million people) for their state assemblies. These are influential states: two in the south, one in the east, and one in the northeast. The next national parliamentary election is not scheduled until 2029, so these elections are not being seen as a bellwether for the central government. However, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government facing challenges due to fuel and food inflation, these elections have become an indicator of his popularity.**

There are three immediate takeaways from this election: first, the level of state manipulation in the elections through the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) certainly undermined faith in the electoral process, since it was seen to have enabled Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to win in West Bengal (population 100 million); second, the Gen-Z phenomenon, or the post-ideological politics wave, has entered India through the victory of film star Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) in Tamil Nadu (population 77 million); third, with the defeat of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in Kerala (population 36 million), there will be no Communist-led government in any part of India for the first time in five decades.

## MODI TACTICS

The prevailing wisdom is that the sitting governments in the three states of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala lost their elections in an anti-incumbency wave. On closer examination, this might be too simplistic an argument. For instance, in Kerala, impressive work by the Communist-led LDF government led to the abolition of extreme poverty (the first Indian state to do so, and the first place outside China) and to the reduction of the infant mortality rate below five per 1,000 live births (lower than in the United States). There was no reason for the electorate to give the LDF its most severe defeat in recent times.

Modi's central government used the entire state machinery to tackle the three governments because their leaders had led confrontations against the national government of Modi on several issues. The core problem is that Modi wants to undermine India's federal system and centralise power in New Delhi. This has been strongly contested by non-BJP state governments, with the sharpest criticism coming from

the states in southern India. The argument made by the southern political leaders is that since they are economically dynamic, their populations have not grown as much as populations in the north, which means that in any revision of the national electoral map, they will lose power in the central legislature.

In these state elections, Modi targeted all three leaders (Mamata Banerjee of West Bengal, M. K. Stalin of Tamil Nadu, and Pinarayi Vijayan of Kerala) and defeated them. Part of the use of the state apparatus was by the elimination of at least 2.7 million voters in West Bengal by the Election Commission of India, as well as the use of highly charged anti-Muslim language (notably of "infiltration" of migrants from Bangladesh into West Bengal) to polarise the electorate along religious lines. Both Banerjee and Stalin lost their own seats in the contest.

## GEN-Z COMES TO INDIA?

Chandrasekaran Joseph Vijay, a major star in Tamil films, launched his party (TVM) through his 85,000 fan clubs, drawing on a long tradition in Tamil Nadu of film stars, fan clubs, and the political establishment. There was something novel about Vijay's campaign. His entire mood was driven by digital fluency, awareness of social issues that captivate online audiences, and impatience with traditional hierarchies. The excitement of his campaign, the unwillingness to accept party loyalties, and the care with which Vijay's team crafted political messages to induce cultural rather than political appeal stretched his popularity beyond the lines of the polarised electorate.

Born in 1974, Vijay reached out to younger voters in a way that eclipsed the otherwise popular administration of Stalin (born 1953) and the other principal opponent, Edappadi Palaniswami (born 1954). The Vijay phenomenon is strong on imagery and weak on policy or administrative competence. It carries forward the Gen-Z protests of Bangladesh, which resulted in a right-wing victory at the polls, and the Gen-Z protests of Nepal, which resulted in a government characterised by right-of-centre incoherence.

In many ways, the victory of Modi's BJP in West Bengal felt as if it were equally formed by a Gen-Z wave, this time a type of cosplay Hindutva. It was Hindu power masked in casual anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim rhetoric and in the vagueness of anti-politics. Social media platforms ran narratives that focused on young people, with themes such as anti-corruption and transparency sounding



Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Photo: kremlin.ru – wikimedia.org (CC BY 4.0)

like anti-older people. It helped that the BJP's leader Suwendu Adhikari (born 1970) was younger than Banerjee (born 1955) and so positioned himself as the coming of a new generation.

Beneath the smiles of the younger candidate and the social media glitz of the West Bengal BJP lies the disenfranchisement of voters, the religious bigotry of the campaigning, and the hoary nature of the BJP's Hindutva ideology – rooted as it is in an ancient fantasy created only a hundred years ago.

Media-savvy personalities avoided the need for real ideas to solve real problems. This is the essence of the Gen-Z phenomenon, much more than young people taking to the streets to demand this or that change.

## MIGRANT VOTERS

The BJP in West Bengal targeted migrants from Bangladesh, but that left a bad taste in the mouth of other migrants. According to the 2011 Census, there were 456 million workers in India who migrated within the country – more than one third of the population.

Most of these workers cannot vote in the states where they work because voting is tied to a permanent home address, and most migrants remain registered in their native villages. As a result, workers must return home to vote, which is both expensive and inconvenient and therefore results in low voter turnout in their areas. One of the great limits of

Indian democratic institutions is this casual disenfranchisement of migrant workers, mostly from the poorer states in India's north, who travel to the more dynamic states in India's south.

Interestingly, a candidate in the constituency of Domkal – Mostafizur "Rana" Rahaman of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPIM – addressed the migrant work issue head-on. A young and dynamic politician, Rana not only campaigned in his district but journeyed through India's south to

galvanise migrant workers to go to the polls. Workers traveled back to Domkal to vote for Rana, and four hundred families with workers out of the state joined the CPIM before the elections. Rana's victory spells the end of the Left's drought in West Bengal, which had begun with the defeat of the Left Front government in 2011 after thirty-four years in power. His victory is that of the migrant worker in India, far less talked about than Gen-Z but perhaps far more important.

Globetrotter 🇮🇳

## Modi's budget for corporations

PF

The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) has described Prime Minister Modi's latest budget as "just catering to foreign and domestic corporations and cutting expenditure on social spending including health and education. This budget, they say, "heralds even greater hardship for the labouring and even middle classes."

Modi's budgets have been criticised for "fudged and misleading" figures to hide the fact that a budget dependent on a foreign investment-dependent growth model.

As in Australia, infrastructure projects depend on a Private-Public-Partnership model which makes fortunes for the private part of the equation, but costs the public side way more than it needs to.

The CPI(ML) news platform 'New Democracy' says that Modi's RSS-BJP government has been "bending over backwards to please western imperialist powers" particularly the US. For example, US companies have been given tax holidays and duty exemptions on imports.

(RSS = Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a fascist Hindu nationalist movement.

BJP = Bharatiya Janata Party, or Indian People's Party, a member organisation of the RSS and the current governing party of India)

**Beneath the smiles and the social media glitz lies the disenfranchisement of voters and the religious bigotry of the campaigning.**

# Book Review: *Atlas of AI* by Kate Crawford

Reviewer: E Whitehead

**This is a book warning us that artificial intelligence, like all the other capitalist innovations in the past, is not for the benefit of humanity, but is yet another invention of dehumanising extractive practices which will enslave low-wage information workers. Crawford, a research professor at the University of California, sees this technology as eventually eliminating any possibility of a sustainable future on a global scale.**

Crawford argues that AI is neither artificial nor intelligent simply by the ways and means it is produced. AI depends entirely on a wide set of political and social structures.

