CPA
The Workers' Weekly
Guardian
#2217 30 November 2026
$5
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www.cpa.org.au
ISSN 1325-295X

Labor's defence laws: 'A war against Australians'



CPA comrades joined in the global protests against the AUKUS pact on November 22.

Peter Farmer

With no debate and precious little media coverage, Labor has joined the Coalition and One Nation to pass an authoritarian set of security laws.

Only nine senators opposed the Bill, rushed through parliament with very little scrutiny. Independent senator David Pocock, one of the nine who opposed it, called the bill "truly heinous." Greens leader David Shoebridge accused the government of "going to war against Australians."

POWERS

Under the Bill, the Minister for Defence, a military contractor, a senior public servant or any senior military officer the Minister delegates to has the power to declare a "defence security zone." They can do this to any part of Australia. They can even make a mobile 'zone.' They don't have to publicly list any of these zones, meaning you could be arrested for trespassing on a zone you didn't know existed.

There's no transparency to this process. The Minister can extend the powers of 'defence security officials' to almost anyone. Once they've done that, people can be arrested for failing to comply with orders issued by 'area managers' or 'defence security officials.'

The Bill has a very loose definition of what a 'defence purpose' is – it can include "cooperation with foreign countries, foreign authorities or international bodies; and the provision of support by, or support to, foreign countries, foreign authorities or international bodies."

Literally anyone can be given the power to search and detain people and to override state and territory laws. Defence officials can even jail people for the 'risk' that they might do something!

AUKUS

One connection with the AUKUS pact is this: Defence Minister Richard Marles has guaranteed that any high-level waste that needs to be stored will go on Defence land. Thanks to this new Bill, Defence Land can be anywhere the Minister likes.

Farmland, Indigenous land, anyone's private property, any place can become Defence Land on the Minister's say-so.

If anyone wants to protest the decision, they can expect jail, heavy fines or both.

The legislation gives total power to the Defence Minister and anyone, including foreign companies, contractors the power to override local laws.

Senator Pocock asked the Labor government "what kind of country are you creating?" One where the rule of law does not apply to the Defence Minister or anyone they've extended their powers to is the answer. Labor is creating a country where nowhere is safe.

FOREIGN FORCES

A lot of the Bill is about what a "foreign force" can do. Almost all foreign forces in Australia are from the US military. This legislation is designed to help the US military do what it likes.

Under the Bill, US forces can operate wherever the Defence Minister makes a "capability declaration." This could mean testing weapons, transporting military equipment or "declared conduct." The minister would only have to be satisfied, in part, "that the impact (if any) of the conduct on persons in Australia will be reasonable and proportionate."

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Literally anyone can be given the power to search and detain people and to override state and territory laws.

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COP31: held hostage by oil mafia

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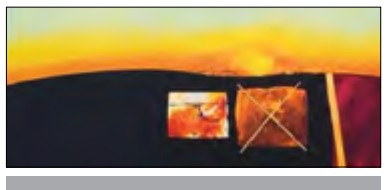
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Guardian

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SANCTION ISRAEL

The UK has decided to start sanctioning illegal Israeli settlements on the West Bank. All Israeli settlements on the West Bank are illegal because they're in someone else's country. Britain is late on this – Ireland announced sanctions of the settlements in July, and there are a range of sanctions from other nations on the settlements, on Israeli companies and on Israel politicians.

It's good that the UK is doing this. The settlements are on Palestinian land, and the settlers have ramped up violent and often murderous attacks on Palestinians recently. Many will say that the UK is not going far enough. They're right, but shamefully, these latest sanctions are better than Australia, which has only sanctioned some extremist Israeli politicians and made feeble noises of protest.

What's needed is sanctions on Israel, not just sanctions on particular businesses, politicians or areas. Israel should be made aware that it's an international pariah. As such, it should face the full range of international opposition. Israeli trade should be sanctioned. The embassy should be closed and all travel suspended.

Israel is an apartheid state, with separate roads for Israelis and Palestinians in many areas. Israelis love to call themselves "the only democracy in the Middle East," but a huge number of people under Israeli control cannot vote.

Israel is practicing a genocide – the deliberate extermination of a people. This is no exaggeration, but the considered judgment of UN experts in the topic. Israel has deliberately killed over 75,000 people in attacks on Gaza and is engaging in murderous attacks on Palestinians on the West Bank on an almost daily basis.

Israel doesn't do these things in isolation. The apartheid state is working as an instrument of the US in the Middle East, giving the US leverage in the area. The US underwrites Israel, providing $3.3 billion, almost AU$5 billion, in the last recorded year. The US also provides Israel with military hardware.

Australia is physically a long way from the Middle East, but when it comes to Israel's genocidal campaign, this country is in the thick of it. Australia is part of the system that provides weapons to the Israeli 'Defence' Force. Australia's military has multi-million dollar contracts with Israeli military contractors.

When it comes to diplomacy, Australia does the bare minimum. A few extremist politicians are sanctioned in a way that won't bother them at all. Australia has officially described Palestine as "occupied," which briefly infuriated the local pro-Israel lobby, but had no effect on Israel internationally.

Australians offer support in other ways. Australian Zionist organisations are free to host IDF soldiers coming here for rest and recreation. Up to one thousand Australians have served in the Israeli 'Defence' Force since October 2023. Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade merely told its staff to encourage anyone who wants to serve in a foreign military to "carefully consider their legal status." It should be illegal to serve with the IDF.

The UK's sanctions on illegal West Bank settlements are a step in the right direction, but they're only a step. Shamefully, it's a step the Albanese government isn't up to. The Labor government does the bare minimum it thinks will keep critics quiet.

The Communist Party of Australia supports the full range of sanctions on Israel and supports the Boycott, Disinvest and Sanctions campaign. We need to close the embassy, stop dealing with Israeli military contractors, and crack down on Australians who serve in the IDF. It's about a genocide, and it's time to get real.

Labor's defence laws: 'A war against Australians'

Continued from page 1

The minister can also allow operations to ignore specified state, territory or Commonwealth laws. What the US military does can be kept secret. The Bill allows the minister to make a temporary capability declaration not a "legislative instrument." That means the 'capability' does not have to be publicly listed.

ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

There are three kinds of 'defence zone'.

An 'ordinary defence security zone', can be essentially any area in Australia.

A temporary or mobile defence security zone, is somewhere where equipment, supplies or personnel "of the Defence Force, the Department, a foreign force or a defence entity are, or are to be, located" or "movable."

This means that if the US or Australian military is moving through where you live, the minister can declare that place a temporary or mobile defence security zone. If you are there and the military think you're in the way, you can be attacked by dogs or be arrested and jailed.

An emergency defence security zone, can be declared anywhere if the minister "is satisfied that an emergency situation exists or is likely to arise." The minister could declare a protest area an emergency security zone. An emergency situation "may relate to a risk to the safety or security of [Australian defence personnel, US forces or department officials]." The duration of the emergency period is 72 hours, but the minister can easily extend it.

The minister can declare any defence security zone a 'special defence security zone.' This means that the penalties for trespass or action in the zone are more severe. The Bill lists Pine Gap in this category, but the minister can declare any defence security zone (except for mobile or emergency) "special."

Anyone who is caught inside one of the special zones flying a drone, taking a photo or even sketching the premises or "a person or thing entering or exiting" will face seven years' imprisonment, a $152,880 fine or both. 'Absolute liability' applies to this Bill, meaning people can be charged even if they weren't aware they committed an offence.

DECEPTIVE

Labor rushed the Bill in. The legislation bears Richard Marles' name, but was introduced by another minister, the assistant Defence Minister Peter Khalil. This is a common tactic when a government wants to avoid attention. Khalil gave a brief introduction to the Bill to Caucus, assuring MPs that the aim was merely to make it easier to prevent drone attacks. Labor and the Coalition worked to push the Bill through one day after it was introduced. One Nation voted in favour.

Greens leader David Shoebridge called the legislation the worst he's ever seen, saying that the Bill is aimed at Australians:

"You want to criminalise and jail and punish your fellow Australians because they might disagree with you – they might have a different view about the way this world goes. And let's be clear: this legislation is going to war against democracy; it's going to war against our own civil rights. And you, the three war parties here, are going to war against your fellow Australians."

"And all for what? So that you can get AUKUS going up, or you can get another US military base going up, or you can keep Pine Gap going?"

The claim that the legislation is aimed at drone attacks is very unconvincing. Labor doesn't need these sort of powers to deter anyone using a drone for malicious purposes. The Bill seems obviously aimed at people who inconvenience or embarrass the government by protesting or just by being somewhere the Defence Minister, the US military or private contractors don't want them to be.

Contact your MP and let them know you oppose this assault on Australians.

The Communist Party of Australia fights for an independent Australia and against the AUKUS pact.

Quote of the Week

"I often get asked by journalists, why does One Nation get so much media coverage? And I would turn that back on the journalists. Why do you keep writing about them and bigging them up?"

Victorian Greens leader Ellen Sandell pointing to the mainstream media role in One Nation's 'rise'

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Donations

On 21 November, the Communist Party of Australia officially opened its new headquarters in Marrickville. Many thanks to the CPA's Belloyannis Branch for their generous donation towards moving costs.

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DP World fails to notify workers of asbestos contamination

The Victorian Branch of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) has called for an urgent WorkSafe Victoria investigation into DP World Logistics after documents obtained through Freedom of Information (FOI) revealed asbestos and other potentially cancer-causing contaminants in soil at its West Melbourne container facility.

The documents raise serious questions about what DP World knew, when it knew it, and why workers were allegedly kept in the dark while exposed to significant dust conditions.

Soil testing commissioned by DP World identified asbestos-containing material in a western soil stockpile, alongside elevated concentrations of benzo(a)pyrene and nickel.

DP World received the results by 20 May 2026. Almost six months later, workers have still not been formally notified.

MUA Victoria Branch Assistant Secretary Aarin Moon said workers had been denied basic information about hazards that could affect their long-term health.

"Workers were turning up every day, breathing dust from soil subsequently found to contain asbestos and other hazardous contaminants. DP World had the test results, but the workers were left in the dark.

"This is a disgrace. A multinational corporation has a basic obligation to tell workers when dangerous materials are identified in their workplace. Workers' health must come before corporate reputation."

SERIOUS QUESTIONS

The documents also raise questions about DP World's disclosures to the Environment Protection Authority (EPA).

DP World initially provided the regulator with test results from the eastern soil stockpile but did not supply the western stockpile results, which identified asbestos, until the EPA specifically requested them.

Moon said the circumstances demanded a full investigation.

"Why did DP World provide the EPA with one set of results but not the results identifying asbestos in the western stockpile? Was this an oversight or a deliberate attempt to withhold critical information from the regulator?

"Workers and the public deserve answers. This cannot be brushed aside or buried in corporate paperwork."

DP World took control of the Container Park 2 facility on Coode Road, West Melbourne, in May 2025. Earthmoving and road base works followed, with workers raising concerns about excessive dust blowing across the site.

The MUA first contacted the EPA on 5 March 2026 and lodged a further notification on 29 April. EPA officers attended the site on 18 May.

The contaminated soil was reportedly removed around 26 May and disposed of as Category C contaminated waste. However, questions remain about whether contaminated material could still be present in road base and surrounding soils.

While the identification of asbestos-containing material does not establish that workers inhaled asbestos fibres, the dust conditions and contamination findings demand an independent occupational exposure assessment.

"Removing contaminated soil does not make the problem disappear," Moon said.

"Workers have a fundamental right to know what they may have been exposed to. They deserve proper answers, independent testing and appropriate health monitoring. No worker should have to gamble with their health because a company wants to avoid scrutiny."

The MUA is demanding:

1. An urgent WorkSafe Victoria investigation into DP World's handling of the contamination and its workplace safety obligations.
2. Immediate notification of all potentially affected workers and disclosure of relevant testing results.
3. Independent occupational hygiene and exposure assessments.
4. Comprehensive testing of remaining road base, surrounding soils and areas disturbed by earthworks.
5. Full disclosure of environmental reports, including assessments undertaken before DP World took control of the facility.
6. An investigation into DP World's communications with the EPA and the delayed provision of the western stockpile results.
7. Appropriate health assessments and ongoing monitoring for potentially affected workers, guided by independent medical advice.

The MUA has formally referred the matter to WorkSafe Victoria and is continuing to examine FOI documents and obtain independent technical advice.

Moon said the union would not let the matter disappear.

