

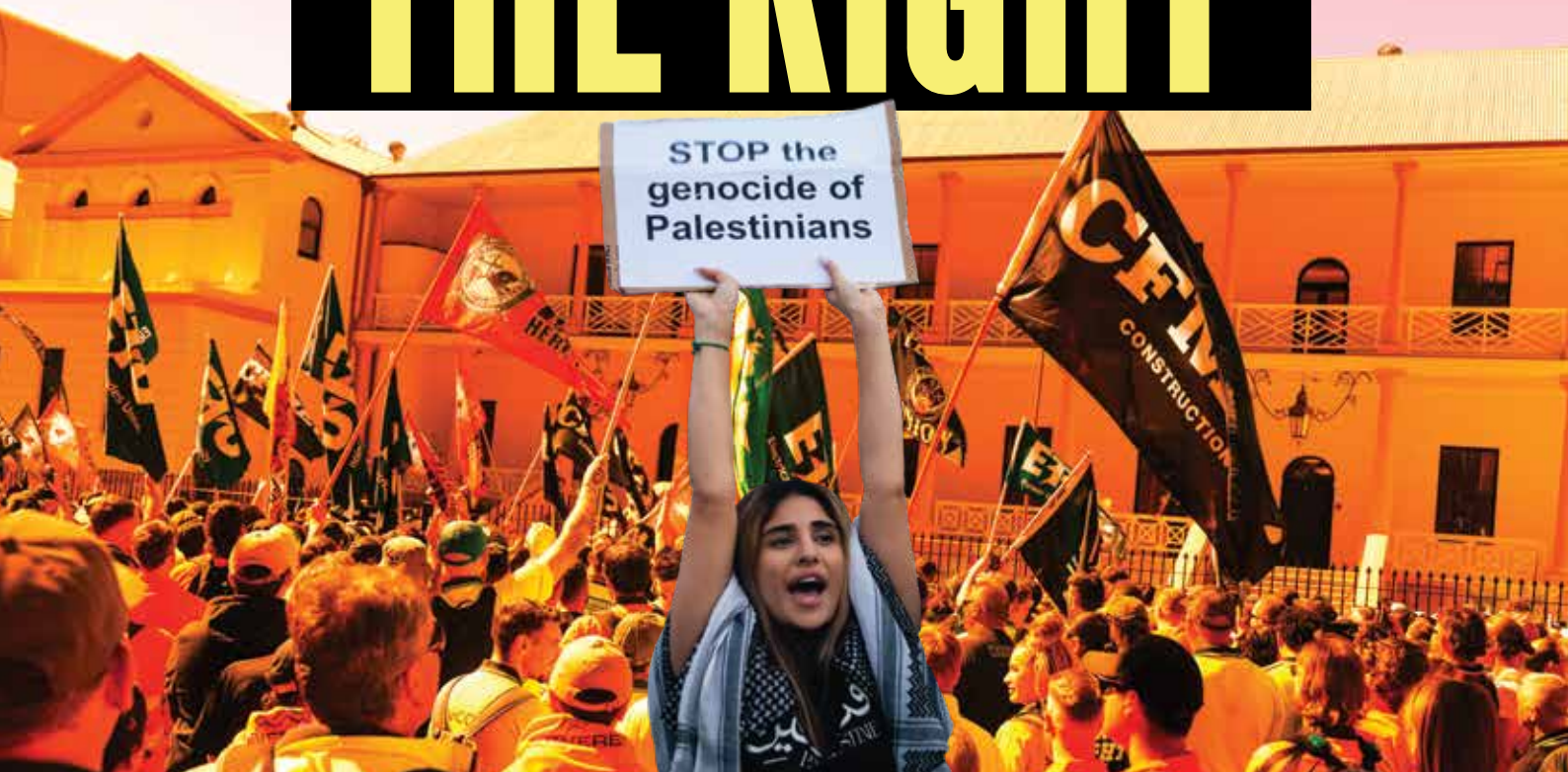
# Solidarity

Issue No. 187 / September 2024

\$3/\$5

## AUKUS, PALESTINE, CFMEU

# FIGHT LABOR'S LURCH TO THE RIGHT



**CFMEU**

How to fight Labor's administration regime

**FAR RIGHT**

Britain's racist riots

**IMPERIALISM**

Why the West hates Iran

# Solidarity **WHAT WE STAND FOR**

## Capitalism is a system of crisis and war

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

## Workers power and socialism

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

## What about elections and parliament?

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

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

## We are internationalists

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

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

We oppose imperialism and support all

genuine national liberation struggles. We oppose Australian nationalism.

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

## Oppression and liberation

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

## Linking up the struggles

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

## Educate, agitate, organise

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

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

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

## SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

### Sydney

Meeting 6.30pm every Thursday  
Brown St Hall, 8-10 Brown St  
Newtown  
For more information contact:  
Adam on 0400 351 694  
sydney@solidarity.net.au

### Melbourne

Meeting 6.30pm every Thursday  
Kathleen Syme library and community  
centre, 251 Faraday St, Carlton  
For more information contact:  
Jason on 0456 624 661  
melbourne@solidarity.net.au

### Brisbane

Contact Mark on 0439 561 196 or  
brisbane@solidarity.net.au

### Perth

Contact perth@solidarity.net.au

### Canberra

Contact canberra@solidarity.net.au

### Adelaide

Contact Robert on 0447 362 417 or  
adelaide@solidarity.net.au

Or check fb.com/soliaus/events

## CONTACT US

### Magazine office

Phone 02 8964 7116  
Fax 02 9012 0814

### Email

solidarity@solidarity.net.au

### Website

www.solidarity.net.au

### Facebook

Search for "Solidarity Magazine" or  
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## Things they say

**We can go halving the cost if you like.**

Anthony Albanese jokes to US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell about sharing the cost of a \$400 million Pacific Policing Initiative since the US was planning on a similar operation—aimed at keeping out China

**I don't think she's a very bright person. I think I am a very bright person, and a lot of people say that Donald Trump on Kamala Harris**

**I don't ramble. I'm a really smart guy, you know, really smart. I don't ramble.**

Trump rambling about rambling

**I want to hold them captive all day long. I don't want them leaving the building ... I don't want them walking down the road for a cup of coffee. We kind of figured out a few years ago how much that cost.**

Mining billionaire Chris Ellison doesn't just ban working from home, he bans staff leaving the building

**I am Abu Muhammad, a Palestinian, not an Israeli**

Released prisoner Farhan AlQadi, a Bedouin, who was then castigated by Israeli politicians who said he should be sent back to Hamas

**I can't think of an issue that's been tougher to manage in my two decades**  
Sydney Uni Vice-Chancellor Mark Scott says Gaza protests at the university were tough for management

**Destroy the family unit... Brainwash children early with the woke mind virus.**

Former Liberal National Party Senator Gerard Rennick on the plot behind childcare and why he's against pay rises for childcare workers

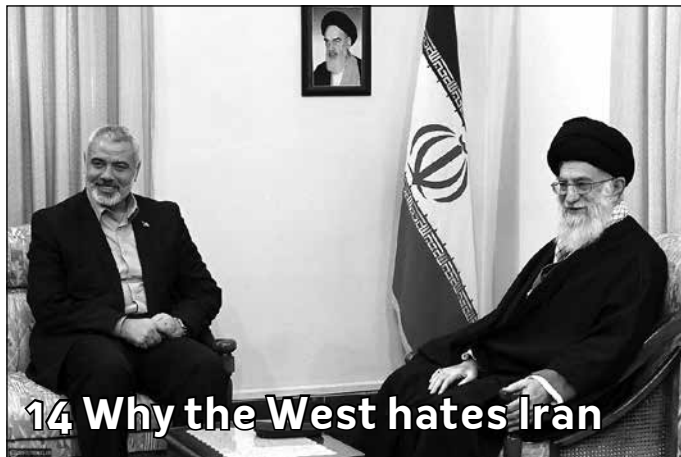
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## Rich nations hoard mpox vaccines

RICH COUNTRIES are failing to deliver mpox vaccines to the African countries at the centre of the outbreak. This threatens to speed up the spread of a new strain of the virus.