Due to the enormous capital required to build AI at scale and the ways of seeing that it optimises, AI systems are designed to serve the existing dominant interests. It's a "registry of power."

AI's environmental damage is a resource intensive, extractive technology "that converts water and electricity into computational power." Its carbon footprint matches "the aviation industry at its height and is increasing at a faster rate." The exact amount of energy consumed by AI models is a highly guarded corporate secret. Apple and Google contend that they are carbon neutral due to their offsetting of carbon emissions through purchasing credits! Microsoft, Google and Amazon's AI platforms are linked with fossil fuel companies and are most responsible for "anthropogenic climate change." China's data centre industry "draws 73% of its power from coal and, in 2018, emitted 99 million tons of CO2."

Then there's the question of water consumption which Campbell addresses by referring to the Intelligence Community Comprehensive National Cybersecurity Initiative Data Centre run by the National Security Agency in Utah. It is thought to consume 1.7 million gallons of water per day. Should Australia be concerned?

In her chapter about labour, Campbell makes an interesting observation about the "young, mostly male engineers" who are usually unencumbered and "fully committed to working all hours" who are creating the tools policing very different workplaces. She takes aim at Amazon with its low wages

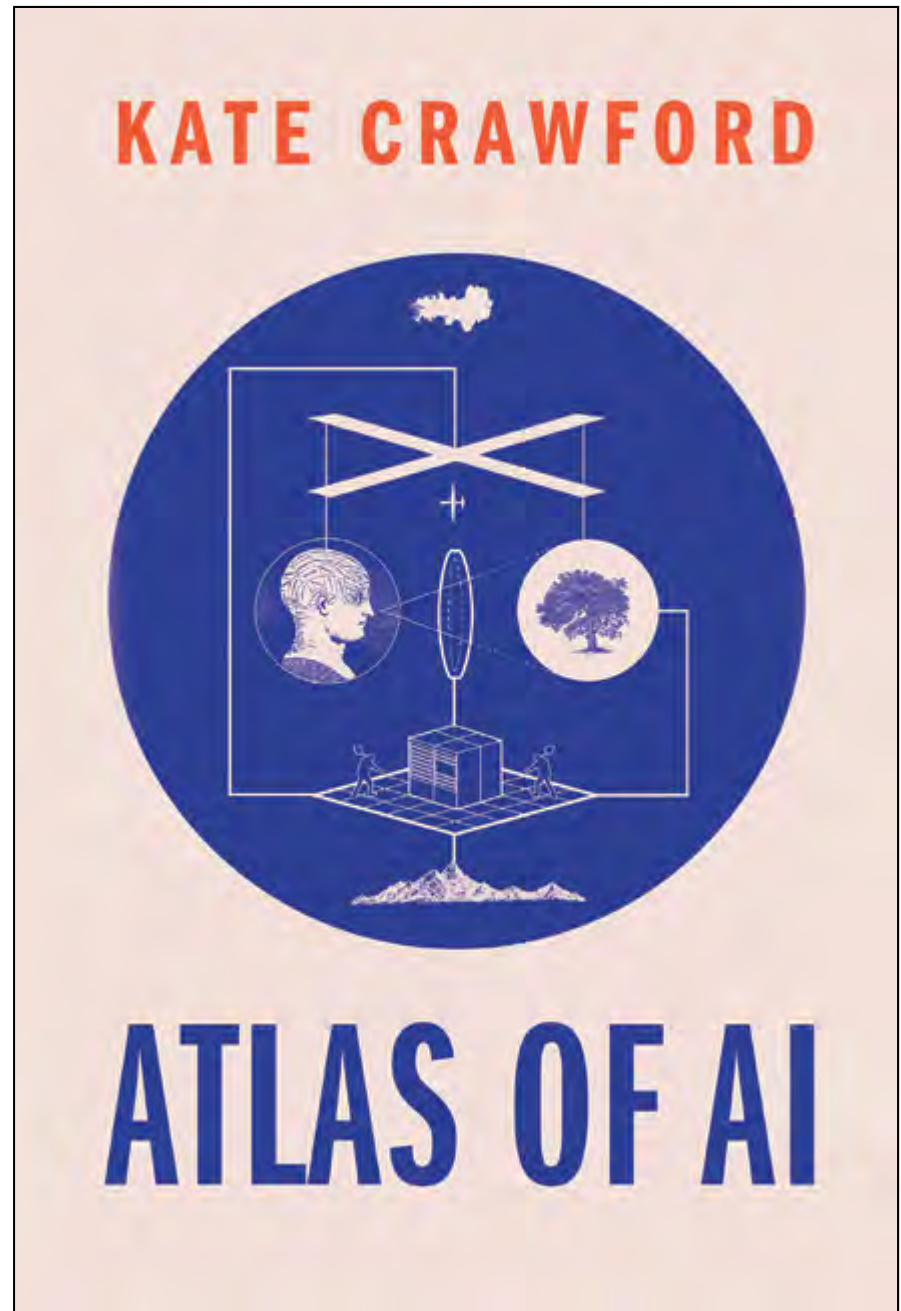
and where "brightly lit break rooms ... have Orwellian corporate slogans painted on the walls: Frugality; Earn trust of Others; Bias for action." Complaints are met with management boilerplate responses: "We value your feedback."

The section on 'The Capture of the Commons,' Campbell's name for what AI does with data is downright horrific. She sees data as "something to be taken at will, used without restriction, and interpreted without context. *Atlas of AI* reveals a rapacious international culture of exploitative and invasive data harvesting, producing lasting forms of harm.

Similarly, the methods being pursued in classification for AI are proving to be discriminatory. A good example is Amazon's biased automated hiring system. She investigates ImageNet where people were being categorised as objects, but finds Facebook "much harder to investigate and criticise: proprietary systems with few ways for outsiders to probe or audit how images are ordered or interpreted."

An even more worrying aspect of the book is Crawford's study of "the relationship between the state and the AI industry, with technologies once reserved for war zones and espionage now used at the local level of government." She sees "militarised forms of pattern detection and threat assessment" now moving into "municipal-level services and institutions" and warns the reader about Palantir, quoting a major investigation by Bloomberg in 2018, which found that Palantir as "an intelligence platform designed for the global War on Terror was 'weaponised against ordinary Americans at home.'" Palantir developed a phone app called FALCON which was used by ICE agents "to guide their raid of almost a hundred 7-Elevens across the US in what was called 'the largest operation against a single employer in the Trump era.'"