"DP World must explain what it knew, why workers were not told and why the EPA was not initially given the full picture.

"This is about corporate accountability and workers' basic right to a safe workplace. DP World can spend its time protecting its reputation, but we will spend ours protecting workers.

"We will keep fighting until the truth comes out and every affected worker gets the answers and protections they deserve."

Maritime Union of Australia

South Australia data centre backlash

Maximus M

On 15 November, around 300 South Australians met in front of the South Australian parliament to demand cancellation of the construction of the Quantum DC proposal data centre.

In the growing AI race, Australia doesn't want to be left behind, with 30 different data centres being proposed in SA alone. Locals from all over South Australia came, whether it was around Tungkillo, Murray Bridge or Kangaroo Island to demand the end of AI Data centres.

The growing resistance to both national and state government promotion of AI Data centres continues, with a growing coalition of Right-Wing Populists, Liberals, Moderates and Progressives.

The most organised movement originated in Tungkillo, where the Quantum DC data centre is proposed to be built. It would be the largest such centre in South Australia.

Having such a large data centre has caused mass backlash from the locals, as adequate information hasn't been provided. Quantum DC has refused three times to meet with the local population of Tungkillo and has paused plans for construction due to organised opposition.

If it goes ahead, this would have massive environmental consequences. The construction of such a data centre would take 120 hectares of prime farmland, which could be used for agricultural purposes instead. This would also have the impact of damaging the biodiversity of the Adelaide Hills area (which contains 1,500 native plant species and 450 native fauna species, including about 75% of South Australia's bird species).

The proposed data centre would consume almost as much water as the entire state of South Australia uses yearly. The water consumption could also negatively impact the River Murray.

The South Australian Labor government has criticised Quantum DC's handling of engagement with the community while calling for stricter regulations concerning AI Data centres. Despite this, members of the Labor government did not meet with protesters. Instead their space was filled by opposition parties, including Greens, Liberals, and some far-right populists who all spoke in front of parliament in support of protesters demands.

Right wing support for the protests is very opportunistic with the Liberals desperate for popularity after their embarrassing defeat in the recent State Election, and far right groups, consistently anti-worker, wanting to burnish their anti-establishment credentials.

Another issue is power, with the Albanese Labor government backing down from initial plans to force data centre operators to provide extra renewable power, leaving the decision to state governments, many of whom have crumbled in the face of pressure from the data centre companies.

There will be more protests on this issue, both in South Australia and around the country.



Pro-Israel groups get petty

Peter Farmer

The Jewish Council was formed in 2024 because, as CEO Sarah Schwarz puts it "we wanted to organise against Israel's destruction of Gaza and insist that our Jewish identities belonged to us, not to Israel or its defenders."

Since then, the Council has done a lot of work establishing that being Jewish does not entail mindless unconditional support for the actions of the State of Israel. It has raised concern about real antisemitism, as distinct from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry's line that any criticism of Israel or support for Palestinian people is antisemitism.

The founders expected pushback, but not dirty tricks. As the Jewish Council started getting recognition in the media and becoming a force to be reckoned with, the zionist Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) bought the domain names jewishcouncil.au and jewishcouncil.org.au before the council could and redirected them to their page.

Recently Schwarz says, the council discovered that ECAJ was seeking to register a trademark for a name that was almost identical to the Jewish Council's name.

ECAJ's deadline to finish filing their application has lapsed, giving the Jewish Council little time to get in its own trademark application. To get the application in, the Jewish Council has had to raise $19,500 very quickly to cover legal and associated fees.

Schwarz has called the ECAJ buying domain names and registering similar names to the council's "a petty attempt to silence our message."

Collective agreements, better pay rises

FK

Workers covered by collective agreements continue to get better pay outcomes than those on individual contacts, according to the latest ABS wages data.

Data for the September quarter shows that annual wages growth remains steady at 3.5%, tracking behind the current annual inflation rate of 4.3%.

Workers on collective agreements are securing higher wage increases, with wage growth averaging 4.0%, broadly in line with price pressures.

Workers who have their pay set by individual arrangements with their employer secured pay rises of just 3.1%, dragging down average wage growth.

Among those securing higher wages, are frontline workers covered by collective agreements, including nurses, midwives, and police.

The Annual Wage Review increase of 4.75% from 1 June 2026, that unions won, is another key driver of wages growth for nearly three million lower paid workers around the country.

ACTU Secretary, Melissa Donnelly says that the data shows that workers on union negotiated pay deals are better off. She says that "workers can negotiate a collective agreement by banding together with others in their workplace or sector, backed by support from the relevant union.

"The power imbalance between an individual worker trying to negotiate directly with their employer means it is no surprise that pay outcomes for those on individual contracts are so poor, compared to those covered by collective agreements.

"Australian workers on individual contracts have less protection from global inflationary pressures and high supermarket, housing and energy prices that are impacting the entire community."

Donnelly is not wrong about the power imbalance between individuals and employers and the importance of banding together, but there's a lot more to be done to enable workers to band together effectively. It's important for workers to be active in their unions and to show up when industrial action is an issue. The Communist Party of Australia supports active union membership and the autonomy of effective unions like the CFMEU.

Education union action on disability cuts

The Australian Education Union (AEU) Victorian Branch has launched legal action in the Federal Court of Australia in response to the Victorian government's decision to cut public school disability funding and the failure to consult with principal, teacher, and education support employee members of the AEU.

Unless the government reverses their decision, the cuts to Disability Inclusion program funding will result in support being pulled from around 7,000 Victorian students – one in every six students currently receiving disability inclusion support at a public school from 2028. This is on top of cuts from the start of 2027 of $3,400 to the funding allocated to individual students with the highest needs in mainstream schools and a further 2.5% reduction in the level of funding.

AEU President Justin Mullaly said the Victorian government should abandon their cuts immediately and that they have failed to meet their obligation under the Victorian Government Schools Agreement (VGSA) to consult on the cuts, which constitutes a major change to the Disability Inclusion program with a likely significant effect on employment conditions, including the potential for the government to sack public school workers.

"The decision to cut funding for students with disability attending public schools is an affront to those students and their families and will have a significant impact on public school principals, teachers, and education support employees.

Australian Education Union

Something to say?

Write to the Editor!

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Dingo bytes

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) is alarmed by reports that the government is considering an AI regulatory regime that would provide specific protections for the music industry while possibly excluding other creative sectors from equivalent safeguards.

MEAA supports laws that maintain and strengthen copyright protections and recognise the importance of ensuring Australian rights holders, musicians and all other creative and media workers retain control over how their work is used by artificial intelligence systems.

But those same rights must apply to all creative and media workers.

MEAA Acting Chief Executive Adam Portelli said the government should be held to the commitment Prime Minister Anthony Albanese made on 15 July this year.

The Prime Minister said that "no company should use Australian books, music, art or news to build or train AI without the artist's control of the price and value of their work." If that principle is right for musicians, it is right for journalists, performers, screen workers, photographers, writers, and every other creative and media worker.

Portelli said any AI framework must protect workers, not just rights holders.

"This cannot simply be a deal between governments, technology companies and corporate rights holders. The workers whose creativity, skill and labour create the value in the first place must be included in any solution. Even if rights holders in the music industry are protected from AI scraping, its still possible, and even encouraged, for them to do commercial deals with AI. In that case it is almost certain that musicians would have no say over these deals and receive no benefit".

MEAA is particularly concerned that the reported model contains no clear proposal for Equitable Remuneration (ER) for creative workers.

Portelli said freelance journalists and screen workers could be particularly disadvantaged if protections are not extended beyond the music industry.

"Many freelance journalists do not retain copyright ownership of their work despite creating it. Any new framework must ensure freelance creators are protected and are not excluded from compensation when their work is used to train AI systems.

"Any carve-out that excludes screen content risks undermining residual and secondary payment arrangements that performers and other screen workers rely on. Those hard-won rights and income streams must be protected."

The government's reported recognition that music requires protection demonstrated that licensing and consent were both possible and necessary.

"Anthony Albanese said that 'anything less, is theft.' Those are strong words and they establish a clear principle. Australian creative workers should not be asked to surrender rights that the Prime Minister himself has said they must retain.

"We support maintaining and improving Australia's copyright framework and we support strong protections for the music industry. But those protections must apply to all creative sectors, and must include remuneration for all the workers in those industries."

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: Pacific Equity Partners. The private equity firm funds Australia's second largest private hospital operator Healthe Care. Nurses in the Hunter valley have had to go on strike to force the employer to commit to enforceable staffing ratios and a pay offer that addresses the cost-of-living struggles our nurses and midwives face.

It's the third major stop work action by nurses and midwives working at Healthe Care sites across NSW, as they escalate their protected industrial action campaign in a bid to send Healthe Care a strong message that patients and staff deserve better.

The private operator's latest wage offer is well below inflation and doesn't address rising cost of living pressures. In addition, the operator is still refusing to commit to nurse-to-patient ratios.

Pacific Equity Partners' website boasts about 'transformational profit improvement.'

COP31: held hostage by oil mafia

M Santos

The 31st UN annual climate summit (COP31) ended with a big win for fossil fuel and other greenhouse gas industries and a devastating loss for the peoples of the world and the planet. The meeting, held in Antalya, Turkey, failed to reach agreement on a pact to take urgent and necessary action on climate change.

COP31 took place at a time when climate change is set to overshoot the Paris (COP21) target of 1.5°C by 2030. That target, set in 2015, was based on the science.

The year 2026 has continued the streak of record global temperatures, melting ice and rising sea levels, with a very strong El Niño event set to unleash even more heat and extreme weather well into 2027, according to a new report from the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

Addressing the opening session, WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo said, "the past 12 years are the 12 warmest on record. From January to September 2026, the global average temperature was about 1.47°C above pre-industrial levels."

Saulo warned that "2027 is likely to set a new global temperature record."

The world is on track to heat 2.6°C to 2.8°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of this century with catastrophic consequences.

It is not too late to reverse this overshoot, but time is running out.

COP31 is the only such international climate forum with 195 country participants. The US was notably absent, thanks to President Trump's withdrawal. The tasks before it included:

- Acknowledging the world is overshooting 1.5°C
- Recognising that fossil fuels are driving climate change
- Adopting a pathway for a just transition to safe renewables
- Boosting finance for developing countries facing the worst of climate change while having contributed the least to it.

There were four drafts of the final decision, each one watered down to becoming almost meaningless, with the Saudi-led group of petro-states and Russia leading the charge.

After negotiations had continued for two days and nights beyond the scheduled finish time, agreement could not be reached. COP decisions are based on consensus.

An irreconcilably divided summit failed humanity dismally. The EU, Marshall Islands, Germany, Ireland, the UK and other nations refused to adopt a statement that failed to even reaffirm previous decisions regarding the phasing out of fossil fuels, a just transition, or financing of mitigation and adaptation for developing and less developed nations.

LACK OF LEADERSHIP

"Recognition of the dangers of overshoot should have shaken leaders into action, instead COP31 saw a shameful lack of urgency and leadership from the co-presidencies Turkey and Australia," Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland said.

The two presidents, Australia's environment and climate minister Chris Bowen and his Turkish counterpart Murat Kurum, lacked leadership in their addresses to the opening session.

PM Albanese, while promoting the plight of Pacific Island nations, failed to mention the words 'fossil fuels' let alone make a commitment to cease approving new fossil fuel projects in his address. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had the gall to announce the opening of two huge new oilfields in his speech.

Apart from being short on credibility, coming from two states with economies heavily reliant on fossil fuel production, they failed to push for a decision based on the science. (See *Guardian* #2216, "End fossil fuel addiction.")

'OIL MAFIA'

Panama's environment minister Juan Carlos Navarro said the world was "held hostage by oil mafia," adding "we are in love with our kidnappers."

In total, 103 big polluter groups and industry associations were admitted to COP31, some embedded in national delegations. They included fossil fuel, Big Tech, industrial agriculture, and food industry representatives.

Analysis by the Kick Big Polluters Out coalition shows that 30 of the top 100 banks that fund fossil fuels were also at COP31, collectively representing more than US$2.2 trillion (AU$3.32bn) in fossil fuel financing from 2021-2025.

Corporate Europe Observatory noted 50 fossil fuel industry representatives on Italy's delegation and 17 on France's.

"The same corporations profiting from a system that drives inequalities, destroys forests, fuels emissions and confines billions of animals cannot be allowed to dictate the terms of its transformation. Climate negotiations must not become a boardroom for Big Polluters," Elodie Guillon, World Animal Protection said.