The new variant is more contagious and appears to have a higher fatality rate than the version of mpox that spread worldwide in 2022.

Individuals in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have occasionally contracted the virus from animals for decades. But this year 14,000 cases of the new variant have been detected there.

Vaccination is vital to halting the spread of viruses like mpox, as well as the emergence of new variants.

But two years after the initial strain began spreading, only 10,000 vaccines have been shipped to Africa. This repeats the failure to ensure COVID vaccines reached the continent.

The DRC's Health Minister says it needs 3.5 million doses and Africa as a whole 10 million to deal with the new outbreak.

Millions of doses are stockpiled in rich nations, with the manufacturer saying it supplied 15 million doses from 2022. Yet Europe has pledged to donate just 500,000, and the US 50,000—a fraction of the seven million it had plans to stockpile last year. Japan says it will donate two to three million, indicating the stockpiles some countries hold.

The manufacturer says it could scale up production to make ten million doses by the end of 2025, but only if countries pay an exorbitant \$200 a dose, something African nations cannot afford.

## Audio evidence withheld over Zomi Frankcom investigation

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT adviser Mark Binskin was refused access to an audio recording accompanying Israeli footage of the missile strike that killed Australian aid worker Zomi Frankcom and six others in April.

Israel refused his request on the grounds the recording was in Hebrew and Binskin wouldn't understand it, *Declassified Australia* has reported.

World Central Kitchen's José Andrés has called for its release, stating, "We need to be saying, 'what was the conversations, the radio conversations between the different officers and soldiers in charge of saying that those cars were a target'".

The Israeli soldiers responsible for the killings have escaped any criminal prosecution or punishment. Two Israeli Defence Force (IDF) soldiers were dismissed and another three reprimanded over the incident.

Israel has continued killing aid workers, with a similar missile strike on an aid convoy at the end of August killing seven people. The American Near East Refugee Aid convoy was taking medical supplies and fuel to the Emirati Hospital in Khan Younis.

A few days later the UN World Food Program was forced to suspend operations in Gaza after it was fired on at an Israeli checkpoint. No one was injured but one vehicle was hit ten times with gunfire, even after "receiving multiple clearances by Israel".

At least 289 aid workers have been killed since 7 October, according to the UNRWA.

## Union power on display as CFMEU rallies against administration



TENS OF thousands of construction workers walked off the job to protest the attack on the CFMEU on Tuesday 27 August in a nationwide strike.

Melbourne saw up to 50,000 on the streets as CFMEU members were joined by the MUA and other construction industry unions, the ETU, plumbers and AMWU.

It was a taste of union power and the potential to force Albanese to retreat.

In Sydney up to 4000 workers took over Macquarie Street outside NSW Parliament. Sacked NSW Secretary Darren Greenfield blasted "the rotten stinking Labor Party" as well as Sally McManus and the ACTU as "a sellout to working people" for supporting the attack.

"If they can make this rotten legislation to break up our union," he said, "they can do it to any union."

He warned that, "If they think by sacking the leadership our union is going to disappear they are very wrong," as chants of "CFMEU: Here to stay" roared from the crowd.

In Melbourne, ETU Victorian Secretary Troy Gray explained how the unions plan to respond, "At this stage there looks like being three or four legal challenges and there's about five unions that will fund it," despite CFMEU funds now being controlled by the administrator.

But he admitted that, "Even if we've got a strong case in court it would take six months to lodge, probably ten months after that until you get an outcome and it would be a barrister's feast."

Putting hope in the courts to overturn administration is a mistake. Even if the unions win, after spending

millions on lawyers, the government would simply change the law again to make the court case irrelevant, as it did to force through administration in the first place.

Gray also promised that other construction industry unions would hold a 1000-strong delegates meeting to support the CFMEU. "It will be a unanimous resolution from all the building industry unions to gather round the CFMEU and have a state-wide campaign to get up the [CFMEU's] recent EBA."

But there was no indication of how the CFMEU itself plans to keep organising to resist the administration.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has already threatened workers who went on strike to attend the protest, urging bosses to report them for unlawful industrial action. Albanese also threatened there would be "consequences" for attending. His new laws mean workers face up to two years' jail for obstructing the administrator.

The stopwork rallies sent a strong message to the administrators and to Albanese. But the administrators are likely to sack organisers and expel delegates who have been willing to break the anti-strike Fair Work laws over the years. Further strike action will be needed to defend them.

Construction bosses are already pushing to take advantage of the union's weakened position.

CFMEU delegates across the industry will need to organise at a rank-and-file level to respond to these attacks. All unionists need to support the CFMEU and to demand that their own union leaders oppose this vicious attack on militant unionism.

# EDITORIAL

## Build the resistance as Albanese and Labor race to the right

ALBANESE'S APPALLING union busting attack on the CFMEU with the support of the Liberals is a new low, as Labor lurches even further to the right. Albanese is desperate to prove to big business and the rich that Labor will reliably serve their interests.

Labor's attack on working class organisation and militant unionism is a serious warning. With the economy teetering on the brink of recession (growing just 1.1 per cent in the last year), Albanese is even more desperate.

There is deep anger at the government's failure to address the cost of living crisis. Wages are 4.8 per cent lower than before the pandemic, and bosses are more aggressively attacking workers fighting for wage increases.

CFMEU members at Etex have been locked out in their fight for 6 per cent. Fair Work has outlawed industrial action by ETU members at Transgrid in NSW who are fighting for 6.5 per cent for three years.

The attack on the CFMEU is part and parcel of the conservative approach Labor has adopted since it was elected in 2022. Labor has enthusiastically embraced AUKUS and US imperialism, lavishing \$368 billion on nuclear submarines but cutting back NDIS spending.

It launched its own law and order campaign, following the Liberals, when the High Court overturned indefinite immigration detention.

When Senator Fatima Payman dared to criticise Labor's sickening support for genocide in Gaza, she was hunted out of the party.

Labor refuses to consider any sanctions on Israel, with parts for the F-35 fighter jets bombing Gaza still being exported.

As Peter Dutton launched a racist scare campaign over Gaza refugees, labelling them potential terrorist sympathisers, Labor caved in, boasting it had rejected 70 per cent of the visa applications from Gaza since 7 October.

But we can't wait for the next federal election, and the prospect of independents or Greens winning the balance of power in parliament. If Labor gets away with gutting the CFMEU, every union and every campaign will be weaker.

Every Palestine activist, climate activist, or refugee supporter also needs to support the CFMEU.

Building deeper support for Palestine now can win real victories. Student general meetings have won votes supporting the right of Palestinians to



**Above: CFMEU members stop work against administration on 27 August** Photo: Aman Kapur

resist. University staff in the NTEU have already won motions supporting Boycott Divestment and Sanctions at three universities.

It's a disgrace that the majority of union leaders have supported Labor's push to put the CFMEU into administration. But they are badly out of step with their members. Every unionist and workplace should be demanding

their union backs the CFMEU.

The national strike rallies on 27 August were a fantastic display of the power that could force Albanese to retreat. But more stopwork and solidarity action will be needed.