The book ends with Campbell analysing the tech giants' talk of space colonisation, which she finds "underscores a fundamentally troubling relationship with Earth. Their vision of the future does not include minimising oil and gas exploration or containing resource consumption or even reducing the exploitative labour practices that have enriched them. Instead, the language of the rich elite often echoes settler colonialism, seeking to displace Earth's population and capture territory for mineral extraction." \*



## ACROSS

2. When union members sing, how long do they want solidarity? (7)
3. How many countries are staying out of Eurovision due to Israel being invited? (4)
5. The US set a record for this (4)
6. Australia will be spending \$53 billion more on this in the next ten years (7)
9. Lebanon calls is occupation, Israel says it's a security \_\_\_\_ (4)
10. Bond villain outfit, also haunts Europe (7)
11. Expands to fill a room, needs to be taxed (3)
13. Japanese are protesting (14)
15. Australian Crawl hit, what Iran calls the US war (8)



Yeah, I'd get in this car



## DOWN

1. Would turn 100 this year, no not Attenborough (11, 2 words)
4. Celebrated in Moscow (10, 2 words)
7. When union members sing, how long do they want solidarity? (7)
8. Run by Indian communists for 50 years (6)
12. Staff at University of Canberra are doing this (8)
- 14 For electric vehicles, build your \_\_\_\_ (5)
- 16 German Chancellor says the US has no (8)

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# Worth Streaming: *The Boys*

Graham Holton

***The Boys* is one of the most provocative American TV series (Prime TV) in recent years. It is thrilling, psychologically disturbing, and genuinely insightful about money and politics in the United States. Its best episodes make it one of the most relevant shows about power and ideology. The series asks what would happen if people with godlike powers were shaped by celebrity culture and capitalism, with zero accountability?**

To answer this, it uses everything from nationalism, media manipulation, to corporate 'woke' branding. Along the way its attacks on social hypocrisy have sparked debate across the political spectrum in the United States.

*The Boys* explores power without accountability, the commodification of heroism, the merging of politics and celebrity, and the fragility of public truth in the media. The series aligns critiques of late capitalism, with resistance being absorbed and marketed. A Marxist reading of *The Boys* works because the show is less about evil superheroes and more about how great power operates under capitalism.

Developed by Eric Kripke, and based on the comics by Garth Ennis and Darick Robertson, it converts the superhero genre into an ultraviolent satire and political commentary. Instead of noble protectors, 'supes' are corporate assets owned by Vought International, a kind of cross between McDonnell-Douglas and Disney (or indeed, the show's producer, Amazon).

Vought is a near-total monopoly, controlling production of the Compound V – which created the superheroes – to distribution of films, media, and military contracts, and ideology through news, branding, and values. Vought manufactures public belief through its

movies, news media, and branding, which shape how people see reality. Scandals are absorbed and repackaged for public benefit. The public support the very system that exploits them because ideology masks reality.

By series five, the 'supes' are influencers, always keeping a worried eye on their engagement metrics. Their personal identity is a brand. They are not individuals, they are commodities. The supes appear powerful, but are workers alienated from their own labour. Their identities are owned and marketed; their 'heroism' is scripted and monetised. Their morality is shaped by corporate interests.

Homelander (Antony Starr), is the show's central achievement. He is terrifying because he is so controlled in his violence, incredibly narcissistic, and deeply insecure. He embodies authoritarian power wrapped in patriotic imagery, caped in kitschy US flag colours, creating one of TV's most unsettling antagonists. Homelander represents concentrated, unaccountable power, being above the law, as he is protected by Vought. His fans defend him, even after witnessing his atrocities. He mirrors a ruling class that maintains control through brutal power, ideology and public consent.

Of the main protagonists, The Seven, Hughie (Jack Quaid) provides a moral centre, Billy Butcher (Karl Urban) brings a raw, cynical energy, and Starlight (Erin Moriarty) adds emotional depth and ethical conflict. Even Starlight, with her incredible powers, cannot act freely from Vought.

Their activism is commodified, reflecting late capitalism's tendency to turn everything – including resistance – into a product. Their fight against Vought fails to produce a proletarian movement because they lack the class consciousness and organisational skills to create rebellion amongst the public.

By series five, the satire has



## late capitalism turns everything, even resistance, into a product

been updated, desperately so, with countless 'this is just like Trump' moments. The season opens with our heroes broadcasting proof of Homelander's psychopathy to the world, only for the big revelation to fall flat as Vought's media outlets flat out lie about it.

By now the shocking violence and language is beginning to feel dutiful rather than transgressive. If you're in, you're in, but as with the books it's based on, the show

is beginning to feel as though it should have stopped one or two climactic series-ending finales ago.

Then again, that's how it is with the late capitalism the show sends up. The real world of US arrogance and billionaire immunity from consequences isn't going to end easily either. Juan Carlito Espinoza's ambiguous character 'Mr Edgar' lays it out for the heroes. He explains that whichever super-powered psychopaths they defeat, they

will always face the corporations – "you've got to feed the machine."

As with the superhero stories the series parodies, *The Boys* has become pretty baroque by series five. If you're already into *The Boys*, you'll like it. If you haven't seen any of the series and you're not bothered by people exploding in the interests of Ennis' brand of black humour, start at the beginning and treat yourself. ✨

## A GOOD PLACE TO START: *The Principles of Communism*

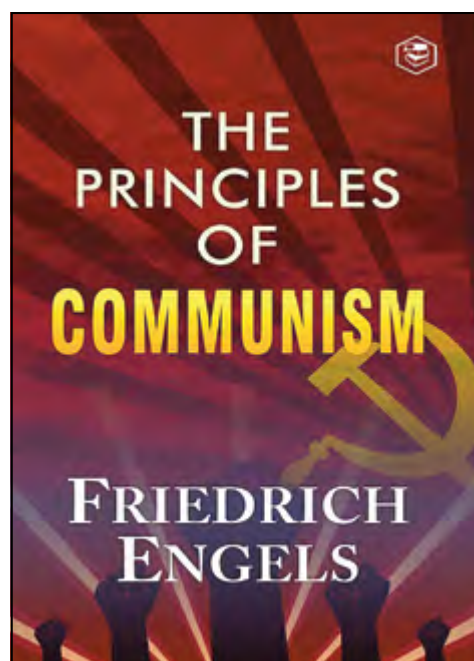
JH

Engels' *The Principles of Communism* acts as a great FAQ for Communism. This short work (my copy is only 30 pages!) covers 25 important questions about what all this communism stuff is about. It is written in Engel's simple and easy to understand tone. Copying the form of the question-and-answer Catholic catechism a lot of Engels' readers were familiar with.

This work provides an understanding of what the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are, what the demands of communists should be and what course the revolution may take.

It also helps to clear up a common misconception of the proletariat as just the poor and working people, with the bourgeoisie in contrast being those with money. Engels demonstrates clearly that these classes are based around the relation to the means of production and the division of labour: who owns the machinery and who uses it. It's not a division between people who are dirt poor and those who are comfortable.

*The Principles of Communism* is a good place to begin, but it's not perfect. It's an early work and is sometimes naïve sometimes simplistic. Modern readers will find language about "civilised" and "backwards" countries jarring.