"COP31 has failed to deliver any meaningful outcomes on climate action. Shame on rich polluting countries for once again turning their backs on communities fighting for survival in a climate crisis they did little to cause," Oxfam International's Climate Change Policy Lead, Nafkote Dabi, said.



A protester being restrained during the evening plenary. Photo: Mike Muzurakis/IISD/ENB

"Shame on the presidencies for prioritising profits and ego over progress. And shame on all the countries that stubbornly blocked and distracted from discussions meant to deliver crucial funding to people watching their homes swallowed by floods, their crops wither in droughts, and their lives upended by deadly heat.

"Instead of implementation, COP31 has delivered yet another victory for rich polluting countries and fossil fuel interests. The co-presidencies – who both remain heavily invested in fossil fuels and are profiting from climate destruction – attempted to broker a decision without a single mention of fossil fuels in favour of false solutions."

"Rich countries, including EU member states, came to COP31 with empty pockets, alongside Australia, who handed wealthy countries and coal, oil, and gas corporations another free pass to shirk their responsibilities to pay their historical debts. This failure betrays millions of people trying to protect their communities, recover from climate disasters, and prepare for the next crisis."

BYPASSING UN

Frustration over fossil fuels at COP31 is leading more nations to go outside official talks to progress phase-out efforts.

For example, more than 75 countries and 180 businesses signed the electrification pledge promoted by Bowen, for 35 % of energy to be electricity by 2035 – the '35 by 35' pledge. Even this pledge lacks force, failing to commit to how the electricity is produced – by fossil fuels or renewables.

"As we suffer the second-hottest year on record and with 2027 projected to shatter records at 1.7°C above pre-industrial levels, every fraction of a degree warmer is a matter of life and death.... Rich countries cannot afford to let climate talks fail. COP31's breakdown leaves communities battling climate breakdown even more exposed to the deadly impacts of extreme heat, floods, and droughts," Dabi added.

BETRAYAL

Rachitaa Gupta, global coordinator of the Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice, said: "The cause of the climate crisis is clear, as well as who should pay for it. What's remaining is the global north's political resolve to provide this finance. The moral bankruptcy of the global north is very visible to all of us in the global south."

"Rich countries' failure on finance [for poorer nations] is a historic disgrace. They expect developing countries to shoulder the cost of a global transition while refusing to provide the means to deliver it. This is not a failure of technical negotiations. It is a shameless abdication of political responsibility."

Mohamed Adow, the director of the Power Shift Africa think-tank, accused rich countries of offering "crumbs" to a fund for the developing world to adapt to extreme weather. Only $50m has been pledged so far, compared with $135m last year.

"We have money for wars but not to save communities," Ambassador of the Marshall Islands Albon Ishoda said.

"For us, it's about existence."

"But the fight is far from over. To those disillusioned by the COP process, talks riddled with distractions and false solutions, this year must not erode the legitimacy of a space that brings the Global South a seat at the table. People in rich countries need to use the next months to hold their governments accountable," Dabi concluded.

"Rich countries are offering crumbs to the adaptation fund, while blocking the negotiations that should provide the money countries need," he said. "Listening to ministers praise the adaptation fund before giving next to nothing, you have to wonder how they expect it to do the work they say is so important," Adow said.

"Nothing short of a profound shift from fossil fuel economies to human rights-based economies is acceptable. Frontline communities, environmental human rights defenders and Indigenous Peoples cannot endure another cycle of empty promises while their lives, lands and livelihoods are destroyed. A just transition, inclusive of a full fossil fuels phaseout and adequate climate finance from developed countries to least-responsible ones, must happen now to prevent the worst", Hugo Gabbero, Head of the International Federation for Human Rights Defenders Protection Desk said.

COP32 will be a test of whether the UN process can be reformed or has a future.

"We have money for wars but not to save communities."

Communist Party opens new headquarters

Peter Farmer



They sang, they socialised, they spoke. After a lot of work by comrades from all around Australia, the move from the Party's old HQ, Peter Symons House in Surry Hills to new premises in Marrickville is complete.

On 21 November, communists, supporters and friends gathered to inaugurate the new premises. Guests included distinguished representatives from the People's Republic of China's NSW consulate, at least three *Guardian* editors, and a cartoonist.

Comrades were entertained by classic songs from NSW's Arthur Martin and South Australia's Dylan C.

Speakers included Elly Hulm, CPA General Secretary Andrew Irving, and Party President Vinnie Molina, who reminded those present that the building will be a living home for a living political party. The headquarters will be a bookshop, an office, as well as a site for meetings, party events, and a springboard for activism.

Putting those words into practice, comrades met in the new HQ, named 'Peace and Socialism House' the next day for an action in conjunction with parties in the USA and the UK as part of the campaign against AUKUS (see page 1).





Data centres worth 3 coal power stations

Australia's nine dirtiest data centre proposals could add 40 million tonnes of climate pollution a year by 2035 if they don't bring new solar, wind, and storage to the table, according to new analysis by the Climate Council and Carbon Zero Initiative.

That's almost as much pollution as our three dirtiest coal power stations combined: Loy Yang A, Eraring, and Bayswater.

The report, *Pollution Pipeline: Australia's Dirtiest Data Centres*, also finds:

- The nine dirtiest data centre proposals are located in NSW (4), Victoria (3), Queensland and the Northern Territory, predominantly in regional areas;
- Three developers, some tied to the gas industry, want to build gas power stations bigger than any running in Australia today;
- Without new renewables and storage, data centres could push wholesale power prices up 20 per cent across the main grid by 2035. Using gas to run data centres would tighten supply for Australian industries that need it, undermining the proposed Domestic Gas Reservation Scheme.

Climate Council CEO Amanda McKenzie said: "Millions of us have put solar on our roofs and batteries in our garages. Now some of the richest companies on the planet want to run an extension cord into our grid, pushing up pollution and leaving everyone else with higher bills.

"Gas corporations looking to justify burning more gas have spotted data centres and are circling like seagulls around a bag of hot chips. If we let them lock in giant gas power stations now that will pollute for decades, we'll be paying the price.

"It's simple: If you want to plug into our grid, bring your own renewable power: solar, wind and batteries."

The Climate Council is calling on the Albanese government to make sure its national data centre law requires every facility over 30 MW, including those already in the pipeline, to match its demand with new renewables and storage built within three years and rules out gas as a primary power source. The government should also places strict limits on water use, including no use of fresh water for cooling in water-stressed regions.

Carbon Zero Initiative Co-Founder Alexander Hoysted said: "Data centres don't have to drive up power prices and pollution. Australia has one chance to lock in strong guardrails that work to our nation's advantage, not just throw down the welcome mat for big tech to come here on their own terms.

"We have a clear choice here: demand that developers bring new clean energy, or condemn future generations to decades of energy chaos, soaring bills, and climate harm."

Climate Council

(for more information, go to climatecouncil.org.au to see the 'Dirty Data Centre Watch')

Call for Australia to cease UAE weapons exports

Appalling violations and atrocities against civilians have been documented over the past three years in Sudan where a brutal conflict is under way between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and an independent military force called the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is credibly accused of providing weapons and other resources to the RSF.

Despite this, Australia continues to export military equipment to the UAE – in fact, almost $300 million worth in the last five years. It is possible that Australian exports have been diverted to Sudan.

At its recent Board meeting, the Australian Peace and Security Forum (APSF) signed on to a statement prepared by Australians for War Powers Reform calling on the Australian government to:

- Fully disclose information on weapons and military equipment sold to the UAE in the past 5 years
- Suspend all weapons and military exports to the UAE, pending a full review.
- Conduct an open and transparent review of the current military exports to the UAE and the defence export approvals process, to ensure compliance with the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and Australia's human rights obligations.

At the beginning of the Israel-US war on Iran, Australia deployed an E-7A Wedgetail spy plane with 85 personnel and a plane load of missiles to UAE. The intelligence gathering capacity of the plane was supposedly to be used for defensive purposes only, but the information was also passed on to the US forces in the region, who would obviously have control over the use of the data.

Australian Peace and Security Forum

Silver miners to get gold-standard lung monitoring

Workers at a major lead, zinc, and silver mine in Broken Hill will receive best practice lung health monitoring after the NSW Mine Workers' Alliance (NSWMWA) secured orders from the NSW industrial umpire to improve testing standards.

After workers at Perilya Mine raised concerns with the NSWMWA about how spirometry* tests were being conducted, the NSWMWA used new powers in the NSW Work Health and Safety Act to apply to the NSW Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) to arbitrate the issue.

It is the first time a union has successfully sought to arbitrate a work health and safety issue since the law was amended last year.

Mining and Engineering Union South West District Vice President and NSWMWA spokesperson Dan Hopkins said the IRC orders were an important step towards lifting safety standards for NSW metalliferous mineworkers.

"Health monitoring for conditions like respiratory and dust diseases is critical to the long-term health of mineworkers.

"Unfortunately, our hard rock mining industry is not held to the same safety standards as our coal industry in the awareness, prevention, and screening of respiratory and dust diseases.

"This order ensures that miners at Perilya can have confidence in their health screening and sends a strong message to the industry that they must meet high standards when it comes to health and safety."

The NSWMWA is also campaigning for the reintroduction of Industry Safety and Health Representatives in the metalliferous industry. ISHRs are worker-elected safety representatives who are independent of the employer, and are able to stop unsafe work and influence standard operating procedures. ISHRs are mainstays of the NSW and Queensland coal industries, where they are recognised as a world-leading model for worker-elected safety representation.

*Spirometry is a common breathing test which measures respiratory health by recording the amount of air you inhale and exhale. In mining spirometry is often used to track lung health over a worker's career, and identify the early signs of respiratory diseases before they fully develop.

Mining and Engineering Union



MEU South West District Vice President and NSWMWA spokesman Dan Hopkins. Photo: MEU



Something to say?
Write to the Editor!

PEACE NOTES

'Take back our country'

Denis Doherty

One way to keep up with the breath-taking military build-up in the north of the country is to check out the *Militarism in the NT* newsletter. Editor Jorgen Doyle has been arrested for trespassing at Pine Gap. In a recent court case he was defended by Professor Richard Tanter who outlined how Pine Gap assisted the Israeli military.

Another link in this chain is a 2020 book *Peace Crimes*. The author Kieran Finnane outlines a trip from Adelaide to Darwin and lists the military-related sites along the way.

The latest edition of *Militarism in the NT* outlines new developments which are taking place through the centre of our country with very little oversight. The northern sector of our country is being alienated for use by the US military and its arms corporations. We need to take back our country and to stop it being a cast-off place for war on China.

Military Logistics Hub planned for Alice Springs

Defence has issued a tender for a 250-hectare site "for a logistics hub." The land must be near a major transport asset like rail, air, or road. The hub is described as "deployable logistics supporting facility supporting sustainment and distribution." This word salad means storing weapons that can be used in war. Pre-positioning of weapons for US aims in the Indo Pacific is part of Australia's military doctrine. There is also a "new hub" being created in Queensland.

Rare earths

The topic of critical minerals or rare earths is a sensitive topic worldwide. This material is crucial for sophisticated weaponry for use in US cruise missiles such as the Tomahawk. Recently China has declined to export such materials to the USA. Australia has the 2nd largest deposit of critical minerals in the world but no processing ability.

The Albanese government has sold the minerals cheaply to Gina Rinehart and US partners. The mine is located on Anmatjere country 135 kilometres north of Alice Springs.

The mine is set to produce two rare earth elements that are crucial for high-performance magnets. On 8 October 2026, NT chief minister Lia Finocchiaro, federal resources minister Madeleine King, Arafura Rare Earths CEO Daniel Cuzzubbo, the US consul to Australia Colin Grosby, and a bevy of others were present for the "turning of the first sod" of Arafura Rare Earths' Nolans Bore critical minerals mine.

The presence of the US consul at this ceremony indicates the importance of the mine to US military and strategic interests in the region. Meanwhile Aboriginal people in the NT are left in appalling conditions either in housing or incarceration.

Pine Gap undergoing another major expansion

On 23 October, the *Australian Financial Review* reported that satellite images indicate that the base "is likely undergoing one of its largest expansions in its 60-year history." An area of 50 hectares has been compacted and looks likely to hold more electronic surveillance equipment spurred on the by arrival of AI.