Labor's lurch to the right can be stopped. Grassroots organising, strikes and protests are the way to fight the system and win real change.

## Israel spreads rampage to West Bank—demand sanctions now

ISRAEL IS threatening to ignite war all across the Middle East, launching its biggest military raids in the West Bank in 20 years, as well as provocations against Hezbollah and Iran.

Its Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has sabotaged Gaza ceasefire talks, intent on continuing a war that is still massacring dozens every day.

Hamas agreed to a ceasefire proposal back in May—but Netanyahu has kept inventing additional demands to prevent it. He is now insisting that Israel keeps control of the Philadelphi corridor at the border with Egypt as well as the Netzarim corridor across the centre of Gaza.

Israel is spreading the same brutal tactics it is using in Gaza into the West Bank, deliberately blowing up homes and destroying roads, water and electricity infrastructure in order to make areas uninhabitable.

Its Foreign Minister Israel Katz called for the "temporary evacuation of Palestinian residents" just as in Gaza, where Palestinians have been forcibly moved again and again as Israel reduces cities to rubble.

Israel's assault on Jenin, Tulkarem and Tubas has killed at least 30 Palestinians including an 83-year-old man.

Its assassinations of Hezbollah commanders in Lebanon have put it on the brink of war, as Hezbollah responds with strikes on Israeli targets.

Israel is a rogue state on the rampage. Western backing is allowing it to act with impunity. Last month the US approved another \$20 billion in arms sales to Israel, including fighter jets, missiles and mortar shells.

But pressure to end Western complicity is growing. The new British Labour government has suspended 30 export permits for arms sales to Israel, saying there was a "clear risk" the weapons could be used in breach of international law in Gaza.

It refused to suspend another 320 permits, including for parts for F-35 fighter jets. But the action is a sign Israel's isolation is increasing.

We need to keep fighting for Albanese to put sanctions on Israel, as well as a ban on intelligence sharing from Pine Gap, to help raise the pressure to stop Israel's war.

.....  
**If Labor gets away with gutting the CFMEU, every union and every campaign will be weaker**

## Why the CFMEU is right to break bad laws

By Luke Ottavi

THE LABOR government wants to paint the CFMEU as thuggish and criminal.

The media claims of links to organised crime or corrupt behaviour are all still just allegations—with no one found guilty and no new charges since the media campaign broke.

So instead they are depicting the union as criminal for breaking industrial laws.

Australia has some of the most restrictive anti-strike laws in the developed world.

Industrial action is illegal outside of narrow “bargaining periods” for new enterprise agreements every three or four years. This means that if an enterprise agreement is finalised, but the boss reneges on promises like safety or redundancy payments or sacks workers, strike action is forbidden.

Even during strikes, picket lines that prevent scabs or deliveries entering a worksite are illegal, helping bosses to make strikes ineffective. CFMEU members at Cross River Rail in Brisbane were recently banned from picketing anywhere within 15 metres of site entrances.

Strikes can also be banned if Fair Work decides they would “damage the economy”. This has seen power workers in NSW essentially lose any right to strike, with the companies claiming strikes might produce power failures.

Action in support of another group of workers, such as solidarity strikes in refusing to cross a picket line or to move goods subject to a union ban, are illegal “secondary boycotts”.

And strikes for political reasons are illegal, such as those against the new laws targeting the CFMEU or for Palestine.

The process of authorising legal strike action is also extremely restrictive. Unions must apply to the Fair Work Commission for a protected action ballot, have more than 50 per cent of union members return a vote and win majority support for action.

The boss must receive three days’ written notice of any industrial action, unless it is in response to action by the employer (such as a lockout), giving them ample time to prepare for any disruptions.

The CFMEU has repeatedly faced court for entering worksites without permission, stoppages to demand safety measures and other industrial action.



**Above: Unions rallying to demand the right to strike**

The union was fined \$2.4 million after it organised a two-day strike at Barangaroo in 2014 to defend a union delegate that the company sacked.

Unlawful strike action in Queensland against John Holland during enterprise bargaining at the Enoggera Army Barracks and QUT’s Kelvin Grove Campus led to \$817,500 in fines. The union had organised strikes, picket lines and swore at scabs.

One recent fine of \$168,000 that the *Financial Review* labelled “typical of the CFMEU’s contraventions” was for a 2019 incident on the West Gate Tunnel Project in Melbourne.

CFMEU officials were attempting to ensure job safety following disputes with the employer. They climbed on top of a scaffold deck to stop work, refusing to leave until safety issues were fixed.

The Fair Work Commission says the CFMEU has broken the law more than 2600 times in the past 20 years, costing the union more than \$24 million in fines.

Breaking industrial laws is not serious criminal activity—but the bosses hate it because it hurts their profits.

The CFMEU is right to defy the law to fight for safety, pay rises and workers’ rights. We need more unions willing to break bad laws—and they should refuse to pay the resulting fines as well.

It is the CFMEU’s militancy and effectiveness as a union that has put it in the sights of the bosses, the mainstream media and the government—not allegations of criminality or corruption. It deserves every worker’s support.

By Ian Rintoul

THE ALBANESE Labor government has imposed administration on the whole CFMEU construction division. Control of the union is now in the hands of Workplace Minister Murray Watt and his lackey, administrator-in-chief, King’s Counsel Mark Irving.

Irving’s administration is the most appalling act of union-busting since Labor deregistered the BLF in 1986.

Murray Watt has boasted it is, “The strongest action that any government has ever taken against any union.”

NSW Secretary Darren Greenfield and President Rita Mallia, Queensland Secretary Michael Ravbar and Assistant Secretary Jade Ingham, Victorian Assistant Secretary Derek Christopher and others have all been sacked. While National Secretary Zach Smith remains in place, he is now powerless.

The cynical claim in Mark Irving’s letter to CFMEU members that it will be “business as usual” for the CFMEU is just a lie.

The administrator has the power to remove elected delegates and the power to sack organisers employed by the union.

Six organisers in Brisbane have already been sacked. Any union organiser who has had their right of entry removed will be in the firing line for daring to break the shackles of the Fair Work Act.

And there are penalties of up to two years’ jail and almost \$1 million fines for obstructing the administrator.

Albanese has tried to put a fig leaf over the attack by appointing supposedly friendly labour lawyers or ex-union officials as administrators.

Former NTEU National Secretary Grahame McCulloch has disgracefully agreed to act as administrator for the Victorian branch.

In NSW it is Phil Pasfield, a barrister who had a name for representing unions. To his eternal shame, Chris Christodoulou, a former Unions NSW Assistant Secretary has also become an administrator.

But this can’t hide the seriousness of the attack.

In Victoria and NSW, a number of companies are either refusing to sign the new EBA or trying to revise it. Some sub-contractors have refused to pay the EBA pay increase.

When the Liberals tried to smash the MUA in 1998, every union backed it, joining picket lines to stop the

# Stop Labor's union busting attack— All out to defend the CFMEU



attempt to put scabs on the wharves. This time, shamefully, the ACTU has backed Albanese and the bosses.

But administration can still be fought.

## Opposing administration

The nation-wide rallies on Tuesday 27 August were fantastic. But one strike is not going to be enough to stop Albanese and the Master Builders.

CFMEU members should call for more strikes and a union-wide delegates meeting to show the Labor government and the bosses that administration will face active industrial resistance.

Appeals for solidarity will have to be made directly to the rank-and-file of other unions whose leaderships have gone along with the attack on the CFMEU.

Over 200 NTEU members, including nine branch presidents, have signed a letter condemning their national officials.

Waiting for a High Court challenge to rescue the CFMEU is a mistake. Even if the CFMEU wins in court, the government will just change the legislation, as they have done numerous other times.