Despite these issues, you'll be hard pressed to find an explanation of communism that is this short, clear and enlightening. It's a good place to start. ✨

## Costa Rica: ex-president keeps immunity

Costa Rica's outgoing President Rodrigo Chaves will remain a top official in his successor's government, president-elect Laura Fernandez has announced, granting the Trump ally ongoing immunity in the face of corruption allegations.

Chaves, who was barred from seeking re-election, will hold the posts of minister of the presidency and minister of finance, Fernandez said.

The president-elect, who took office on 5 May, presented herself as a "continuity" candidate in the run-up to February's elections – so much so that many ministers and leaders of the Chaves government will also remain in their previous positions or swap jobs.

"Just as we have done since the first day of your administration, we will continue working very well as a team," she told Chaves at a public event in the capital San Jose.

Chaves has curried favour with US President Donald Trump, most recently by

agreeing to accept 25 third-country deportees per week from the US.

He is known for lashing out at the media and critics and has sought to project himself as similar to El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele by cracking down on rising crime.

Last year, prosecutors accused him of illegal campaign finance and corruption charges, which Chaves has denied.

By remaining in government, Chaves retains his immunity from prosecution.

Costa Rica's legislature has made two unsuccessful attempts to strip him of his immunity. Another attempt appears unlikely, especially as the ruling party now holds a majority in the legislature.

Opposition MP Jose Maria Villalta said that Chaves's appointment was a blatant attempt to "grant or preserve immunity for controversial politicians from the outgoing government, rather than to improve the functioning of institutions."

*Morning Star* ✨

Something to say?  
Write to the Editor!

# ‘Footing the bill for both’ Interview with Peter Mertens

Peter Mertens is the General Secretary of the PVDA-PTB aka the Workers’ Party of Belgium, a Marxist and socialist political party, and currently the strongest political force in the Brussels region. His new book *The Last Days of the Old Normal* will be out soon.

Recently, *german-foreign-policy.com* spoke to Peter Mertens about the year-long wave of protests against the erosion of workers’ rights and social standards in Belgium. Mertens sees a link between the protests against social cuts and the fight against militarisation: “It’s the same people footing the bill for both.”

## Belgium has seen a wave of massive anti-government protests. What exactly are they about?

**Mertens:** Actually, this wave of very large and far-reaching nationwide protests began back in 2024 when negotiations to form the current government were still in full swing. A hundred thousand people took to the streets. This had never happened before. In the 16 months that have since followed, there have been 14 national mobilisations, the most recent on 12 March, when 100,000 people again took to the streets in protest.

Basically, the protests are about issues affecting everyday life, with pensions at the heart of the concerns. The government wants to introduce a “pension penalty,” a punitive measure for those who retire before age 67. Those who do so could lose up to 20% of their state pension. State pensions in Belgium are already very low. There is a wage freeze – even in high-profit sectors – and there are many more cuts to come. People are very angry about this.

## Do you consider the protests a success so far?

**Mertens:** There’s always a certain dialectic at work. First, there is a “No”: people are angry about certain government measures. The fact that people don’t express their anger by sitting in their armchairs in front of the TV and throwing their slippers, but become active and act together in the street, is very important.

You see, there are two sides to every expression of anger. On the one hand, there’s the bitterness, the sense of being powerless as an individual. The far right knows exactly how to exploit this. We try

to turn the anger and class hatred – this “No”, so to speak – into something positive. It starts at a very basic level: we have to convince people to take to the streets, to act together. The system wants people to feel small and powerless. It tries to destroy all belief in collective strength, through intimidation, through repression. If people believe that their action is in vain and that their adversary is invincible, they give up. This is exactly what we on the left have to fight against. We need to restore people’s faith in their collective strength.

And if we consider the socio-economic aspect, every demonstration, every strike has pushed back the government to some extent. The pension reform has not yet been implemented. Although not completely dropped, it has already been considerably weakened on several fronts thanks to the pressure the movement has exerted on the government.

There are also many contradictions within the government. Without the protests, these contradictions would not be so serious. Discussions are being held, for example, about how to deal with today’s high energy prices, which are a consequence of the illegal wars waged by Trump and Netanyahu, along with all those in Europe who are supporting these illegal wars. It’s clear that life is becoming more and more expensive.

One wing of the government wants to make their austerity policy even tougher. The other wing considers this impossible, which again is thanks to the mass protest movement. Without this movement, there would be perfect unity within the government.

It remains to be seen whether



Peter Mertens at a demonstration in Brussels, 2016.  
Photo: Dieter Boone – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

## the system wants people to feel small and powerless

the current Belgian government will remain in office until the end of 2026. It’s under enormous pressure, there’s a lot of tension within the government, and even though this wasn’t the primary aim of the protest movement, it is nonetheless a consequence of the pressure it is exerting.

## What role does militarisation play in the social cuts imposed by the Belgian government?

**Mertens:** I think it’s becoming increasingly clear that the government is trying to sweep an elephant under the carpet. It’s rather difficult, however, because an elephant

is quite large, and the elephant in the room, in this case the military budget, which amounted to 3.9 billion euros in 2017, has kept growing, reaching 12.7 billion euros in 2025 – more than triple in just eight years. It’s crazy. And yet, the government has promised Trump that it will increase the military budget to 22 billion euros, which would amount to 3.5 per cent of Belgium’s GDP. The Belgian government cannot run up a debt, like the German government, to reach 22 billion euros. So it has to cut spending in other areas.

This can be seen in the debates in parliament: every ministerial

department is pretty depressed – they all have to implement austerity measures. The situation is drastic. As a result, the prison system is completely collapsing, the health-care system is crumbling under the weight of austerity measures, and care staff are suffering from excess workloads and chronic understaffing. So all the ministers are a bit downhearted – except the Minister of Defence, who is beaming with joy. He’ll be able to spend billions and billions in the years to come. The ministers themselves say: if they have to choose between cannons and butter, they choose cannons.

Excerpted, from [pvda-ptb.be](http://pvda-ptb.be) 🇺🇦

## For peace in the Americas, defend Cuba

**The US Presidential Executive Order, “Imposing Sanctions on Those Responsible for Repression in Cuba and for Threats to United States National Security and Foreign Policy,” signed on 1 May 2026, International Workers’ Day, marks both an escalation of existing policy and a qualitative shift toward total economic warfare, deploying starvation as an instrument of statecraft. The timing of this escalation is not incidental. Issued amid renewed US rhetoric around exerting control over Cuba, the EO signals an effort to consolidate that control in a moment of deepening crisis for US imperialism.**

By broadening sanctions to target any entity or individual deemed a “material supporter” of the Cuban government, authorising secondary sanctions against third-party financial institutions worldwide, reinforcing energy constraints on fuel procurement, and invoking dubious national security

designations, the Order effectively criminalises basic economic survival. These provisions extend US economic warfare beyond its borders, coercing foreign banks, suppliers, and intermediaries to cut off even routine transactions with Cuba or risk punishment and exclusion from the dollar-dominated financial system. Weaponising the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) isolates Cuba from the global financial system entirely, collectively punishing every Cuban citizen seeking medicine, food, or electricity. Beyond Cuba, from Haiti to Venezuela, from Nicaragua to Grenada, the US utilises political subversion, economic coercion, and military attack to enforce ‘full spectrum dominance’ in the Americas.