The role of Pine Gap in assisting the US and Israel in their wars on Gaza, Lebanon, and Iran is well known. If there is ever a reckoning for the murder of children when the US bombed a school in Minab, Iran, there should be some blame apportioned to the current PM and Foreign Minister for blithely allowing the US to use our soil for this grievous war crime.

The fairness of the US 'justice' system!

We have just learnt that the US has imposed the same sanctions on the murderous Comanchero outlaw motorcycle gang for drug-running and contact with Mexican drug cartels as they have put on Francesa Albanese the UN Special Rapporteur on Palestine, for the crime of telling the truth.

SHOP PROGRESSI

Looking for gifts or something to read over the summer holiday period? Go no further than Shop@CPA (cpa.org.au/shop/)! We have a great stock of books ranging from the Marxist-Leninist classics through to invaluable reference materials and the environment. We also have revolutionary t-shirts, badges, and other gifts at the best of prices.

ENVIRONMENT

Fighting for the Future
By Hannah Middleton
New Age Publishers 43 pages $10

This pamphlet is an urgent call to action to save our planet and humanity. It argues that humanity is at a crossroads. The insatiable drive for profits by capitalism is leading to irreversible and catastrophic climate change. Capitalist governments – and the giant corporations they work for – are refusing to act on the warnings of the world's leading scientists. A popular movement for change is growing around the world. It aims to dismantle the destructive policies that have led us to this uniquely perilous moment of human history, and to move toward a world system that gives priority to human rights and needs. The stakes in the bitter class war that is taking shape are immense and arise from the nature of capitalism. Capitalism is an unsustainable system. The booklet insists that we must confront the reality that what we do now will forever alter the course of humanity and all life on Earth. Now more than ever we must fight for a better system. Our lives are more important than their profits.

POLITICAL ECONOMY

Super Profits and Crises: Modern US Capitalism
By Victor Perlo
International Publishers NY Paperback – 546 pages $30

This is a great book for beginners and those with a greater knowledge and understanding of Marxist political economy. It covers such topics as exploitation of labour and value, real wages and productivity, the rate of profit, corruption and decay of capitalism, monopoly, state monopoly capitalism. It not only presents the theory, but also its application today, something which many theoretical texts do not do. It covers such topics as exploitation of labour and value, real wages and productivity, the rate of profit, corruption and decay of capitalism, monopoly, state monopoly capitalism. It also delves into racism, the militarisation of the economy, US imperialism, economic crises and the business cycle, the structural crisis of world capitalism, socialism versus capitalism, and much more, in simple everyday language.

The Fundamentals of Political Economy
By MN Ryndina, GP Chernikov & GN Khudokormov
Progress Publishers, 287 pages $30

This accessible text on political economy covers various modes of production, through from primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and socialism. Coverage of basic theory of capitalist commodity production includes exploitation, wages, capitalist accumulation, surplus value, and its distribution. The chapters on socialist social production look at the main economic law of socialism, planning, distribution of goods and services, and much more.

Yellow Devil
By A Anikin
Progress Publishers, hardback, 245 pages $25

The role of gold in the economy is a highly controversial question. *The Yellow Devil: Gold and Capitalism* examines the history and modern problems of gold as a monetary metal. Its theoretical basis in Marxist-Leninist political economy, in particular in monetary theory, is examined. The author explains the essence and workings of the gold standard. His analysis links the gold question to the crises and evolution of the capitalist international monetary system.

ABC – What is Surplus Value?
By Y Volkova & F Volkov
Progress Publishers, 301 pages $15

This volume in the ABC series of social and political knowledge is in simple English, very accessible to beginners in the study of Marxism-Leninism, and also an invaluable text for more advanced students. It covers a wide range of basic concepts, including capital and commodity production, the process of exploitation and how surplus value is created and increased, the development of international corporations and state-monopoly capitalism. It also includes the struggle of the working class against capitalist exploitation. It has a great glossary of key terms in the main text.

REVOLUTION

ABC – What is the Working People's Power?
By D Dmiterko & V Pugachev
Progress Publishers 1986 Paperback 228 pp $15

Another easy-to-read publication that examines Marxist-Leninist theory on the state. It starts with an historical examination of the different types of exploiter societies and the bourgeois state. This is followed by bourgeois democracy, where real power lies, and the working-class struggle against exploitation. Lenin's theory of the proletarian revolution and development of socialism in the Soviet Union and working people's power are amongst the other topics covered.

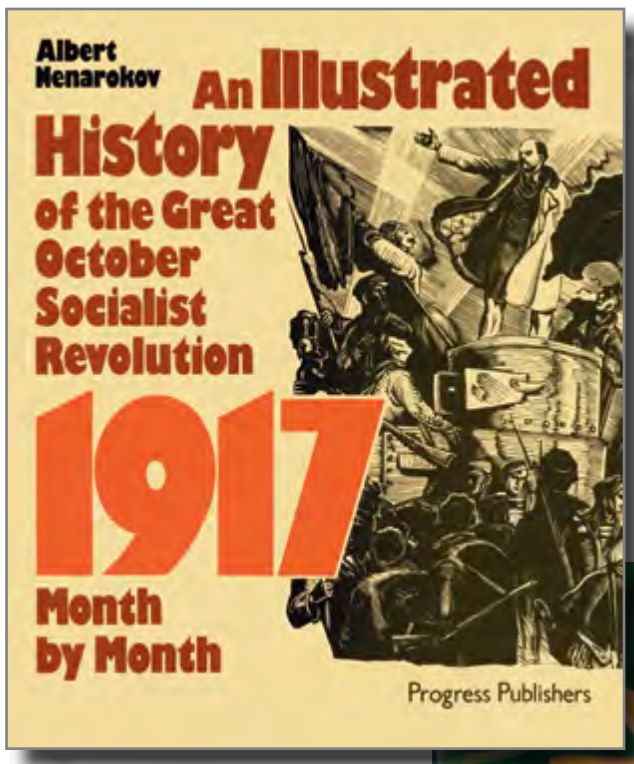
REFERENCE MATERIAL

Dictionary of Philosophy
Progress Publishers, Hardcover, 464 pages $30

An invaluable resource which covers a wide range of historical philosophers as well as Marxist philosophy and its laws. The explanations are clear and would be useful to both students setting out in their study of Marxism-Leninism, as well as those who have completed advanced studies.

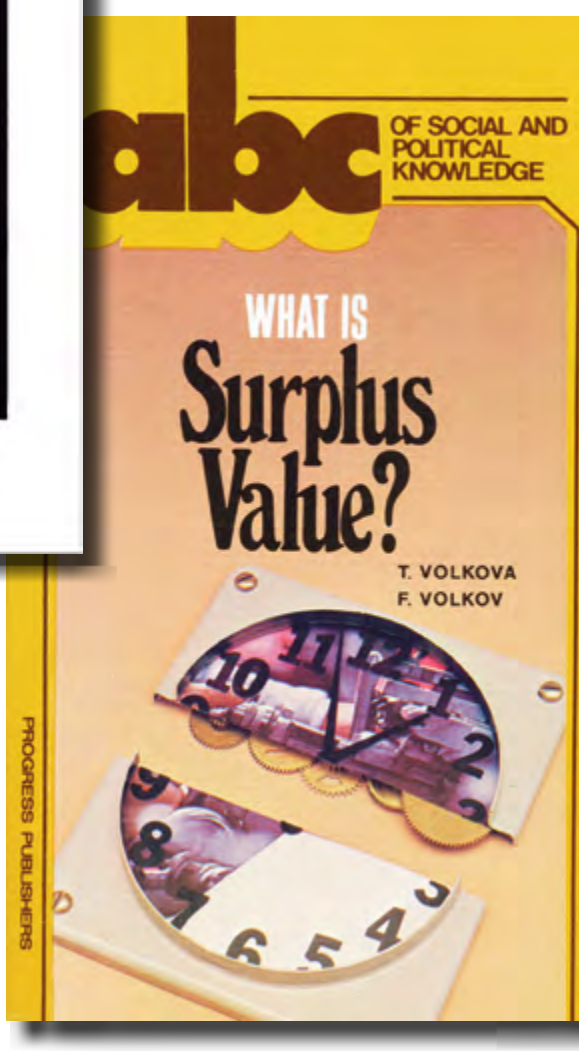
Dictionary of Scientific Communism
Progress Publishers, Hardcover, 288 pages $30

A comprehensive range of topics explained in detail, including the basic principle of socialism, collective leadership, détente, revolution, racism, popular front, transition from capitalism to socialism, the Commune, life under socialism, international communist movement, and much more.









IVE THIS SUMMER

An Illustrated History of the Great October Socialist Revolution 1917
By Albert Nenarokov
Hard cover 400 pages Progress Publishers $35

This table-top book provides a calendar of history, a calendar for Russia in 1917. Month by month, dates are overflowing with pictorial records of one of the greatest historic events of the 20th century. A true collectors' item that remains a critical reference for succeeding generations.

Birth of The Communist Manifesto
By Karl Marx & Frederick Engels Each $25
Edited by Dirk J Struik
Paperback 224 pages, International Publishers, New York

This publication contains the full text of the *Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels with early drafts by Engels and other supplementary material. It has a very useful introduction by Professor Struik that assists with understanding the *Manifesto* and the context in which it was conceived and written. Still very relevant, this is a must-read for anyone wishing to understand Marxism. It also includes an invaluable question and answer section on Principles of Communism by Engels.

T-SHIRTS

CPA 15th Congress $25
Women's in 12 -20 – black or emerald green
Men's in L- 3XL – black or olive green

TEA TOWEL

"How to Spot a Communist" tea towel $15

The "How to Spot a Communist" tea towel is a popular and humorous item, which has a practical use or can be hung in the kitchen or somewhere else. It gives guidance in spotting a communist, and makes an excellent gift for communists and non-communists alike, with fifteen pointers. For example: "A communist can be spotted by frequent use of foreign phrases like 'increase wages,' 'fix prices,' 'unity is strength,' 'peace not war,' etc."

CPA FLAG

CPA red flag with hammer and sickle $15

BADGES

Hammer & sickle with star $6
CPA – yellow $5
CPA – yellow on red $5
CPA – 100th anniversary $5

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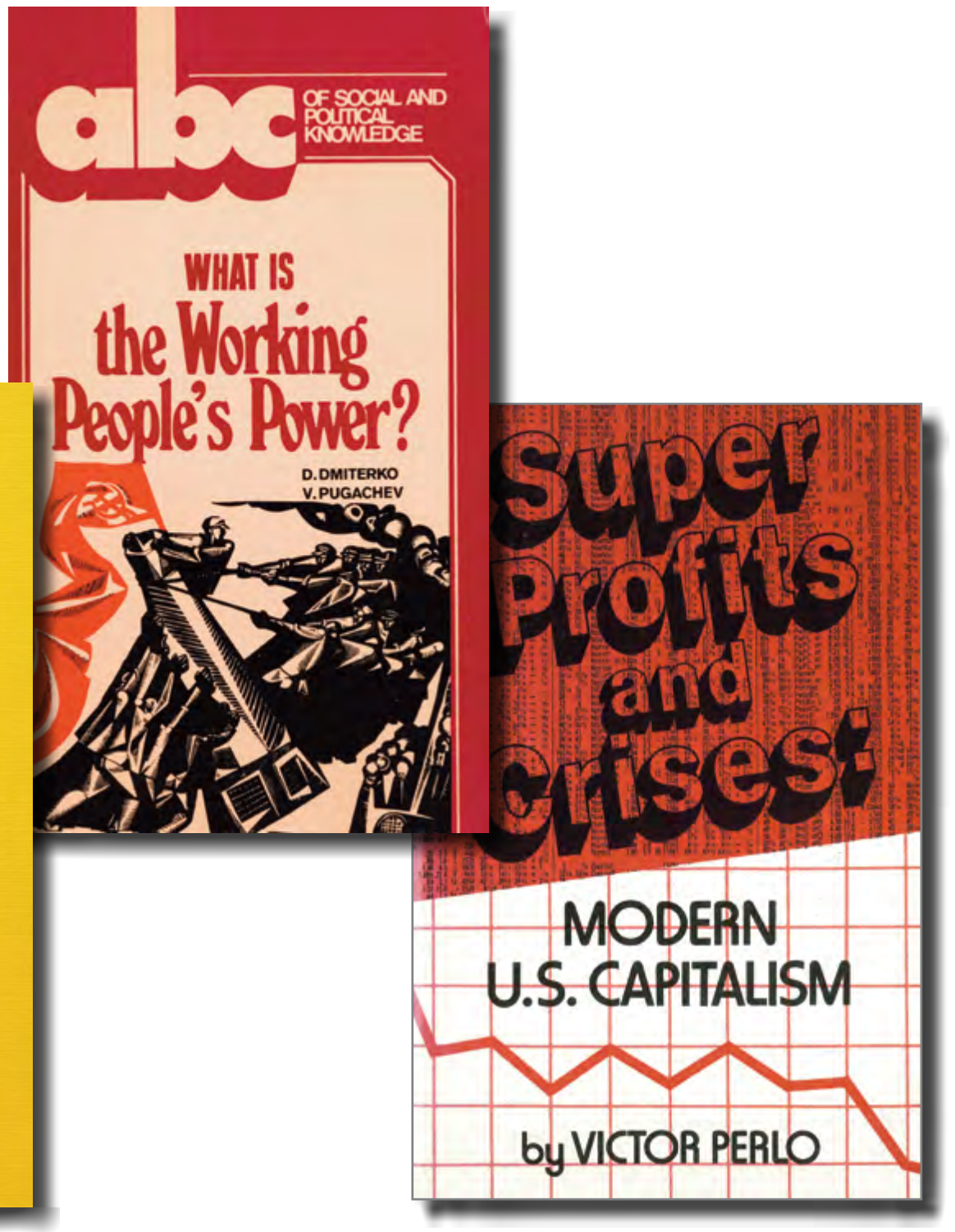