The CFMEU is in administra-

**Above: Sydney's stopwork rally against administration on 27 August** Photo: Aman Kapur

tion for a minimum of three years—even the Queensland, WA and ACT branches, where there is not a single allegation of corruption or criminality.

In South Australia, a police investigation into the union launched by Labor Premier Peter Malinauskas in July has returned “no evidence of criminal behaviour” in the state. But the Premier has backed administration continuing anyway.

More than 270 elected union officials, including both full-time branch secretaries and construction workers serving on the union's elected councils, have been sacked.

But Labor's attack on the right to organise goes even further.

Labor accepted the Liberals' amendments which mean that hundreds of CFMEU members and officials will be banned from holding office, or any job, in any union, potentially forever, unless they can convince the Fair Work Commission to give them an exemption.

This will apply to the hundreds of officials and elected representatives such as Committee of Management members whose union positions were “vacated” when the administration began, as well as anyone sacked during the administration period.

The government wants to ensure that the union is left as weak as possible even after administration ends.

Labor is waging a full-blooded assault on union militancy. It has instructed the administrator to ensure all CFMEU officials and organisers have a record of past and continued respect for industrial laws.

This is designed to weed out anyone willing to break the Fair Work laws that impose severe restrictions on the right to strike. But in construction in particular, defending safety and workers' rights on the job depends on breaking bad laws.

The takeover of the union has nothing to do with bikies in the union or unproven allegations of corruption. Labor and the building bosses want to smash union militancy.

## Striking back

The wider union movement needs to understand the scale of the attack—and the need for every union member to defend the CFMEU.

Striking back is the only way to resist Labor's union busting.

Construction bosses everywhere will use administration as a chance to grind down union organisation and undermine EBAs.

At Etex, in Matraville, Sydney, where CFMEU members have been locked out after a one-day strike for their pay claim for 18 per cent over three years, the boss has said openly he will only negotiate with the administrator, not the CFMEU.

Organisation on the job is going to be crucial to holding together the rank-and-file networks of delegates and activists that can fight the boss and administration.

The CFMEU's Committee of Management has been banned from meeting but a new rank-and-file committee can be elected to maintain democracy and keep rank-and-file control of the union.

Cross-union “Defend the CFMEU” committees can help build solidarity across unions and in the community. The administrator has to know that every attack will be resisted.

The old CFMEU saying, “If provoked, we will strike,” needs to be turned into action.

## UNIONS

By Wasmiya Alashour

STUDENTS ACROSS the country are holding Student General Meetings (SGM) in an effort to win wider support for Palestine and end universities' complicity with Israel.

The large number of attendees at the SGM at Sydney University's (USYD) in early August has produced increased engagement around Palestine on campus.

Around 600 students voted to cut ties, support Palestinians' right to resistance and support a single, secular, democratic, Palestinian state.

However there is still a need to convince students of the importance of protest. Students Against War (SAW) called a follow up rally targeting a medical exchange scholarship with the Israel Institute of Technology (Technion) which offers up to \$5000 for Doctor of Medicine students. Students, staff and alumni from the Faculty of Medicine and Health have signed an open letter calling on the Medical School to condemn the genocide and the attacks of healthcare workers in Gaza, alongside ending this partnership.

Tawhid, a medical student, told the crowd the university's, "legacy will be a legacy of genocide. Technion have developed remote-controlled bulldozers that have demolished Palestinian homes and are now building mass grave sites for the numerous killed."

Despite a relatively small turnout of around 40 students, the rally saw contingents from Social Work and Education, and Conservatorium of Music students.

Students at Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra scored a win on divestment with management announcing that the university, "will not invest in controversial weapons manufacturers and civilian small arms manufacturers." This follows student campaigning including their Gaza Solidarity Encampment, and protests outside ANU Council.

The university has over \$1 million invested in weapons companies. But the ban covers only "controversial weapons" including cluster munitions, chemical and biological weapons and nuclear weapons outside the non-proliferation treaty.

This deliberately excludes depleted uranium, produced by Northrup Grumman, which provides scholarships and research programs at the university. The munitions, which Israel has used in Gaza in the past, cause lethal effects such as lung cancer.

The university also maintains other research partnerships with weapons

## Student General Meetings support Palestine



**Above: Sydney Uni students march to the Medical Faculty to protest links with Israel's Technion University**

companies, and allows the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) to hold an office in ANU in an effort to recruit students and normalise ASD's administration of the Pine Gap Spy Base.

Following the announcement, around 150 students participated in an SGM to call for the end of ties with weapons companies and an additional motion by Staff and Students Against War (SSAW) to end an exchange partnership with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the ASD.

Melbourne Uni held an unofficial SGM on 15 August calling for the university to cut ties, due to the student union's fear of legal action resulting

from an official motion supporting BDS.

As a result, "we had a 'mass student meeting', with a turnout of 300 people," Students Against War activist Liz explained. "We went around with a petition to raise motions to defend the Palestinians' right to resist, and a one state solution."

"We're also organising a rally to cut ties with Israeli universities, targeting the Jerusalem-Melbourne joint PhD, an exchange program of 13 students with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which has an IDF base on campus."

The struggle for the student intifada will continue until Palestine is free from the river to the sea.

## NTEU members back BDS and Palestine

SUPPORT FOR Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel within the university staff union, the NTEU, is growing.

In May, over 300 staff at Sydney Uni voted for an academic boycott of Israeli institutions and to cut all ties with arms companies, including research funding and scholarships from the defence industry.

Similar BDS motions have now been passed at Melbourne University and UNSW, with UTS set to vote later this month.

Universities across the country have deep ties to weapons companies, including research partnerships with companies.

Lockheed Martin for instance, which makes the F-35 fighter jets, has programs at Melbourne Uni, Adelaide Uni, Newcastle Uni, ANU and University of Queensland. Many universities also have exchange partnerships with Israeli universities such as Technion and the Hebrew University that are deeply implicated in its military system.

Political repression has been fierce, with *The Australian* targeting pro-Palestine academics and staff at Sydney University facing disciplinary action for raising the Palestinian flag. But support for Palestine has steadily grown on campus.

NTEU members from universities across the country convened a national "NTEU for Palestine" meeting on 3 September attended by over 220 members. This backed a BDS motion going to the union's National Council meeting as well as a national day of action for NTEU members on 23 October.

The meeting also passed a solidarity motion with the CFMEU, and collected over \$1000 in donations for locked out CFMEU members at Etext in Sydney.

These efforts show how we can both broaden support for Palestine at a workplace level, and build the pressure for sanctions on Israel both at a local level and on the Albanese government.

**Matte Rochford**

.....  
**Students at ANU in Canberra scored a win on divestment**



# Albanese fans Islamophobia in attack on Palestine protests

By Jack Stublej

THE ALBANESE government is stirring up Islamophobia to try to demonise the Palestine movement and justify its efforts to keep out Palestinian refugees from Gaza.

Under increasing pressure over its refusal to impose sanctions or even condemn Israel over its genocide, Albanese has resorted to desperate smears against those protesting for Palestine.

Albanese has continually claimed that the protests are responsible for undermining social cohesion.

This has been part of a pattern of attack from the government. Bill Shorten has smeared Greens MPs for attending what he labelled “aggressive demonstrations” outside politicians’ offices over Gaza.

Meanwhile, Peter Dutton has insisted that Labor’s responses to the protests have not been nearly harsh enough.

Last month the Albanese government raised the terror threat level from “possible” to “probable”, with the Prime Minister himself linking this decision to Palestine “actions outside electoral offices” and The Greens’ refusal to “lower the temperature of debate”.