Cuba is under attack because its revolutionary project poses an existential threat to US hegemony. For over sixty years, a small island under the most brutal economic embargo in modern history has built a society with universal healthcare, free education, and a life expectancy that rivals the Global

North’s, without submitting to International Monetary Fund austerity, World Bank structural adjustment, or US corporate domination. The Order’s provisions targeting “foreign actors” and “security concerns” function as transparent pretexts to intensify economic strangulation at a moment of vulnerability in Cuba as it recovers from pandemic-driven tourism collapse, tighten the noose on its hard-won energy independence, and preempt any deepening relationships with China, Russia, or Global South partners.

For BAP, this Executive Order must also be understood within the current geopolitical moment. It echoes and reinforces US offensives against Venezuela, aiming to break the Bolivarian Revolution, and Iran, whose own targeting under maximalist pressure campaigns mirrors Cuba’s isolation. Furthermore, the Order weaponises dollar dependence to coerce Caribbean states into continuing to abandon their historic solidarity with Cuba, punishing regional integration. In this context, the Executive Order is a unilateral bid

to shatter the emerging call for a Zone of Peace in Latin America and the Caribbean. This is why ending unilateral coercive measures (i.e., imperialist sanctions), returning Guantanamo Bay to Cuba, and dismantling the US Southern Command ‘Southcom’ infrastructures throughout Our Americas are fundamental requirements for peace in the region.

This escalation follows a campaign of narrative warfare of so-called “anti-Blackness in Cuba” aimed at isolating Cuba from African nations and from African/ Black people living in the US. The Cuban Revolution’s deepest gift is its unbroken refusal to bend. Cuba is a living demonstration that dignity, not profit, can organise a society. Those who claim the legacy of anti-imperialism cannot be silent. Now is the time to stand with the people of Cuba as fiercely as possible. The world must answer this Executive Order not with statements, but with organised resistance.

Black Alliance for Peace 🇺🇦

# Bahrain cracks down on Shia communities

**Bahrain's Interior Ministry announced on 9 May the arrest of 41 citizens, including multiple Shia religious leaders, over alleged ties to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).**

The ministry said security services uncovered the alleged network through "investigations, security reports, and previous Public Prosecution cases related to espionage involving foreign entities."

The detainees are accused of "espionage involving foreign entities and sympathy with blatant Iranian aggression."

Around 30 Shia Muslim clerics were among the 41 arrested, as the Gulf monarchy intensifies a campaign of raids and arrests predominantly targeting Shia religious figures and seminary teachers in Bahrain.

The arrests mark a new security escalation by Manama (capital of Bahrain) and form part of

a continued policy of restrictions against clerics in the country.

The *Bahrain News Agency* reported that legal proceedings are now underway against the 41 detainees.

Earlier this week, Bahrain stripped three lawmakers of their seats in parliament after they publicly criticised the monarchy's crackdown on dissent over its support for the US-Israeli war on Iran.

That decision came less than two weeks after Bahrain revoked the citizenship of 69 people over alleged support for Iranian retaliatory attacks on the country.

The Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy described the move as "dangerous" and a "blatant abuse of power," saying the individuals had not been publicly named and that their legal status remained unclear.

Since the launch of the US-Israeli war on Iran on 28 February, Bahrain has escalated a sweeping

domestic crackdown tied to alleged support for Tehran and opposition to the country's western alignments.

Authorities have reportedly arrested hundreds of people since then, targeting Shia communities, banning public gatherings, detaining activists, and jailing dissident.

In March, Bahraini authorities tortured Shia activist Mohammad al-Mousawi to death after accusing him of being an Iranian spy, with AP citing witnesses who described signs of beatings, cable whippings, and electrocution burns on his body.

Bahrain has a Shia majority governed by a Sunni ruling dynasty. In 2011 a revolt by Bahrainis was put down only after Saudi Arabia sent troops and state spending was increased.

Now the country is facing severe economic problems, with low oil reserves it can not sell and low cash reserves.

*The Cradle* (edited for space) ★



Bahrain World Trade Centre. Photo: B.alotaby – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)



## Global Briefs

**POLAND:** Polish President Karol Nawrocki said Poland was ready to host US troops withdrawn from Germany in addition to the 10,000 which are already stationed there. Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell acknowledged that the Polish side was ready to provide the necessary infrastructure and financial support for the deployment of US troops. "Poland is prepared to provide the US military with its bases and ranges, warehouses for equipment and weapons, logistics infrastructure, as well as to be part of the costs associated with the deployment of the contingent, including the maintenance of facilities, energy supply and ensuring the daily activities of units," Parnell said.

**SLOVENIA:** National broadcasters in Slovenia, Ireland, Spain, and Iceland will not air the Eurovision song contest this year after deciding to boycott the live event over Israel's participation in the contest. Slovenia's decision follows an earlier announcement that it would not submit a national entry for the competition. "We will not be broadcasting the Eurovision song contest. We will be airing the film series "Voices of Palestine," featuring Palestinian documentaries and feature films," RTV Slovenian's director said.

**ITALY:** Italians have taken to the streets of Rome to express their strong objection to the visit of US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and express their support for the Cuban Revolution. The march was led under slogans "Rubio, Get out of Rome" and "Cuba is not Alone!" The demonstrators rejected the US blockade against Cuba and condemned Rubio's attempt to legitimise US interference and pressure on sovereign nations.

**IOC:** The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has recommended that international federations lift sanctions against Belorussian athletes and teams. In the case of Russia the IOC still maintains restrictions, though it noted that it is reviewing the situation through dialogue with the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) especially following new investigations by the World Anti-Drug Agency (WADA).

**ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA:** Antigua and Barbuda, the twin island Caribbean state, has sworn in a new government under revised constitutional rules that for the first time removed allegiance to the British monarch from the official oath of office. Under the revised wording, elected officials now pledge loyalty to Antigua and Barbuda, its constitution and laws. Despite the reviewed oath Antigua and Barbuda still remains part of the Commonwealth, with the British monarch retaining the role of head of state.

**IRAN:** Iran has created a new government agency to authorise transit and collect taxes from ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz. The decision has raised concerns about freedom of navigation in one of the world's most important maritime corridors. According to data from Lloyd's Life Intelligence, the new authority is called the Persian Gulf Strait Authority and is positioning itself as the sole legitimate institution to grant transit permits to ships passing through the strategic area.

**USA:** The US Department of Energy has announced that it had taken 13.5 kg of highly enriched uranium from a legacy research reactor near Caracas. The operation was reportedly carried out in coordination with the United Kingdom and Venezuelan authorities.