HOW TO SPOT A COMMUNIST

1. A Communist talks very earnestly against war. This is clever and really hides the fact that what he wants is peace.
2. Communists make a great noise about being in favour of socialism. This is really diabolically clever because it hides the fact that they ARE in favour of socialism. Also it proves that they will stop at nothing. Also it gets people frightfully tangled and makes them easy marks for talk about "nationalisation", "full employment" and "peace".
3. A Communist can be spotted by his frequent use of foreign phrases like "increase wages", "fix prices", "unity is strength", "peace not war", etc.



4. All Communists do their secret work openly. This is very confusing.
5. Communists pay their union dues promptly. This proves they are getting Moscow gold through their local savings bank.
6. Communists led the fight for the 40-hour week; for higher wages; for penalty rates. They didn't really want these things, which accounts for why they fought so hard to get them.
7. Communists carry secrecy to really ridiculous lengths. Communists insist on being elected by secret ballots under closest supervision with all manner of safeguards. This proves that secrecy is a mania with them.
8. A Communist moves resolutions seeking better wages and conditions for himself and his fellow workers. This is merely to bewilder them and obscure the fact that he IS a Communist.
9. In demonstrations, with rare exceptions, it is always Communists who are arrested. This proves that the Police are Communists intent on making martyrs of their fellow members.
10. Communists never join Fascist organisations, New Guards or bosses' unions. This means that they are fellow travellers with others who don't join. And this is very clever because it throws people off the scent.
11. Communists get resolutions passed against anti-democratic measures and against atom bombs and threats of war. This proves that communists are sly, subversive and in favour of violence, and shows just how low Communists will stoop in order to be Communists.
12. A Communist attends all union meetings punctually. This is disruptive because it annoys the sane, conservative, non-dominated members and shows that the Communist can tell the time.
13. A Communist constantly uses the word "Australian". This word is derived from the Russian "Australianovitch". This proves he is Russian dominated and under orders from a foreign power.
14. Communists who are members of the Communist Party are probably Communists. Communists who are not members of the Communist Party are probably Communists. Communists who admit they are Communists are probably Communists, and Communists who deny they are Communists are probably Communists. All Communists are probably Communists. All people who are not Communists are probably Communists.

Thus, all you have to do is to keep your eyes open and you will be able to pick a Communist at first glance -- or even earlier.

Letters to the Editor
Guardian
299 Enmore Road
Marrickville NSW 2204
email: editor@cpa.org.au

Cold War trillions could have been better spent

Thirty-five years ago, the Cold War (1948–1991) ended. By then the United States had spent an estimated US$26 trillion in today's dollars) on military expenditure.

What is not included in this figure is the cost of CIA covert operations that overthrew elected governments, military aid to right-wing governments, and military borrowing.

US government reports show that average annual military spending ran at US$298.5 billion, including the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and military activities in Latin America, Africa, Middle East and Asia. Not included is the social cost of McCarthyism and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), which destroyed the lives of so many Americans, whose only crime was to support social justice.

This staggering amount of money could have been far better spent on social housing, public healthcare, free education, poverty reduction, and civilian infrastructure in low-income areas. In 1991, total US healthcare expenditure was US$752 billion, with hospital spending at US$288.6 billion.

The US government could have invested this military spending in universal healthcare, public hospitals with more doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals. Billions of dollars could have subsidised prescription medicines, free dentistry, and improved mental health services and aged-care facilities.

The trillions of dollars could have built new school buildings and provided free early childhood education. The money could have been spent on free university and college education, increased teachers' salaries with students in smaller classroom sizes and having free school meals.

In 1990, Social Security Administration recorded public social welfare expenditure of over US$1 trillion, including social insurance, education and public assistance. Trillions of dollars from military spending would have been better spent on a national poverty-reduction program which guaranteed access to affordable housing, increased social security payments and increasing food assistance.

The military budgets could have been redirected to build a better, safer country without any risk to national security. Archival documents show that the USSR had never planned to invade North America or Western Europe. This fear of the Soviet Union was generated by the CIA, State Department, and senators who supported the US military-industrial complex. We can only imagine what the US could have become if it had not supported war-mongering and an unfounded paranoia about Communism.

Graham Holton
Queensland

Book Review

Strangers on the Shore:

A history of migrant artists in Western Australia

by E N Whitehead

Reviewer: Elly Hulm

This book is a fascinating, investigation into the development of visual art introduced by migrants into WA, from settlement to the present day, as well as presenting those artists' biographies and images.

What makes it unique is the way it links the development of culture in WA using the art produced as well as by showing how politics have shaped this culture and influenced society's attitudes over the decades.

Perth/Borloo's cultural development post-WW2 blossomed with the arrival of thousands of displaced Europeans who had a gradual but powerful influence in education – particularly the arts – with new migrant teachers introducing contemporary sculpture and ceramics into the curriculum.

The role migrants played in the consolidation of both the cultural, educational and built environment in WA has continued throughout the decades, with the effect of government policies on the arts towards the latter part of the '70s into the '80, seen through the lens of multiculturalism.

The superstructural concerns with multiculturalism and its effect on individual/community disquiet with identity was a vitally important issue to 'new' Australians. Multiculturalism initiated many issues of identity agency, and these socio-political realities are investigated relating to, and through, the experience of émigré artists in Australia, who were continually questioning their place in the world.

The book shows how global events, such as the end of the Cold War, affected many artists belonging to migrant families, with many able to return to their 'homeland' for the first time in 50 years.

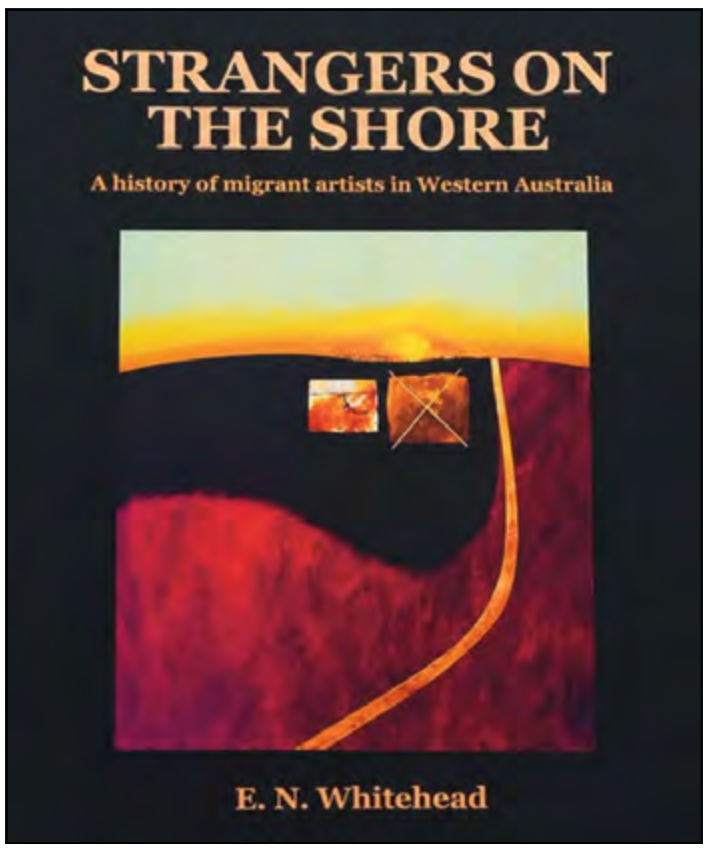
The '90s saw a nation finally consolidating itself, with a population of nearly 18 million, and 25% of migrants and émigrés from other parts of the world, to whom the monarchy was especially irrelevant.

To anyone interested in art, the book addresses the growing impact of globalisation in the new Millennium – financially, physically, and culturally. The subtle shift in public consciousness towards migrants and migration is examined with especial focus on the political changes to legislation appearing. It also describes innovations in the arts in WA influenced by global trends.

This refreshing look at artists from migrant backgrounds brings a greater understanding of their artwork and, also their families' trials and tribulations. It goes some way towards explaining the complex nature of their contribution to the visual arts in Australia.

Through those artists' biographies, Whitehead informs readers of often complex lives and their transformation through diversity within an Australian culture. This is the first time so many WA artist biographies have been collected in one place. At a time when One Nation is spreading division about immigration to this county it's very timely for such a book to be on the market.

It can be found at the independent bookshops Pigface, Crow Books and New Edition, as well as online.



Worth streaming: *Return to Paradise*

Reviewer: Graham Holton

***Return to Paradise* is an Australian-British comedy drama series. It won the Silver Logie for Best Drama Program in 2025. The series is based on the popular British whodunnit drama *Death in Paradise* which is set in the West Indies.**

The three-part *Return to Paradise* begins with Detective Inspector Mackenzie Clarke (Anna Samson), who works for London's Metropolitan Police, returning home to Dolphin Cove to fix up her mother's house. Clarke ends up rejoining the local police to help solve a murder.

Return to Paradise incorporates Aboriginal actors who play members of the local police force. That Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders are integral to its stories is significant for Australian television. These characters are not peripheral, as in so many Australian series, nor are they mere racial stereotypes. Aboriginality is central, with cultural identity, oral histories, and cultural artefacts being addressed.

The ABC has moved away from portraying Aboriginal people as stories of racism and discrimination, poverty and social disadvantage, or dispossession and colonial violence. Instead, we see Aboriginal people as police officers, doctors, teachers, lawyers, politicians, and neighbours.

A Season 3 episode addresses the erasure of Indigenous knowledge, with the detectives dismissing evidence from Aboriginal folklore until they're reproved by one of the Aboriginal characters who schools them in how that knowledge supports written and photographic evidence.

This is an important criticism. Indigenous representation is more than putting Aboriginal actors on screen; it must respect Indigenous knowledge, allowing Indigenous perspectives and evidence to carry intellectual authority.

Aboriginal actors include Aaron McGrath, who plays Constable Felix Wilkinson. He is a professional, intelligent, and capable police officer who belongs within the community, providing important cultural background. Meyne Wyatt joined the extended cast for season 2, and Aaron Pedersen played Laurie Rogers in season 1.

The series provides important regular employment in mainstream television, giving opportunities for Indigenous performers, writers and screen professionals, thereby developing a sustainable Australian Indigenous screen industry.

The viewer may ask whether Australian television has finally changed how it portrays Indigenous Australians and understands Aboriginal history and culture in contemporary society? Or is the series simply following the British formula of *Death in Paradise*, replacing Caribbean people with Indigenous people?

What is needed is greater Indigenous participation behind the camera, in writing, directing, producing, enabling them to determine how Indigenous history and culture are represented in Australia. Aboriginal people must play meaningful and central roles in our television.

This is an excellent and entertaining series, with the 4th season now being filmed.

Return to Paradise can be streamed on abciview



Climate Justice Compact

In his opening speech to world leaders at COP31 meeting in Antalya, Türkiye, UN Secretary **António Guterres** put forward a proposal for a Climate Justice Compact based on four pillars.

The following are extracts from his speech:

First, speed a just transition away from fossil fuels.

Leaders – and in particular those from developed countries – cannot keep expanding fossil fuel production while claiming to be committed to 1.5 degrees.