This represents fearmongering and Islamophobia directed against Palestinians and the pro-Palestine movement in Australia.

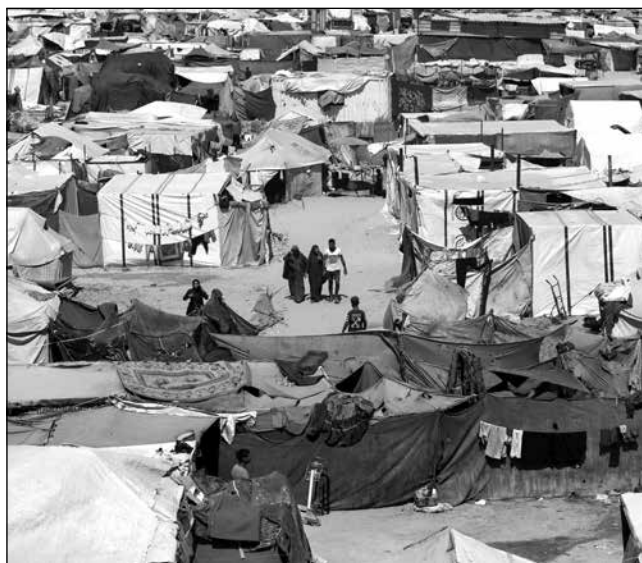
In contrast to 2022, when the government took months to downgrade the terror threat after a recommendation from ASIO, the threat level was raised almost immediately in response to ASIO’s latest briefing.

ASIO chief Mike Burgess claims, “Anti-authority beliefs are growing; trust in institutions is eroding.”

However, the reason for this is not, as the government puts it, Palestine protesters or The Greens undermining the social fabric of Australian society. It is Israel’s horrifying actions in Gaza and the government’s disgraceful ongoing support for Israel, recently confirmed by the International Court of Justice to be an apartheid state.

Albanese’s attack on the Palestine movement mirrors that of Britain’s recently defeated Tory government.

Former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak attempted to conflate the Palestine movement and Muslims with terrorism through his characterisation of university encampments as “extremist” and denouncing slogans like



**Above: Palestinians are living in makeshift camps in Gaza while the Australian government refuses them refugee status**  
Photo: UNRWA

“From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” as antisemitic.

Just as the Coalition in Australia has explicitly called for harsher crackdowns on protests, the Tories in the UK labelled the pro-Palestine movement “as un-British as it is undemocratic” to ramp up the police response.

UK Labour leader and now Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, supported these condemnations as necessary to “defend our values”.

Dutton’s attempt to outdo the government has led to him to call for a ban on any refugees from Gaza, claiming “ Hamas sympathisers and antisemites” might be able to enter the country because of lax checks.

Independent MP Zali Steggall rightly branded Dutton’s demand as “racist”.

Dutton, deliberately ignoring the extensive security checks conducted by both Israel and Egypt on any

Palestinians trying to leave Gaza, is intentionally amplifying this message: Palestinians by their very existence are dangerous and support for resistance against Israel is unacceptable.

But while the Coalition voices open Islamophobia, Labor has been putting it into practice by denying safety and support to Palestinian refugees.

It boasted that of the roughly 10,000 applicants for tourist visas to enable people to escape Gaza, more than 7000 have been denied, usually on the grounds that they were unable to prove they would return home and were likely to apply for refugee status—a right they should have been granted in the first place given they are fleeing genocide and mass destruction of their homes.

The government’s attitude to Palestinians stands in direct contradiction to the swift action taken to provide pathways to Ukrainians, Afghans and Syrians fleeing wars.

Additionally, the government is refusing to provide consular assistance to any Palestinians that do not meet an incredibly narrow definition of “close family” of Australian citizens, limited to their partners, children under 18, and parents. This has meant that of the 2922 visas granted, only about 1300 people have made it to Australia.

It is crucial that the Palestine movement confronts this Islamophobia head on and backs Palestinians’ right to resist Israel, which is recognised under international law as legitimate in the face of foreign occupation.

The real terrorism is Israel’s deliberate targeting of civilians in Gaza through massacres, starvation and the obliteration of housing and basic infrastructure.

## Student activist Bea Tucker’s expulsion overturned

STUDENT ACTIVIST Bea Tucker has had their expulsion from ANU in Canberra overturned by a university appeals committee, in a victory for free speech and the campaign for Palestine.

Bea was disciplined for comments during an ABC interview where they expressed solidarity with the Palestinian struggle and the right under international law to resist Israeli occupation, saying, “ Hamas deserves our unconditional support ... Not because I agree with their strategy, [I’m in] complete disagreement with that.”

An open letter opposing the ex-

pulsion was signed by 1200 people.

At campuses across the country, students have faced disciplinary action for speaking out and taking action against the genocide in Gaza.

Many universities, including ANU, have links with weapons companies and Israeli universities.

University administrations have set out to silence students and staff who are opposing the genocide, and demanding universities cuts ties with the Israeli apartheid state.

It should never be a crime to uphold the right of oppressed people to resist or to campaign for Palestine.

.....  
**While Dutton voices open Islamophobia, Labor has been putting it into practice by denying support to Palestinian refugees**

# Labor backs bigger US airforce presence in northern Australia

By Adam Adelpour

THE HIGH-LEVEL AUSMIN talks between Australia and the US in August underlined the Albanese government's commitment to deepening its ties with the US empire.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Richard Marles and Minister for Foreign Affairs Penny Wong travelled to the US for the talks with US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The agreements made at the meeting expand the militarisation of the Australian continent, intensify the US military presence in Australia and accelerate the drive to war on China.

The US military footprint in Australia is set to grow further as part of a plan to establish Australia as a major base from which the US can menace China. Rotation of US military aircraft through upgraded bases in WA and the Northern Territory will increase.

Following the talks Lloyd Austin said these deployments would include more visits by "bombers, fighter aircraft, and Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft". Two thousand US Marines already rotate through Darwin under an existing agreement.

Progress also continues on plans to pre-position US Army equipment and materiel in Queensland and Victoria.

The military build-up is deadly serious. The talks noted the progress of US-funded upgrades to the Tindal Air Force Base in the Northern Territory, which will enable it to house six nuclear weapons-capable B-52 bombers. Disturbingly, under existing arrangements the US is not required to notify the Australian government if the bombers are carrying nuclear weapons.

AUSMIN also cemented the expansion of Australia's military-industrial complex and the integration of arms production here with the US war machine.

By December agreements will be finalised for the production of precision strike missiles and Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (GMLRS) in Australia.

Australia will be the first nation outside the US to produce the weapon. The intent is to produce volumes for "global consumption", with demand for the GMLRS at an all-time high.

This militarisation is coming to Sydney's suburbs. The GMLRS rocket systems will be produced through a



Above: AUSMIN 2024 talks held in Annapolis Photo: US State Department

partnership with US war-profiteers Lockheed Martin at Orchard Hills near Penrith in western Sydney. The facility will form part of a defence industry corridor planned by the state government around the new Western Sydney airport.

## AUKUS 2.0

Alongside the AUSMIN talks the Albanese government has signed a new agreement to allow the transfer of nuclear material to Australia under the \$368 billion AUKUS nuclear submarine deal with the US and UK.

The extraordinarily expensive nuclear subs have nothing to do with defending Australia and everything to do with ramping up aggression against China. Their distinguishing feature is that they can lurk off China's coast for extended periods without refuelling.

The new agreement reveals the dangers the nuclear subs pose aside from their military use. Under AUKUS 2.0 Australia will indemnify the US and the UK "against any liability, loss, costs, damage or injury" arising from using the dangerous and dirty nuclear technology.