**DPRK:** The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has revised its constitution to define itself as a separate sovereign state, formally ending its policy of eventual reunification with South Korea. According to the revised wording, "The territory of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea includes the territory bordering on the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation to the north and the Republic of Korea to the south, and the territorial sea and airspace established on it." The change means that reunification is regarded as no longer viable, particularly as South Korea deepens its alignment with external powers.



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# Washington bullies Canadian company out of Cuba

**Citing financial and operational pressures from the escalating US economic war against Cuba, Canadian mining company Sherritt International has announced it is suspending its operations on the island. In response, the Canadian Network on Cuba has called on Ottawa to defend Canadian sovereignty by defying Washington's blockade.**

The government of Canada must take immediate and decisive action in defense of Canadian sovereignty, international law and the right of Canadian companies to conduct lawful business free from foreign coercion and intimidation.

The latest escalation of the United States' decades-long economic war against Cuba by the Trump administration – through its 1 May 2026 Executive Order – constitutes yet another illegal attempt to extend US domestic law beyond its borders and impose Washington's unilateral sanctions regime on the entire world. This represents not merely an attack on Cuba, but a direct assault on Canada's sovereignty, on international trade law and on the principle that no state has the right to dictate the economic relations of other nations.

In the wake of the Executive Order, Canadian-based Sherritt International Corporation – one of the most important Canadian investors in Cuba and a key player in Canada's critical minerals sector – announced the suspension of its direct participation in joint venture activities in Cuba, the repatriation of personnel, and warned that financial and operational pressures

stemming from US sanctions may cripple its activities. The resignation of board members and the uncertainty now facing the corporation underscore the chilling effect of Washington's campaign of economic intimidation. This is economic coercion of the highest order.

The United Nations General Assembly has condemned the US blockade against Cuba overwhelmingly and repeatedly for more than three decades. The blockade and its extraterritorial application violate the UN Charter, international law, freedom of navigation and trade, and the sovereign equality of states. Yet Washington continues to intensify this economic siege, now seeking to punish not only Cuba, but also Canadian companies, Canadian workers and Canadian economic interests.

The current escalation is rooted in the infamous Helms-Burton Act of 1996, legislation designed explicitly to internationalise the US blockade by threatening foreign corporations and governments that engage in lawful commerce with Cuba. At the time, Canada recognised the grave danger posed by this unprecedented assertion of extraterritorial jurisdiction and amended the Foreign Extraterritorial Measures Act (FEMA) precisely to counteract Helms-Burton and protect Canadian sovereignty.

*(editor's note: FEMA, if enforced, allows a company or person to use Canadian courts to sue the person who has instituted an action under the Helms-Burton Act. Any Canadian affected by Helms-Burton can recover any*



Sherritt International Corporation, Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, Canada. Photo: Nut Graf – wikipedia.org (CC BY-SA 3.0)

*fine ordered against them, along with legal expenses.)*

The question now is simple and unavoidable: Will Ottawa finally enforce the Foreign Extraterritorial Measures Act?

Canada cannot continue to proclaim opposition to the blockade rhetorically at the United Nations while effectively capitulating to Washington's illegal dictates in practice. The purpose of FEMA was not symbolic. It was enacted to shield Canadian corporations and citizens from precisely this type of US interference.

If the Canadian government fails to act now, FEMA becomes little more than a hollow gesture,

and Canada effectively concedes that US law supersedes Canadian law on Canadian soil.

The attack on Sherritt is particularly revealing. Sherritt operates strategically important nickel and cobalt refining capacity in Alberta – critical minerals essential to the global energy transition and North American industrial supply chains. The irony is staggering: while Washington speaks endlessly about securing critical mineral independence, its policies are actively undermining one of North America's key refining operations because of its relationship with Cuba.

This demonstrates once again that the US blockade is not driven

by “human rights” or “democracy,” but by the long-standing policy and campaign of economic warfare, sabotage and destabilisation aimed at strangling Cuba regardless of the collateral damage inflicted internationally. Canada must choose whether it will defend its sovereignty and uphold international law, or whether it will permit itself to be subordinated to the extraterritorial dictates of a foreign power: whether to join empire or challenge it.

Silence and inaction are not neutrality. They amount to acquiescence.

People's Voice ✪

## Capitalism, anti-anti-fascism and the working class

Dave McKee

**In what can only be described as an acceleration and expansion of the bellicose and dangerous far-right populist movement around the globe, the US government of Donald Trump is reportedly seeking to build an international coalition to oppose the anti-fascist left.**

Washington says US counterterrorism officials are organising a summit in the summer to discuss and develop “strategies to counter the anti-fascist movement.”

White House and State Department officials have described such groups as a “serious threat to national security,” lumping together “anarchists, Marxists and violent extremists.” The State Department claimed these organisations have waged “a terrorist campaign in the United States and across the Western world for decades, involving bombings, beatings, shootings and riots in the service of their extreme agenda.”

The move comes as Trump faces significant domestic opposition to many of his

policies. This includes a sustained two-month popular uprising in Minnesota against violent anti-migrant sweeps by ICE, which ultimately forced the president to back down.

Labelling virtually all opposition as “terrorist” is an alarming escalation in Trump's rhetoric, and it suggests a significant shift in counterterrorism priorities. The fact that the US is trying to internationalise this effort – invites to the summit include Canada, Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Hungary, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, India, and Indonesia – suggests that such a shift may be underway in other countries as well.

Reuters reported that sources within US counter terrorism say the summit will encourage intelligence sharing and common strategies. Other reports suggest that Washington is considering multiple international conferences, beginning in May with a workshop with foreign law enforcement officials in The Hague to “teach them about the dangers of far-left groups and how to counter them.”

The US push comes as right-wing political forces in Canada are also agitating to label dissent as “terrorist.” In a move eerily

reminiscent of the McCarthy era, Conservative MP Garnett Genuis has reportedly asked federal departments and agencies to determine whether any of their employees or members have current or prior association with anti-fascist and anti-racist left movements.

Right-wing politicians and media typically use the term “antifa” to refer to a sweeping range of organisations and movements that oppose fascist, racist and far-right groups.

With such a broad interpretation, virtually any political grouping, however large or small, can be described as “terrorist” or “a threat to national security” and subject to state repression.

This is the desperate response of a system that is in crisis and decay. As capitalism's social contradictions sharpen – evidenced by recurring and deepening social and economic crises, increased inter-imperialist rivalry and competition, and the accelerating drive to militarism and war – an increasingly broad section of the population becomes drawn into opposition and resistance. Cutting off the organisational and political leadership of

this growing movement against capitalism is of utmost importance to the ruling class.

If the commanders of capitalism are indeed planning ahead through their “Anti-anti-fascist summit,” then working people had better start doing the same.