The recent UNEP (United Nationals Environment Programme) Emissions Gap report is clear:

By 2035, global renewable capacity must at least triple from 2025 levels, while unabated coal power must fall by at least 75 per cent.

By 2040, unabated coal power must be all but phased out – and oil and gas use cut by around a third.

Every government must align its policies, investments and infrastructure plans accordingly.

That starts with credible national roadmaps to transition away from fossil fuels – protecting workers and communities affected.

That means no new coal.

No new oil and gas infrastructure that puts 1.5 degrees further out of reach.

Slashing methane emissions.

Expanding renewables, grids, storage and clean electrification at bullet speed.

Safeguarding forests, oceans, and biodiversity.

We have a choice: Either plan this just transition – or pay for it in chaos and lost livelihoods.

Second, protect people.

As temperatures rise, adaptation is a matter of survival.

An overshoot above 1.5 degrees demands a transformational approach to adaptation – requiring a new generation of national adaptation plans with the international community supporting developing countries.

Every person on Earth must be covered by an early warning system – and every community protected from floods, droughts, and rising seas.

When adaptation reaches its limits, support for loss and damage must be swift and accessible.

Third, finance must be adequate, affordable and readily available.

Developed countries must lead in delivering at least $300 billion a year by 2035 – and set out concrete plans with clear milestones to at least triple adaptation finance by then.

The $1.3 trillion goal must become real finance flowing to developing countries and this demands that every source of finance pull its weight.

Multilateral development banks must go beyond their Baku commitment of $120 billion a year by 2030.

Donors must ensure meaningful and ambitious replenishment of the Green Climate Fund and the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage.

Private investments also must back the transition in developing countries.

South-South cooperation must increasingly help to expand access to technology and finance.

Those who profit most from fossil fuels must help foot the bill for the damage they have caused.

In the last quarter alone, the nine largest oil companies pocketed $95 billion in profits.

Meanwhile, the Loss and Damage Fund has received around $600 million.

It's time for governments to tax these windfall profits – and use them to help vulnerable countries recover.

Polluters must pay.

Fourth, we must choose cooperation over fragmentation.

A world divided by trade barriers, technology monopolies and geopolitical rivalry means a transition that costs more, takes longer, and leaves billions behind.

We do not need countries to agree on everything.

But we do need them to cooperate on the things no country can solve alone.



Photo: IISD/ENB – Mike Muzurakis

The climate process itself must evolve.

Negotiations matter – but success must be measured on the ground.

Implementation is essential.

Across the United Nations, we are bringing countries and partners together on grids, critical minerals, methane and early warnings, and through our Climate Promise Forward.

This must become the model.

History has handed us a remarkable opportunity to build economies that are cleaner.

Societies that are fairer.

And a world that is safer.

This is a climate agenda.

An agenda for sustainable development, peace and security.

And an agenda for human dignity.

Together, let's keep telling the truth about the climate crisis.

Let's keep demanding the action that truth requires.

Let's keep fighting for the sustainable future we know is in our hands.

'Never bought or sold', the life of Johnno Johnson

FK

A luthier is a craftsperson who makes or repairs stringed instruments.

John Godschall Johnson (1912-2003) was an Australian luthier, artist, and activist who became famous for refusing to sell the instruments he made. Instead, he gave them to young players. He inscribed his violins, violas, and cellos with the letters 'TIMBFG NBOS' ('This instrument may be freely given, never bought or sold'), stripping his creations of monetary value. He was often reported on in the '80s and '90s. A typical article, from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, bore the headline 'John's Work Is Simply Priceless.'

Johnson promoted luthiery at a stall that he regularly ran at exhibitions for wood-working and trade in a number of cities and towns around the country. He taught basic elements of the craft to any members of the public who showed an interest, and he encouraged children to engage with the violin.

"John removed himself from the tyranny of the market place," his wife Phyllis said.

In an interview in 1993, Johnson said, "I don't accept money. I'm interested in young people with talent who haven't a chance to get a violin.

"If I think they've got talent, I make them the custodian of a violin. But my instruments have to be passed from one player to another."

The 'never bought or sold' label was radical, but Johson was a traditionalist about his craft. He made his instruments without using any electrical tools. In line with his commitment to tradition, Johnson made the first ensemble of 'baroque' string instruments in Australia.

Johnson also gave thousands of hours of public violin-making demonstrations. Commentators connected Johnson's generosity to his political convictions. In 1934, Johnson joined the Communist Party, in which he later met Phyllis Mather. They married in 1939 and supported the decolonisation of Indonesia in the mid-1940s.

As a member of the Seamen's Union he joined the crew of the *Elsana*, which ran between Brisbane and Thursday Island.

Johnno wrote in his diary, "On each trip I sat with the leaders, and they told me the problems of life as Indigenous people. I wrote this up in simple language and when it was approved, the pamphlet *Let the Sun Shine* was printed by the communist press in 1954 in English and translated into two Island languages." The pamphlet has been called "a comprehensive program for the Torres Strait Islands" with proposals "for self-rule based upon Indigenous structures within Island communities, with an elected council of chiefs who then elected a "paramount chief."

In the early 1990s Johnson began making a string quartet named in honour of Australian feminist and socialist activist Lady Jessie Street (1889-1970), a prominent campaigner for women's rights and Indigenous rights, as well as Australia's first female delegate to the United Nations.

Johnson raised awareness of Aboriginal people's struggles in Sydney and, while working in the Torres Strait, advocated for the rights of the islands' Indigenous populations. He collaborated with Torres Strait leaders to produce a trilingual manifesto, published anonymously in 1954.

'Freely given' sums up much of Johnson's approach to life as a long-standing communist, union member, and activist who put theory into practice in so many ways.

As the *Guardian, the Workers' Weekly* said Johnson's work as artist, sculptor, photographer, woodworker, chemist, acoustical engineer and Communist activist will live on, remembered by his many friends and comrades those who continue to play his magnificent violins and other instruments.

Johnson's life has been highlighted in a recent article *Luthiery from the Left: Politics and Praxis in the Life and Work of Australian Violin-maker John Godschall Johnson (1912–2003)*. The full article can be found at musicology Australia.



Johnson in his workshop holding the open body of a 'baroque' violin under construction, with its label visible. Photo: Roger Deckker/Powerhouse Museum (Sydney, Australia)

Pax Silica pushback

Richard Mullen

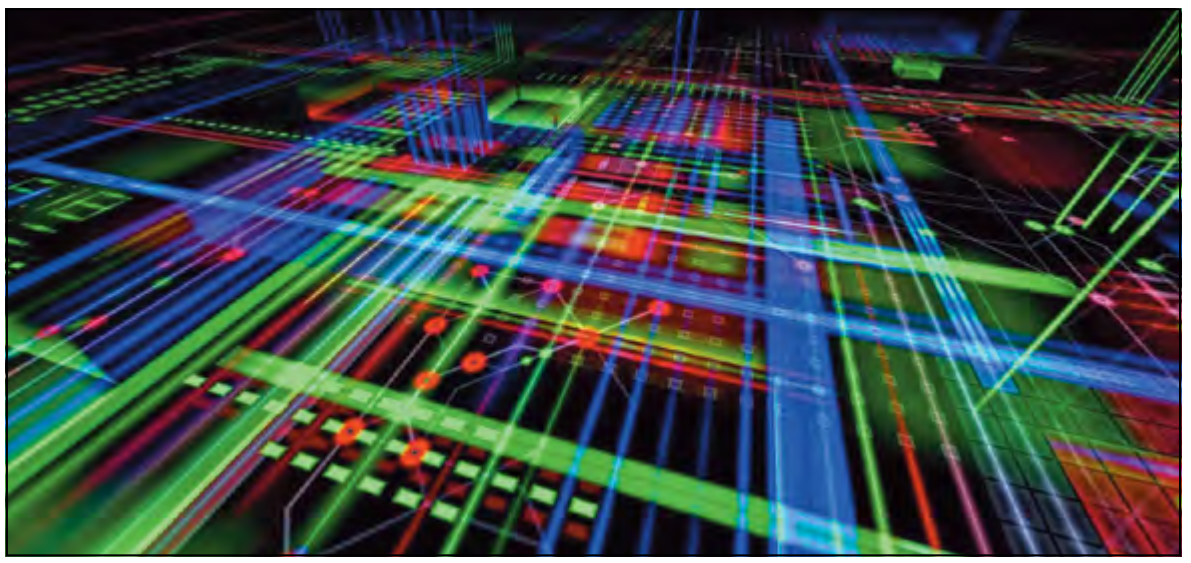
In December 2025, representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Australia, and Israel signed the Pax Silica declaration, a strategic initiative to secure the global supply chains for advanced information and communication technologies and, in particular, artificial intelligence.

Like other prongs of the wide US push for imperialist expansion, Pax Silica has China in its crosshairs and represents an effort to counter Chinese progress in these areas. To put these aggressive US efforts in context, it is useful to look at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute's (ASPI) Critical Technology Tracker, traditionally used to monitor international trends in emerging critical technologies. China leads in 66 of the 74 technologies tracked.

Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs Jacob Helberg, a former senior adviser at Palantir Technologies, said that Pax Silica would strengthen US control over AI infrastructure, semiconductor production and critical mineral supply chains.

The Pax Silica initiative quickly gathered more signatories: first came the Gulf states, then India, and after individual European countries joined the coalition, the European Union signed the pact as well. What are its first practical effects?

The cost of the US's technological appetite is paid in environmental destruction, death and destruction, and loss of sovereignty for peoples worldwide. The technology at the focus of this strategic supply-chain fortification is the backbone of the US military and security apparatus. Waging wars of aggression across multiple continents, interfering in the operations of states and seeking new sites of resource and capital extraction, the US puts its technology into a pipeline for immediate deadly use. Militarisation is also a powerful budget drain, affecting the lives of millions for the profit of the very few.



Graphic: rawpixel.com

Pax Silica is entering its first concrete development: a massive industrial facility in the Philippines, with enormous environmental impact and complete disregard for Philippine sovereignty, local communities and their safety, well-being and prosperity.

On 20 September, grassroots organisations across the United States launched the Shut Down Pax Silica Campaign Network. "Data centres wouldn't exist without minerals, and without the production of technology that can be used in many ways. Without minerals, there won't be any microchips, batteries, sensors, or any weapons used in the current military war machine of the Pentagon. It's the same technology being used to bomb Iran, Palestine, and to wage war in so many places," said Alab Mirasol Ayroso, a member of the National Secretariat of AGHAM, a Philippine-based organisation advocating for science and technology for the people.

The Network describes the Philippines as Pax Silica's "Ground Zero" or testing ground for the further expansion and consolidation of the initiative globally. The Philippines is the only country that has agreed to provide land and resources to the US.

Dr Giovanni Tapang, convenor of the Philippines-based Network to Oppose Pax Silica, said that "Our land, energy, water, and future are being given away: 4,000 acres of farmland; 65-90 million litres of water per day demanded against a dry season that will rob the farmers of water; 3 gigawatts of power, 1/5 of the nation's generation reserved for foreign fabrication and data centres. Pax Silica is for US control of the supply chain and not for the industrialisation for the Philippines."

Dr Tapang called on participants in the campaign to "take this fight into the heart of the empire, organise in every workplace and help us bury Pax Silica where it was born."

Socialist Voice (edited for space)

Gaza Civil Defence struggles as vehicles break down

Gaza's Civil Defence is struggling to save lives due to a lack of parts to repair broken-down vehicles.

Emergency teams are still attempting to reach people in need after air attacks, fires, and building collapses, but their success in doing so is constrained by a lack of functioning vehicles and equipment.

Abdullah al-Majdalawi, a Civil Defence field officer, described an incident earlier this November where Civil Defence crews heard an explosion after an Israeli attack near where he is stationed in al-Qattan and rushed to respond.

But instead of taking a fire engine they had to grab their equipment and rush to help on foot. The fire engine wasn't working.

Al-Majdalawi said, "We heard the strike, opened the vehicle, took our equipment and ran."

It took about 10 minutes for the crew to reach the site, carrying their equipment, and then carrying injured people back. They also recovered the body of someone killed in the strike.

In a separate incident in southern Gaza City's Sabra neighbourhood last month, the vehicle the Civil Defence team was using broke down while the crew was responding to an Israeli air strike on the area.

By the time they were able to reach the scene, several people had been killed, and others were critically injured.