The new agreement also boosts the push for Australia to become a major arms manufacturer. It removes most licensing requirements for trade in controlled military goods, services and technologies with both the US and the UK.

Richard Marles is celebrating this as a boon for arms manufacturers which will "revolutionise defence trade".

This aspect of AUKUS is supposed to encourage collaboration on advanced military technology. The kind of projects in the pipeline are chilling and include multinational experiments to develop AI-driven drone swarms for military use.

The aggression towards China at the heart of the deepening US alliance was summed up in a joint statement following the AUSMIN talks.

China's harassment of Philippine fishing vessels in the South China Sea was condemned as "inconsistent with international law" as participants declared they would maintain a "steady and long-term presence" in the South and East China Seas and accelerate the military build-up in Australia.

The hypocrisy of the US and Australia posing as guardians of international law is jaw-dropping. Just over a week later Antony Blinken approved \$20 billion in additional arms sales to Israel, despite the International Court of Justice charging it with genocide and saying it is practising apartheid. And Albanese continues to allow the export of parts for the F-35 fighter jets used by Israel.

The bloody record of the US in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine is clear. The Albanese government is deepening an alliance with the world's most destructive state, turning Australia into a major manufacturer of weapons of death and helping push the region towards a catastrophic confrontation between nuclear powers. There must be anti-imperialist resistance every step of the way.

.....  
**The hypocrisy of the US and Australia posing as guardians of international law is jaw-dropping**

# Black incarceration crisis deepens as Labor races to the right

By Paddy Gibson

ABORIGINAL AND Torres Strait Islander people are the most incarcerated group on the face of the planet.

When mass Black Lives Matter protests were on the streets in 2020, Albanese said these “horrific” statistics “diminish us all”.

But since Albanese took office, there has been an unprecedented increase in both the number of Indigenous prisoners and the rate of over-representation.

In the first quarter of 2022 there were 12,556 Indigenous adults in prison, making up 31 per cent of the total prison population. Over the same period in 2024, there were a record 15,070 Indigenous adult prisoners, now 35 per cent of those held behind bars.

Indigenous youth now make up 59 per cent of the youth prison system and are an appalling 29 times more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to be locked up.

These shocking figures are the result of an intensifying, racist law and order agenda being driven by Labor governments in the middle of cost-of-living and housing crises that are hitting Black people the hardest.

Albanese has refused to take any action to create Black employment, deal with the mass homelessness or fund self-determining programs. Aboriginal legal services have suffered cuts and had to shut down services.

Labor initially put all its focus on the showpiece “Voice” referendum. Rather than fight Dutton’s rabid racism through the campaign, Labor emphasised that the Voice would have no real power.

Following the disastrous campaign loss, Albanese wiped his hands, telling 2BG, “I’m not Indigenous, so it wasn’t a loss to me.”

And in the wake of the Voice defeat, Labor has shifted even further to the right, now saying Indigenous policy initiatives must have bipartisan support.

## State law and order agenda

In August, the Country Liberal Party won a landslide victory in the NT election.

The party ran a vicious campaign, promising to lower the age of criminal responsibility to 10 and reintroduce spit hoods, banned due to their extreme risk and use in torturing



**Above: Black Lives Matter march against deaths in custody in Sydney in 2022**

Indigenous youth.

But the road to CLP victory was paved by NT Labor, who oversaw a punitive law and order agenda when in power.

Labor refused to seriously deal with the appalling poverty, disempowerment and racism suffered by Indigenous people across the NT, the root causes of the youth crime crisis in urban centres like Alice Springs.

Instead, they beefed up police numbers and powers, tightened bail laws and brought in an extreme youth curfew.

Labor promised more punishment if elected. They could never defeat the CLP on this terrain.

State Labor governments across the country are running the same agenda. In Queensland, Labor is trying to outbid the Liberals with “tough on crime” policies in the lead up to the October election.

Queensland Labor has already funded new detention centres, suspended the state’s Human Rights Act to pass youth bail laws and removed clauses which stipulate youth detention should be a “last resort”.

A new report by the Inspector of Detention Services in August revealed Black youth in North Queensland’s Cleveland youth prison had been placed in isolation for more than 70 days straight and held overnight in tiny concrete rooms with no running water or toilets.

In WA, August saw another death of an Indigenous young person in the notorious Banksia Hill detention centre, the second within a year.

Meanwhile, at the federal level, Labor is continuing to ignore the deep crisis of murdered and missing Aboriginal women and girls, despite the handing down of a report in August that followed a major parliamentary inquiry.

Durambul journalist and scholar Amy McQuire slammed the lack of action from the inquiry and the failure of media to report on the crisis:

“The message that is sent to Aboriginal women is this country does not care.”

The inquiry documented shocking violence at the hands of perpetrators and the state, along with systematic failings of police and other agencies to investigate the deaths and disappearances of Aboriginal women.

Sixteen per cent of homicide victims and 20 per cent of missing women are recorded as Indigenous, a serious undercount given the evidence presented of disgracefully inadequate and incomplete data.

The inquiry heard many stories of the way that Aboriginal women targeted for violence found themselves criminalised and incarcerated, or suffered the forced removal of their children.

Many of the families of disappeared Aboriginal women who presented to this inquiry have fought for years for justice, only to be slapped down by silence and inaction.

Their courage needs to inspire a renewed movement for Aboriginal rights that can get back to the streets and take this racist system head on.

**Labor has shifted even further to the right, saying Indigenous policy initiatives must have bipartisan support**

## Chance to win change after students bring down Bangladeshi regime

By Angus Dermody

IN EARLY August, a mass student uprising in Bangladesh overthrew the 15-year rule of dictator Sheikh Hasina.

The protests involved tens of thousands taking to the streets, facing down intense and violent repression until Hasina fled the country. In her place is an interim government headed by banker Muhammad Yunus.

The protests began in June when the High Court reinstated the unjust quota system which reserved 30 per cent of all public sector jobs for the families of those who fought in Bangladesh's war of liberation in 1971.

In practice it was a way for the government to grant favours to its supporters and prop up its authoritarian rule.

The anger also ran deeper. Despite economic growth inequality has increased, with the number of individuals worth more than \$5 million growing between 2010 and 2019 at the fastest rate in the world. This is the product of widespread corruption and tax evasion.

Meanwhile workers, students and the poor endure serious poverty and repression. Young people face particularly high rates of unemployment and university graduates struggle to find work.

While the overthrow of the dictatorship is cause for celebration the question of what comes next is equally important.

Bangladesh's interim government includes politicians, lawyers, bankers and former generals—but also, significantly, leaders of the student movement that brought down Hasina. The military, which was forced to withdraw support for Hasina, has been kept out of government at the demand of the students.

Interim leader Muhammad Yunus was appointed as the choice of the student movement after a meeting which also included the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the military. Yunus has a reputation as a “banker for the poor”, having won a Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his work in microfinance.

Yunus is yet to present a proposed slate of reforms, although he has promised free and fair elections soon. While he has recognised the students' concerns, he is also eager to restore stability for the ruling class of Bangladesh.



**Students on the streets in Bangladesh against the job quota system in July** Photo: Rayhan Ahmed/Wikimedia Commons

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**While Yunus has recognised the students' concerns, he is also eager to restore stability for the ruling class**

In his first speech as leader, he saluted the student movement and called for an investigation into the killings of hundreds of student protesters. He also pledged support for the million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

At the same time, he reaffirmed his commitment to business, stating that, “We won't tolerate any attempt to disrupt the global clothing supply chain, in which we are a key player.”