The working-class movement needs to get to work on developing its own independent political action plan, and building up organisations and alliances that can carry it out. This includes working to win more people over to political positions like opposing NATO and other imperialist military alliances, rejecting corporate trade deals and tripartite “social dialogue” with the bosses and their governments, and insisting on the necessity of class struggle.

It also means combatting anti-socialist and anti-communist propaganda, including within labour and “left” movements. Narratives that deny the achievements of the Soviet people, or which draw false distinctions between the Cuban people and the Cuban government, or equate communism with fascism and terror – these kinds of lies are all designed to divide and weaken the working-class movement, and to reinforce the dictatorship of capital over working people.

It's true that capitalism is not always fascist. But fascism is always capitalist – and when capitalism is in crisis, it is anti-anti-fascist. This is what we are seeing now, and this is why the working class – which alone has the power to transform society – must get organised.

People's Voice ✪

## an alarming escalation in Trump's rhetoric

# Eyes on the next global flashpoint: Malacca Strait

Anil Chopra

**The strategic importance of Greater Nicobar, the southernmost and largest of the Nicobar islands of India that dominate the Malacca Strait – a critical maritime chokepoint through which 60% of global trade passes – have once again come into focus due to the turmoil in the Gulf of Hormuz amid the ongoing Iran War.**

Against that backdrop, the Indian government has submitted a draft master plan for developing Greater Nicobar island.

The group of Andaman and Nicobar islands (ANI), governed as a single union territory by the central government of India, covers an area of 8,249 square kilometres. The entire island chain consists of 836 islands, including islets and rocky outcrops, of which about 31 are permanently inhabited.

Located 1,300 kilometres southeast of the Indian mainland, these territories are India's premier maritime and air outpost, offering immense strategic leverage in the Indian Ocean. They act as a crucial bridge between South and Southeast Asia and as a strategic gateway for India into the Malacca Strait, a crucial shipping route connecting the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. The strait is the busiest in the world, with over 94,000 vessels passing through every year.

The Nicobar islands are instrumental for India in monitoring shipping lanes and help to extend its military reach. They serve as a key bulwark of India's Act East Policy against the growing influence of China in the region. The islands act as a permanent air and naval base, facilitating power projection and rapid military deployment in the eastern and northern Indian Ocean. They support comprehensive maritime domain awareness, and also provide a first line of defence against both traditional and non-conventional threats such as illegal fishing, drug trafficking, and piracy.

The islands provide 300,000 sq km of additional Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), rich with underwater mineral and hydrocarbon resources. Sustainable power projects are designed to enhance both economic growth and strategic defence capability.

The plan looks to utilise island's strategic location next to the very crucial and busy sea-lane, the Malacca Strait.

Situated near the Malacca Strait, these projects aim to reduce dependence on foreign ports (like Singapore or Colombo) for container handling.

40% of the land covered in the project has been set aside as "urbanisable." The rest has been allocated to "special."

RT.com 

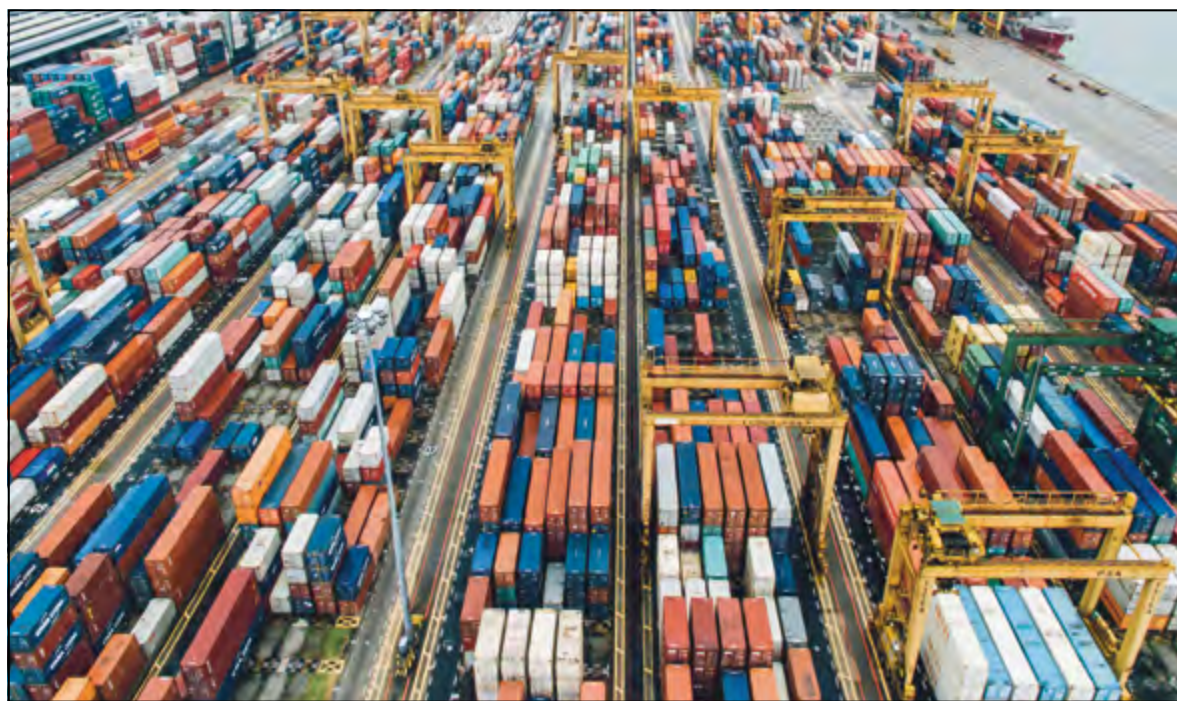


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## Uncertain

One thing is certain, there's a lot of uncertainty about. It's a problem for our pro-US 'alliance' ALP government. On the one hand they never want to criticise the US. On the other hand, everybody can see that the 'alliance' doesn't help this country and that the US doesn't care what happens to other nations.

Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Defence Minister Richard Marles are taking refuge in uncertainty. She says we live in "uncertain times" and he says it's a "time of global uncertainty." What both of them mean is that Israel and the US are stuck in a war of choice that they don't know how to get out of. Nobody knows how the war will end, but in the meantime 'uncertainty' provides Wong and Marles with a way to say that things are stuffed without having to admit that the US is a hot mess.

## Actors (bad)

About \$3 billion dollars worth of home loans have been obtained fraudulently and have been used by organised crime. You might think that this sounds like a lot of money and a systemic problem. You'd be right, but then again, you're not a Westpac executive who has blamed it on "some bad actors." No, they're not talking about the cast of *Home and Away*, just shrugging off a longstanding problem that has something to do with banks ignoring Royal Commission recommendations.

## Administrative error

We know what this means – someone writes the wrong date on a form, you get two copies of a letter from the government when you should get one, that kind of thing. For former Foreign Minister and (thankfully now former) Australian National University Chancellor Julie Bishop, 'administrative error' explains how she had two university appointed staff to help her do her chancellor job who also worked for her private business on the university's money. Whoops.