During another mission, in 2024, the crew had to rely on a man with a donkey-drawn cart to transport them and their equipment.

Al-Majdalawi said: "People were astonished to see Civil Defence personnel travelling that way but this is what we can do."

The only dedicated rescue vehicle in Gaza governorate, a Toyota Hilux pick-up truck, has been out of service for weeks and has been worn down by years of use and the intense workload during Israel's genocidal war against the Palestinians.

The crew has tried everything to keep it running, including patching its tyres with flour dough when proper repairs were not possible.

The vehicle needs a power steering pump, tyres and other parts. Its turbo system is also faulty, while problems with its lights make night-time missions more dangerous.

The department has fewer than 1,000 employees across Gaza's five governorates, and many continue working despite inadequate resources and a lack of regular salaries.

"If the world cannot stop the war on Gaza," Dahshan said, "at the very least it should enable humanitarian services to rescue the injured before they die."

Morning Star



Tankers hit in Hormuz as Iran warns against US-backed passage

Two tankers were struck off Oman on 21 November after a separate tanker fire the day before that Iran attributed to mines along an unauthorised route.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) Centre reported two separate tanker strikes near Khasab in Oman, one hitting a vessel's stern and another its engine room.

Iran attributed the other incident to naval mines, while UKMTO reported a strike by an unidentified projectile.

No casualties were reported in the UKMTO accounts.

Both vessels were traveling outbound through the strait when they were hit less than an hour apart. UKMTO reported no casualties in either incident, while the environmental impact remained unconfirmed.

The strikes add to continuing dangers for commercial shipping through the waterway amid the US-Israeli war on Iran and stalled negotiations over navigation. Tehran has repeatedly warned vessels against attempting passage without coordinating with its forces.

Iran has repeatedly insisted that vessels coordinate passage through Hormuz with its armed forces, warning that ships entering areas it designates as dangerous risk striking mines and catching fire.

Those warnings contrast with US Central Command's assertions that the main shipping lanes have been cleared of mines and are safe for transit.

Navigation through the strait has remained a central dispute in efforts to end the war, which began with US and Israeli attacks on Iran on 28 February. Tehran responded with attacks on Israel and US military facilities in Arab countries.

Washington and Tehran signed a memorandum of understanding in June and entered negotiations, but talks later stalled over disagreements concerning safe and free navigation through Hormuz.

Fighting between the United States and Iran has flared intermittently since July despite diplomatic efforts. The latest tanker strikes and fire underscore the continuing risks facing vessels attempting to leave the Gulf through the strait.

Palestine Chronicle

Youth strike hits Europe

Hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets of Europe as young people and students demanded a better future for their generation.

The protests in over 25 countries and more than 400 towns and cities, the biggest co-ordinated European youth protest in years, were co-ordinated by the Youth Strike Coalition, a platform involving more than 50 different organisations.

Alessandro Di Miceli from Rete della Conoscenza in Italy said: "We are protesting to claim our right to a better and dignified future, and we are aware that if we stand united, no-one will be able to stop us from taking it.

"From the right to education to the right to housing, from the struggle against the rising cost of living and the climate crisis to the fight against militarisation and rearmament, specific demands may differ from country to country, but are all deeply connected to each other."

Leonor Chico from Estudantes pelo Fim ao Fossil of Portugal said: "As young people, we know that we must organise and fight for our future, because no-one else will do it for us.

"The ruling classes across our countries show us every day that the needs of our generation are not their priority. Instead, they put profits and power first.

"The EU's ReArm Europe plan, now known as Readiness 2030, is a clear example: it aims to mobilise up to €800 billion (around AU$1300 bn) for rearmament, while these resources are desperately needed to be invested in education, youth policies, housing and social welfare."

The Youth Strike manifesto calls for an end to militarisation and rearmament policies, the abolition of all forms of military conscription, solidarity with the struggles of oppressed peoples around the world, climate justice and social justice and a radical transformation of the system we live in, standing against authoritarianism, repression and the far right.

Morning Star

Three die in Indonesian factory fire

Three people have been killed and 36 remain missing after a fire tore through a confectionery factory in Indonesia's Banten province, near the capital Jakarta.

The blaze broke out at around 5pm local time on the 21 November at a facility operated by Fonusa Agung Mulia, a subsidiary of UNIFAM, one of Indonesia's leading food and beverage groups.

Fifteen people survived the fire, while four others were injured and taken to hospital. Two were admitted to Hermina Hospital and two to Modern Clinic.

Firefighters continued working to contain the blaze the next day with flames still burning in several areas of the plant. Crews were also carrying out cooling operations.

Search and rescue teams, working alongside personnel from the Indonesian Red Cross, continued efforts to locate those missing and evacuate victims.

Images released showed extensive damage inside the facility, including charred machinery, melted plastic and several pockets of fire that remained active.

Telesur



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Global Briefs

SLOVAKIA: Slovakia will not participate in a new loan from the European Union to Ukraine, Prime Minister Robert Fico said. "Slovakia did not take part in EU provision of the first 90 bn euro loan to Ukraine and we intend to do the same now, although we were blackmailed politically, by linking participation in this loan to the whole EU budget. It is regrettable that at a time when the contours of peace negotiations are emerging, the EU wants to borrow 45 bln euro (AU$149bln) on the global financial market to support the war in Ukraine and, of course, become the guarantor of this loan." The Prime Minister added that Ukraine would not repay 90 billion euros previously allocated to it, nor would it pay off any future loans. "The truth is that these are not loans, these are gifts," Fico noted.

SWITZERLAND: Around 40,000 students and young people took part in protests in about 10 cities across the country against an increase in military spending and cuts to funding for education, healthcare, and other public sectors. Participants spoke out against rising military spending and the European rearmament program, including the ReArm Europe initiative which seeks to mobilise 800 bln euros (AU$1321 bn).

USA: The FBI is investigating an apparent breach of its criminal information database. This comes after a string of tech outages which hit banking, air traffic control, and other sectors in the US.

GERMANY: The Alternative for Germany (AfD) party has called for the deportation of 2.6 million Ukrainians, Syrians, and Afghans. "If the war in Ukraine ends or the security situation in Syria and Afghanistan improves to the point where protection is no longer necessary, these people must return," said one of the party's leaders.

RUSSIA: "Train traffic across the rail section of the Crimean Bridge has been restored in full," the Russian Deputy Prime Minister said. "Trains on the route are running as scheduled," he added. The Ukrainian military recently attacked the Crimean Bridge, damaging its structure.

IRAN: Iran has initiated legal proceedings in the United States and four European countries over the 28 February missile strike on an elementary school in Minab, southern Iran, which killed 168 people, including 123 children aged 7-12. In September, a UN fact-finding mission found reasonable grounds to believe that the US carried out the Minab school strike and committed a war crime, citing the failure to verify the target's military status. (see page 7 for the Australian connection).

FRANCE: The French government has acknowledged secretly deploying military personnel to Ukraine bypassing the parliament. The mission, codenamed Volia, was exposed by Radio France Internationale (RFI), prompting French officials to confirm its existence. The French constitution requires the government to notify parliament within three days of launching a military intervention abroad. Russia has repeatedly warned that foreign troops deployed inside Ukraine would be considered legitimate military targets and that their presence would constitute direct involvement in the conflict by the countries that sent them. In this case the parliament was not notified. According to the French Foreign Minister, "We are operating far from the front lines with trainers and maintenance personnel, and the numbers are limited. Therefore, there was no reason to inform Parliament under Article 35."

China-Russia-US summit

Liu Xin and Li Yu

A historic first face-to-face meeting between the leaders of China, Russia, and the US continues to draw attention, one day after the three countries released a peace declaration in Shenzhen.

Chinese analysts noted the gathering has charted a new course for diplomacy, with its joint declaration integrating strategic vision and practical measures to tackle pressing global issues of common concern.

PEACE SUMMIT

The meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and US President Donald Trump reached important consensus. The China-Russia-US Heads of State Declaration toward Peace issued after the meeting is instrumental to addressing global challenges and maintaining world peace and stability.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, called the face-to-face meeting – the first of its kind between the three heads of state – a landmark diplomatic event that will go down in history, and is of great significance with a far-reaching impact. He added that the meeting showed "a strong sense of major country responsibility."

Wang said the meeting represented a new step in building a new type of major-country relations. "This is not only good for the three countries, but also benefits the whole world," Wang said.

Both the Russian and US presidents offered positive assessments of the talks.

Russian President Vladimir Putin called the meeting "undoubtedly a page in diplomatic history."

Trump posed on social media that the meeting was "a Great and Highly Consequential Trip." In an interview with NBC News, Trump said "on a scale of zero to 10, I think it was a 12."

Diao Daming, a professor from Renmin University of China called the meeting "groundbreaking across multiple dimensions: major-country interaction models, approaches to international relations, global governance practices, and frameworks for managing global crises."

"This dialogue has charted a clear path for fostering a new type of major-country relationship and demonstrated and validated that the prospect of such a relationship aligns with the universal expectations of the international community," Diao said.

The meeting's final declaration calls for UN reform to address global challenges, expanded production and supply of refined petroleum products to shore up energy stability, recognition of the principle of state consent and respect for immunities of state officials. It also mentions dialogue on nuclear risk reduction and non-proliferation.

He Weiwen, a senior fellow at the Center for China and Globalization, told the *Global Times* that the first point has broad implications because it reaffirms the UN's mandate to maintain international peace and security. Amid continued concern over the possible use of nuclear weapons, the three countries reaffirmed that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought" and agreed to discuss ways to reduce nuclear risks and prevent proliferation.

China has long championed nuclear non-proliferation, and trilateral dialogue can help strengthen global nuclear security, said He.

The trilateral meeting represents a new way for major powers to consult as equals on global governance under the principles of the UN Charter. It marks "a historic innovation in major-power relations in the new era and underscores the responsibility major powers bear for safeguarding world peace and advancing global governance," said He.

In response to a question on how the consensus reached at the meeting will be followed up, and how China views its own role, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated that China will work with Russia and the US to fully and efficiently implement the consensus of the trilateral meeting, maintain communication and coordination at the working level, and make unremitting efforts toward building a better world.

Global Times

Spain's general strike a 'success,' say communists and unions

Spain's first nationwide general strike in 14 years brought workers, tenants, students, and pensioners into the streets on 11 November. A day of picket lines ended with massive afternoon demonstrations in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Málaga, and dozens of other cities, despite foul weather.

The 24-hour walkout was called by Spain's two largest labor federations, the Workers' Commissions (CCOO) and the General Union of Workers (UGT), together with tenants' unions and smaller labor groups, including the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) and National Confederation of Labour (CNT). Its slogan was simple: "Wages, housing, prices."

For many Spanish workers, those three words describe a squeeze that has become unbearable. The progressive coalition government led by Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has raised the minimum wage and pensions, but soaring rents and home prices have eaten away the gains. The unions are demanding general raises of 4% to 7%, a minimum wage increase of at least 7% in 2027, price controls, and full enforcement of Spain's Right to Housing Law.

Anger had been building since late September, when the eviction of 87-year-old Maricarmen Abascal, who later died, set off protests and youth encampments in public squares such as Madrid's Puerta del Sol. On 2 October, the conservative People's Party (PP) and the far-right Vox voted down the government's emergency housing decrees. Sánchez responded by calling a snap general election for 29 November.

For the Communist Party of Spain (PCE), the strike was about the future both on the job and at the ballot box. Writing in the party's newspaper, *Mundo Obrero*, days before the walkout, PCE General Secretary Enrique Santiago warned that "a possible government of the radical right and extreme right in Spain is not a mere hypothesis."

He accused the PP of dropping any firewall against Vox and of joining Vox in a drive to dismantle public pensions and services. Gains like labor reform, higher wages and pensions, and intervention in the electricity market, he wrote, were won through the struggle of the left and the unions.

After the strike, Santiago, who is running in Seville on the ticket of the left coalition Frente Amplio, called the day "an intergenerational success." He said union contracts should include measures guaranteeing access to housing, which he called a constitutional right.

CCOO leader Unai Sordo told union delegates gathered in Madrid's Plaza de Cibeles that no government could ignore workers with average incomes who can no longer afford rent or a mortgage. Rejecting right-wing claims that the strike was an election stunt, he said: "We are not a political party, and we do not take orders from anyone."

The day was marred by police charges and pepper spray against picket lines at Madrid's Mercamadrid wholesale market and elsewhere. At Mercamálaga, in Málaga, Ernesto Alba, general secretary of the Communist Party of Andalusia and a regional lawmaker, was reportedly assaulted.