The textiles industry makes up around 85 per cent of Bangladesh's exports but is notorious for the exploitative conditions of its four million workers.

They receive poverty wages and attempts to unionise are met with severe repression.

In April 2013, more than 1100 garment workers were killed in Rana Plaza when the building housing their factories collapsed.

In the aftermath of the protests, Bangladesh faces new challenges.

The economy and the civil service have suffered. Many police officers have fled, after facing rage from the population for their years brutally enforcing the rule of the old government.

This has created a vacuum exploited by gangs and seen violence continue in the streets. Millions of Bangladeshis have also been seriously impacted by floods in the east and south-east.

Different political players will be looking to capitalise on this instability. Either of the major parties on

the right, the neoliberal BNP and the Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami, could gain from the political vacuum.

The military will also be eager to regain the power that they enjoyed under Hasina.

### Outside powers

India, China and the US will also be watching the situation closely. Previously Bangladesh has had a relatively neutral position and tried to balance between the three, although it has recently strengthened its relationship with China.

A closer relationship with the US would offer American imperialism a foothold close to China and a strategic position guarding China's major trade routes in the Bay of Bengal, according to an article published by the US Naval Institute.

This has wrongly led some to suggest that the overthrow of Hasina was a “colour revolution” orchestrated by outside powers. But the uprising was a response to decades of economic and political suffering inflicted on students, workers and the poor.

This moment is crucial for the future of democracy in Bangladesh. The students and workers who brought down Hasina must keep up the fight to ensure the military or a new authoritarian regime does not take power.

Workers also need to lead a fight against inequality and for a government that delivers jobs and basic services to benefit the mass of the population. This is the only path to real change.

# Anti-refugee riots in Britain as far right takes to the streets

By David Glanz

A SURGE of far right rallies and violence across Britain and Northern Ireland aimed at refugees and migrants shocked millions last month.

In the northern town of Rotherham, about 700 racists gathered on 4 August outside a hotel used to house asylum-seekers chanting, “Get them out.” The rabble stormed the hotel and lit a fire inside.

Ahmed was inside the hotel and told *Solidarity’s* sister paper *Socialist Worker*, “I came to Britain from Afghanistan to get away from being killed, for safety for me and my family.

“And then on Sunday it felt like I was going to be burned. They wanted to kill us.”

Within days, mass mobilisations of anti-fascists turned the tide. On 7 August, tens of thousand mobilised across the country.

Some 7000 took to the streets in the London suburb of Walthamstow. A similar number rallied in the south-west city of Bristol, chanting “Refugees are welcome here” and “Free Palestine”.

In almost every place the far right had said they would march they were either massively outnumbered or failed to show up at all.

It was a similar story on 17 August for a national day of action called by Stand Up To Racism.

In the south coast city of Portsmouth, where 400 anti-racists turned out to oppose 40 from the far right, the mobilisation was supported by three unions, the local trades and labour council and a local Labour MP.

## Official racism

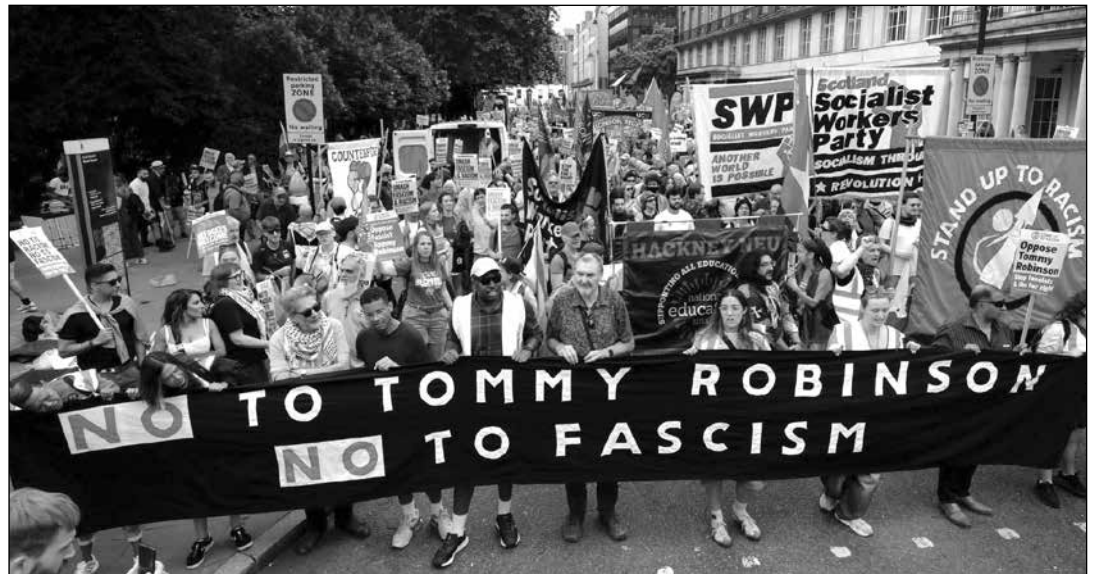
The wave of hate has been driven by years of official racism coming from the top of society.

The former Conservative government took advice from their Australian counterparts such as former Liberal leader Alexander Downer on how to implement cruel border control policies.

They promised to “stop the boats” while calling desperate contingents of refugees crossing the English Channel an invasion.

They unleashed raids on the homes of asylum-seekers, taking them to detention centres including barges functioning as floating prisons.

And the Conservatives proposed deporting asylum-seekers to the



**Above: Anti-racists mobilised to counter the far right after the shocking riots** Photo: Stand up to Racism UK

African nation of Rwanda—deliberately mimicking Australia’s policy of offshore detention in Papua New Guinea and Nauru.

Years of fearmongering saw the racist Reform Party led by stockbroker Nigel Farage, a friend of Donald Trump, win more than 4.1 million votes (14 per cent) and five seats in the national election held on 4 July.

That’s why when prominent British fascist Tommy Robinson (whose real name is Stephen Christopher Yaxley-Lennon) called a rally in London on 27 July, 15,000 racists took to the streets.

The event was a sea of St George’s and Union Jack flags—interspersed with Israeli flags and banners supporting Donald Trump.

And marchers chanted Islamophobic slogans such as, “This is fucking England, you can stick Islam up your arse.”

## Too cruel

Many hoped the new Labour government of Sir Keir Starmer would turn the tide on racism—but it has carried on where the Conservatives left off.

Labour abandoned the Rwanda plan, not because it was too cruel but because it was unworkable.

Instead they said they would be tougher than the Conservatives and unleashed what they boasted would be a (northern) summer blitz of deportations.

Labour home affairs minister Yvette Cooper has since doubled down, ordering 14,000 deportations between now and Christmas and saying that asylum-seekers must be

rounded up and “sent home”.

The message from the top is clear—migrants are a threat to society, and people are right to want them out. And the entire political establishment has gone along with it.

Britain’s rulers may not want fascist riots on the streets but they are happy to punish refugees and foment racism to distract attention from declining wages, the collapse of the National Health Service and attacks on civil liberties.

That’s why British socialists are arguing that anti-racists cannot look to the police, the courts or politicians to hold back the far right, who will hope the anti-fascist rallies in August were a temporary obstacle.

Continuing resistance to the far right must come from below, uniting unionists and migrant communities, socialists and those who voted Labour in July.

We are living through a period of polarisation that can lead to people moving to the left or the right.

Millions in Britain—and elsewhere, including Australia—are angry at the damage that capitalism is unleashing on their lives and our planet.

The left needs to argue a way forward based on class struggle and working class unity that taps into that anger and directs it at those at the top who are responsible for the misery, not at migrants and refugees.