## However

Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore says she has "long supported the principles of peaceful assembly, protest and freedom of speech." That's terrific. What a nice Lord Mayor!

"However," Moore adds "these rights must always be balanced with a responsibility to ensure public safety and respect for all members of our diverse community."

Oh. Like the 'but' in 'I'm not racist *but* [racist thing]' statements, Clover Moore's 'however' shows she doesn't really believe anything that comes before the word 'however.' Specifically, if you want to even talk about the "globalise the intifada" slogan, you can't do it in the freedom-of-speech-loving Sydney Council's buildings.

## Ethical conflict

We're not sure what this means, but it sounds serious. For former Nine papers editor Michael Gawenda, it means that Melbourne journalist Jeff Sparrow shouldn't teach on a journalism course and oppose an ongoing genocide. Sparrow had signed an open letter calling for the PM to demand an end to Israel's illegal occupation and apartheid regime. For Gawenda, this is an "ethical conflict." Pick a lane, Jeff!

## Splurge

Any large and sudden spending you don't like is a splurge. What makes the word weaselly is what you don't apply it to. *Australian Financial Review* columnist and right think tank director Michael Stutchbury has had a go at the NDIS. It's wasteful, it's unproductive – not enough people with disabilities are getting into the workforce to justify spending money on them.

We agree that the NDIS could be run more efficiently – in fact it should be nationalised, thereby cutting out all the ticket clippers who come between public funds and people with disabilities, but that's not what Michael is upset about, it's more the whole 'spending money on people with disabilities' that bothers him. What Stutchbury *doesn't* call a "splurge" is the AUKUS program, which has spent billions on getting Australia exactly no submarines.

# Nakba 2026: displacement and pillage

Graham Holton

**The anniversary of the Nakba – meaning ‘catastrophe’ in Arabic – is on 15 May, the day after Israel declared independence on 14 May 1948. It marks the profound impact on the Palestinian people’s mass displacement and dispossession during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, and the resulting loss of their homes, land, and way of life. Before the war Palestine was a wealthy multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society. The Nakba remains a deeply traumatic event in Palestinians’ collective memory and continues to shape their struggle for justice and their right to return to their homes.**

## LOOT

The Nakba was not only a humanitarian catastrophe it was also a massive transfer of wealth and productive assets. Arab and pro-Palestinian researchers and organisations estimate that long-term economic losses associated with the 1948 Nakba, and subsequent dispossession of Palestinians today amounts to US\$780 billion. In *Valuing Palestinian Losses in Today’s Dollars* (2001), economist Atif Kubursi calculated the value of confiscated land, homes, businesses, agricultural production, infrastructure, natural resources, income, investment growth, and broader intergenerational economic losses. Kubursi’s calculations have been updated to include compound growth.

In *Palestine Hijacked: How Zionism Forged an Apartheid State from River to Sea* (2023), Thomas Suarez writes that “Israel took over an intact, ready-made country – houses, assets, money, orchards, quarries, 10,000 acres of vineyards, 25,000 acres of citrus groves, 10,000 business establishments, olive groves, and machinery.” More recently Adam Raz’s meticulously researched *Loot: How Israel Stole Palestinian Property*

(2024) clearly demonstrates how Zionist forces and Jewish settlers violently looted the well-furnished homes, stocked businesses, farms and orchards of forcibly displaced Palestinians.

One Zionist company commander wrote in his diary: “It is hard to imagine how much wealth people found in all those many homes.” Another described the frenzy with which soldiers and civilians looted as a “debauched atmosphere.” They helped themselves to whatever they saw and took everything that could be removed: expensive china, Persian rugs, pianos, refrigerators, and furniture.

Nearly 750,000 Palestinians were displaced during and after the 1948 war. Their wealth was seized or transferred to Jewish settlers under Israeli ‘Absentee Property’ laws. Hundreds of Palestinian villages were depopulated, plundered, and destroyed, their names erased from Israeli maps. Ever since, Palestinian refugees have been excluded from repossessing their former properties, their economic assets seized. Property restitution and compensation claims remain central issues in the Palestinian refugee question and in interpretations of United Nations Resolution 194.

Israeli scholars and pro-Israel groups challenged Kubursi’s methodology and economic framing, arguing the estimates rely on speculative long-term projections and compound-growth assumptions over decades. They also argue that in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, Jewish refugees lost their wealth when fleeing Arab countries – as thought the theft and dispossession was some kind of compensation! In 1967 Israeli PM Golda Meir justified Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza for national ‘security’ reasons.

Arab scholars insist the flight of refugees was a deliberate Zionist design to depopulate the Arabs by intimidation, terror, and expulsion. Simha Flapa, founder of the International Center for Peace in



Photo: rawpixel (CCO)

the Middle East, argues in ‘The Palestinian Exodus of 1948’ that the Israeli conquest of areas of the Arab state would have increased the Arab population of Israel by 300,000. The Zionist leaders believed that this would threaten the political stability of the new state of Israel and challenge its Jewish culture. So they encouraged the forcing out of Arabs. Zionists argue that Arabs left on their own accord, denying all responsibility for the Nakba.

This year marks the 78th anniversary of Nakba Day, thereby continuing to symbolise the enduring impact of displacement, loss of homeland, and the ongoing quest for Palestinian rights and recognition. It maintains the memory of the ongoing injustice suffered by the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and the hope for a return to their ancestor’s lands.

## Nakba 78: Exposing the ‘invincibility’ of the ‘Zionist State’

Marion Kawas

**As we approach Nakba 78, the Palestinian nation and people stand before you undefeated, unbowed, and with a new generation ready to demand their birthright. Yes, the price they have paid has been high, but it has also fully exposed the lie of Zionist and US invincibility. From Gaza to al-Quds, to diaspora communities all over the globe, Palestinians are proud of their Resistance and existence. And so they should be.**

My father and mother-in-law were both typical of the generation that was catapulted into a reality of violent dispossession and occupation that changed their lives forever. Living and working in Yafa in 1948 (allegedly under “British Mandate” protection), they were forced to flee for their lives when the Zionist militias attacked. My mother-in-law was pregnant and only remembers the bullets that were whizzing over their heads.

As the late Palestinian national poet Mahmoud Darwish wrote back in September 1988 in “Those Who Pass Between Fleeting Words”:

“We have the past here  
We have the first cry of life  
We have the present, the present and the future  
We have this world here, and the hereafter  
So leave our country  
Our land, our sea  
Our wheat, our salt, our wounds  
From Everything, and leave”

We should study the lessons learnt over the past few years to guide us through the new realities of the declining US-Israeli hegemony in West Asia. The prophecy of the late Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah has been proven correct: “Israel” is indeed “frailer than a spider’s web.”

*Almayadeen* (edited for space)

## They helped themselves to whatever they saw and took everything that could be removed.



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