"Demonstrations and picket lines are not crimes," Santiago said. CCOO and UGT announced legal action, with Sordo declaring that "there is no democratic society without a democratic police force."

Raquel Arranz Parejo, general secretary of the Union of Communist Youth of Spain, argued in *Mundo Obrero* that the strike was "deeply political" but only one step in building working-class power. "Neither the encampments nor the strike itself are the end," she wrote, "but one of the parts that must turn the gears."

Spain will have a general election on 29 November.

People's World



Santiago de Compostela. Photo: CNT – (CC BY 4.0)

demonstrations and picket lines are not crimes

Nuclear war survivors protest Japan weapons move

The Hiroshima Council against A and H Bombs (Hiroshima *Gensuikyo*) and the Hiroshima Federation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Hiroshima *Hidankyo*) have held a protest against the government's move to introduce an exception to Japan's Three Non-Nuclear Principles.

The exception would allow nuclear weapons to be brought into the country in the event of an 'emergency.'

The groups demonstrated in front of the Atomic Bomb Dome in Hiroshima City.

The government is considering the change as part of the review of the three key national security-related documents slated for the end of the year.

Holding banners that read, "Withdraw the move to revise the three principles!" 90 protesters, including Japanese Communist Party prefectural assembly member Fujii Toshiko and JCP city assembly member Fujimoto Satoshi, shouted in chorus, "We'll never allow the entry of nuclear arms to Japan!"

Hiroshima Hidankyo head Sakuma Kunihiko pointed out that the three principles have been confirmed repeatedly as a national policy through unanimous Diet (Japan's parliament) resolutions, adding that the government's move is totally unacceptable.

JCP Ohira Yoshinobu, former member of the House of Representatives, criticised the Takaichi government for intending to shut Hibakusha's call for abolishing nuclear weapons out from the Diet with cuts in the number of seats. He said, "Let us raise our voices to demand the protection of the three non-nuclear principles! Let us force the government to protect peace and democracy!"

Japan Press Weekly

Statement from the Australian Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines

We, members of ACHRP, strongly condemn the brutal attacks of the Philippine National Police (PNP) on people exercising their democratic rights to peaceful protest and freedom of assembly. While our Prime Minister watched as the Australian government signed the Australian Cooperation Defence Agreement, further embedding us in the brutality of the Philippine State Forces, we in the solidarity movement watched with horror, alarm, and anger as:

- 296 protesters from the Southern Luzon area, including elderly, indigenous peoples and children, were arrested and forced into trucks
- These are detained and for hours were denied food, water, or access to legal counsel
- 9 unionists were badly beaten and arrested in Manila, one taken to hospital after being beaten unconscious
- 21 people were arrested in Central Luzon on their way to join the peaceful protests in Manila
- 3 students were arrested holding a demonstration outside their university campus in Manila and more than 500 police have surrounded UP Diliman where mainly indigenous peoples are camped, wanting to show their opposition to Pax Silica, which, if progressed, would displace them from their ancestral lands.

The brutality of the PNP exposes the length the Marcos government is willing to go to suppress dissent to appease the US government. The protests are for land, peace, and sovereignty, opposing the economic and military project, Pax Silica which threatens these, and which Trump is flying into the Philippines to promote. The Marcos regime is choosing US interests at the expense of the Filipino people.

At a gala dinner for ASEAN, Marcos recalled the memory of his father several times. Preparation for ASEAN reflected the actions of his father who covered the people's poverty with walls and paintings.

This is the same tactic Marcos Jr uses in order to hide the real reality of the majority of the Filipinos. These arrests are the biggest number of arrests of those exercising the right to protest in over two decades and are part of an increasingly worrisome pattern of the Marcos regime.

It is in this worsening environment for the Filipino people that the Australian government chooses to increase military cooperation.

We demand:

- The arrested protesters be immediately released.
- That while in custody have access to legal counsel, paralegals, and relatives while in custody.
- That they receive immediate medical attention.
- That the Australian government condemn the police brutality happening now and end military aid to the Marcos Regime.

We commend the people who, no matter what repression the Philippine governments exerts in its subservience to the US interests, continue protesting US imperialism, and assert their right to protest Trump's visit, and to resist Pax Silica.

We call on all people of good will to donate to our fund for bail and hospital and medical costs of the victims of these atrocities. Money can be donated through:

Free all Political Prisoners
Reject Pax Silica
Long Live International Solidarity
Sr Patricia Fox, Chairperson ACHRP
patfoxph@yahoo.com



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4:15pm till 5:00pm Thursday 17 December

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Guardian

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Published by
Guardian Publications Australia Ltd
299 Enmore Road
Marrickville 2204

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

Responsibility for electoral comment is taken by **T Pearson**
299 Enmore Road Marrickville 2204

Half the Sky

They shoot women in the head!

Kristina Hall

It's a statement made during a conversation about the Iran war. The statement summed up a view held regarding the status of women in Iran, as perpetuated by Western media. A lot of realities get overlooked if a myth is more convenient. That's especially true if the myth serves the needs of capital accumulation and power.

There seems to be many myths around the status of women in Iran, which led me to wonder: is western feminism potentially being used to justify or manufacture consent for the war on Iran?

Western bourgeois feminist narratives tend to reduce the struggles of Iranian women to liberation of dress. In this account, women are oppressed because they can't wear a bikini and have to wear hijab (Arabic word for veil).

With the protests against the compulsory wearing of the hijab by the Iranian 'Women, Life, Freedom' Movement in 2022, western feminist institutions actively supported these protests, with the mass cutting of hair in solidarity.

When US and Israeli bombs destroy the access of women and girls to education, they are silent. It was mostly girls who were killed in the strike on the Minab school. It shows a selective solidarity, one that determines which forms of gendered violence are recognised and which are ignored, or minimised.

This silence is not neutral. Where is the outrage for mothers who lost their daughters at the Minab school or for the women of Gaza? This selectivity has its roots in a colonial logic – some women's suffering is amplified while others are erased.

Selectivity is based on whether a particular form of suffering affects the dominant geopolitical narrative, and ultimately the capitalist enterprise. With the Women, Life, Freedom protests, which were about broader social restrictions, not just the wearing of the hijab, and included those affecting men, western feminist made the compulsory hijab issue a universal feminist issue worthy of being amplified.

This was done through the lens of backward traditional or Islamic oppression. That's not how violence perpetrated by Western powers is treated. Deaths are lamented, but the system that caused them isn't made the villain. Western feminist voices are silent on the bombing of a girl's school in Iran as a feminist issue, as it is more confronting to challenge Imperialist structures that would risk endorsing the legitimacy of the Islamic state.

There are definitely issues for women in Iran but there have also been gains. Under Islam, women have the right to maintain their identities, dignity, and hold their own property. Women aren't obliged to take their husband's name and are able to represent themselves in court and testify before a judge. They are able to seek divorce, reject marriages, and speak up when facing injustice.

Women are visible in healthcare, bureaucracy, and retail. Before the Islamic revolution, around 35% of women were literate, the number has increased to 89%. In higher education 60% of students enrolled are women. 70% of university graduates in STEM are women. 19% of board positions in start-up companies are women.

The Iranian government has also put in infrastructure to safeguard women, such as women-only public transit cars, as there have been issues around sexual harassment. The Iranian government does not have a policy of shooting women in the head for non-compliance regarding the wearing of the hijab.

A UN report has noted that Iranian security forces have engaged in beating, kicking, and slapping women and girls who are seen as failing to comply with the mandatory hijab laws and regulations. Islam unequivocally states that there should be no compulsion in religion.

So, is Western feminism being used to justify or manufacture consent for the war on Iran? If your voice is selective and supports a geopolitical narrative that facilitates sanctions and wars that subjugate for the purpose of capital, the answer is yes.

Protect the children of Gaza

The Australian Education Union (AEU), National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), and Independent Education Union (IEU) have joined together to call on the Federal government to provide urgent winter aid and the protection of children, students and education in Gaza.

With more than 285,000 members between them from early childhood, school, TAFE and university, the unions have written to Foreign Minister Penny Wong outlining the seriousness of the situation in Gaza and requesting the government act now, before more lives are lost this winter.

Floods have left thousands of families without shelter, with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reporting that more than 6,000 family shelters were destroyed, and more than 3,900 households were left without shelter.

Education International affiliate the General Union of Palestinian Teachers has confirmed that the floods have affected at least 55 learning spaces serving around 55,000 children. Floodwater also entered hospital departments, including a paediatric unit, and rainwater mixed with sewage from damaged networks, creating a serious public health risk.

OCHA has reported that more than 150,000 tents are ready for dispatch outside Gaza, however Israeli approvals are urgently needed to bring in shelter supplies and drainage equipment.

Even with these floods, airstrikes continue, with the Palestinian Ministry of Education reporting that eight school and university students had been killed by Israeli fire since the beginning of November including a 13-year-old year 8 student Jihad Naim Abu Teilakh, and a university student killed during the 4 November attack on the University College of Applied Sciences, which was bombed while students were present on campus.

The unions have made clear that as educators, they cannot accept that schools, universities, learning spaces and hospitals, the places that should be safest for children and students, have become sites of death and injury.

The unions are collectively asking the Australian government to urgently call on the government of Israel, directly and in multilateral forums, to take two immediate steps:

1. Allow winter aid into Gaza without delay, including food, water, tents, tarpaulins, blankets, drainage pumps and equipment to repair damaged sewage systems.

2. Protect children, teachers and displaced families, and take immediate measures to protect schools, universities, temporary learning spaces, hospitals and displacement sites from military strikes.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said:

"Children in Gaza are facing an appalling combination of flooding, homelessness, disease and continuing airstrikes. Thousands of families have lost their shelters, tens of thousands of children's learning spaces have been affected, and students continue to be killed.

"There are more than 150,000 tents ready to be delivered into Gaza, but the necessary approvals are not being granted. The Australian government must use its diplomatic influence to urgently press for humanitarian aid and essential supplies to be allowed to reach the people who desperately need them and ensure that schools, universities and hospitals are places of safety."

IEU Federal Secretary Brad Hayes put it clearly:

"A child cannot learn under a tarp in a flood zone or study while fearing the next airstrike. Every child in Gaza deserves the safety and hope that education provides.

"Schools and universities should be places of learning, not places of danger. We are calling for urgent action to protect students and education workers and to ensure life-saving aid reaches families without delay."

NTEU National President Alison Barnes said:

"Life saving aid needs to flow to the people of Gaza immediately. The trauma being visited upon civilians will only intensify if they are denied basic shelter and food in the depths of winter.

"Education is the great enabler that allows individuals and societies to flourish, but right now the violence and destruction are simply overwhelming. We urge the Australian government to do everything in its power to alleviate this suffering."

Australian Education Union, National Tertiary Education Union, Independent Education Union

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Gaza children. Photo: rescue.org

Macklemore releases protest single, pledges proceeds to mothers and children in Gaza

'Where's Our Love' centres on Gaza's calls for help while challenging the silence and complicity that allow suffering to continue.

"I see my babies in Hind Rajab," Macklemore sings, invoking the six-year-old Palestinian girl killed by Israeli forces whose name has become central to his protest music.

The video features Palestinian kuffiyehs, olive trees and other symbols of Palestinian heritage alongside children and solidarity demonstrations. It also includes footage of destroyed neighbourhoods, mass graves and harsh winter conditions in Gaza.

The song questions how future generations will judge those who remained silent. It also challenges the use of religion to justify hatred, with the video showing Israeli far-right minister Itamar Ben-Gvir taunting Palestinians.

The proceeds will support mothers and children in Gaza through the *Mother of Hind* Fund.

This latest release follows the Free Palestine tour, which began at Dublin's 3Arena in late October before continuing to Paris and London.

The Dublin concert featured Irish artists Hozier, KNEECAP and Beoga, alongside Palestinian singer-songwriter Lina Makoul, Dead Prez rapper M-1, and Palestinian-American DJ and producer Habibeats.

Organisers said all tour proceeds would go to organisations supporting Palestinians, including Medical Aid for Palestinians, the Palestinian Youth Movement, and HEAL Palestine.

The concerts followed Macklemore's removal from Ed Sheeran's LOOP tour in September after he called for a free Palestine during an opening set in New Jersey. According to the reports, several stadium owners threatened to withdraw Sheeran's dates unless Macklemore was removed.

Palestinian Chronicle

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