As Chantelle Lunt, a Labour councillor active with Merseyside Black Lives Matter, put it, “The only way to get rid of hate is together—the same people coming for migrants come for asylum-seekers and LGBT+ people.”

.....  
**Britain’s rulers may not want fascist riots on the streets but they are happy to punish refugees and foment racism**

# IMPERIALISM AND THE MIDDLE EAST WHY THE WEST HATES IRAN

US and Australian hostility to Iran is not driven by concern at the regime’s repression at home but by competition for influence in the Middle East, writes **Miro Sandev**

IRAN VOWED to retaliate with another attack on Israel following the Israeli assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh on Iranian soil.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has accused Iran of “promoting conflict and division” in the Middle East. Many US and Israeli politicians have threatened to wipe it off the face of the earth.

But it is the US, Israel and their allies that are the biggest threat to peace in the region. Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians, armed and supported by the US. It has carried out assassinations of the political leader of Hamas and a senior commander of Hezbollah, torpedoing ceasefire talks.

The US killed millions of Iraqis and Afghans through its brutal invasion and occupation of those countries. Its ally Saudi Arabia has murdered half a million Yemenis.

Western hostility to Iran is not based on respect for human rights or freedom. It comes from the fact that Iran has become one of the main imperialist rivals to the West in the Middle East.

But at the same time, we shouldn’t have any illusions in the Iranian state. It is not leading any genuinely anti-imperialist struggle but instead has its own imperialist interests in mind.

## From ally to 1979

For many decades Iran was a loyal ally to Western imperialism.

Following the Second World War nationalist sentiment against Western control of Iran’s oil grew. In 1951 Mohammed Mossadegh was elected Prime Minister and nationalised the oil industry.

But he was removed from power by a military coup engineered by the CIA with the help of British intelligence. A new military dictatorship

was created under the Shah. For the next 25 years Iran became one of the main pillars of US imperialism in the Middle East. In 1973 the capital Tehran became the Middle East headquarters for the CIA.

The Shah brutally suppressed all the movements of trade unionists, national minorities as well as the communist and Islamist opposition.

The current Iranian state emerged out of the 1979 revolution that overthrew the Shah. The Islamist movement of the Ayatollahs successfully placed itself at the head of the revolution and then repressed the workers’ movement and the left.

While it calls itself the Islamic Republic, Iran is a capitalist state with a ruling class dominated by an Islamic clergy that follows Shia Islam. The state strictly enforces a version of religious law, including repressive laws targeting women and LGBTQI+ people.

It ruthlessly crushes all forms of protest, including the Woman, Life, Freedom movement of 2022, discriminates against national minorities and routinely imprisons union activists and strikers.

The state still controls a large part of the economy and dominates large-scale industries, media, communications, transport and many other sectors. And it owns the oil industry, which makes up about 40 per cent of its total revenue.

The Islamic nature of the regime means some in the West see it as fanatical and dangerous. In fact it has been willing to strike numerous deals with the West—from an agreement over its nuclear program in 2015, co-operation with the US against ISIS and a recent deal brokered by China to ease tensions with Saudi Arabia.

Its ruling class has the same interests as all capitalist classes—growing

**The US has wanted to get rid of the Iranian regime ever since the 1979 revolution**

its own economic and political power, while preserving its existing privileges.

This means it is locked into imperialist competition with other states in the region—including Israel, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey. It often casts its regional ambitions in the language of religion, saying that it wants to spread the Islamic revolution.

The US has wanted to get rid of the Iranian regime since 1979. It bankrolled a devastating war between Iraq and Iran in the 1980s and has imposed years of economic sanctions punishing ordinary Iranians.

Iran has tried to counter US power by befriending both Russia and China. China is Iran’s largest trading partner and buys some 90 per cent of Iran’s oil.

Iran has been able to build the largest military in the region with about 700,000 active soldiers. Israel’s military is much more technologically advanced because of US aid. But despite the US sanctions, Iran has developed an advanced ballistic missiles program and has its own drone industry.

The regime uses the deep hatred towards US imperialism and Israel among ordinary Iranians to defend itself against internal protests and pose as anti-imperialist. Iran touts its support for Palestinian liberation, framing it as a fight for Islam against Zionism.

Iran backs groups that align with its own regional goals and broadly with its Islamist ideology.

This includes Hamas. However, it cut funding to Hamas when it refused to support dictator Bashar Assad in the Syrian civil war, showing just how fickle its pro-Palestinian stance can be when it comes into conflict with its imperialist goals.

And despite the year-long geno-

cide in Gaza, Iran has so far been very timid towards Israel, carrying out only one largely symbolic strike on Israeli territory. It wants to maintain an image of support for Palestine while avoiding open war with Israel.

It supported the Houthis with arms and funding in the Yemen civil war—in part due to Iran’s antagonism with Saudi Arabia.

With Western backing, Saudi Arabia and the UAE waged a seven-year brutal campaign to crush the Houthi movement. This led to 400,000 deaths and four million people displaced by the end of 2021.

Iran also backs Hezbollah in Lebanon. Hezbollah has a much closer relationship with Iran than Hamas and the Houthis.

Iran helped to create Hezbollah, with the Iranian revolutionary guards training them initially. It has built up Hezbollah capabilities over decades, particularly its longer range missiles, so it can act as a deterrent against Israeli attacks on Iran.

### **Bush and the Axis of Evil**

In 2002 US President George W Bush included Iran in his so-called Axis of Evil—meaning that it was now a target for pre-emptive strikes by the US.

The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was seen as part of knocking over Iran as well. One US military planner said, “People think that Bush has been focused on Saddam Hussein since 9/11 but in my view if you had to name one nation that was his focus all the way along, it was Iran.”

The US government falsely claimed that Iran was on the verge of developing nuclear weapons.

In 2005 the US drew up lists of bombing targets inside Iran. Teams of US troops were ordered into Iran undercover to collect targeting data and establish connections with anti-regime groups.

But Iraq turned into a massive failure for the US. The US invasion led to more than one million deaths and destroyed much of the country.

The invasion was supposed to re-establish the US as the dominant power in the region for decades. Its aim was to install a pro-US government and take control of Iraq’s vast oil reserves. But the war left the US weakened.

Meanwhile Iran grew much more powerful. It became a key player in Iraqi politics, making close connections with the Shia factions in the Iraqi ruling class.

In 2014 ISIS took over huge



**Above: Ceremony to mark the beginning of term of the new Iranian Prime Minister Masoud Pezeshkian in July**

swathes of northern Iraq. The US did not want to commit more ground troops to fight ISIS. So an uneasy alliance emerged with Iranian-backed Shia militias fighting ISIS on the ground as the US providing bombing power.

Iranian-backed militias took credit for defeating ISIS in Iraq. These militias are still grouped together in the Popular Mobilisation Forces, which have been carrying out attacks on US military bases since 7 October.

In Syria, Iran also expanded its influence. It helped prop up the Assad dictatorship following the revolution in 2011 and the civil war that emerged from it.

Through this Iran established military bases almost at the border with Israel, as well as more political influence in Syria.

### **The US and allies**

In 2015 as an attempt to recognise this new reality, then US President Barack Obama signed a deal with Iran.

This deal would end the sanctions and eventually allow Iran to fit into the US’s vision for capitalism in the Middle East, if it ended its nuclear program.

This suited parts of the US ruling class, who wanted to avoid further wars after their defeat in Iraq and focus US efforts on countering China.

Another part of the ruling class was against the nuclear deal. Trump sided with them in 2018 and ripped up the deal.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has always been against the nuclear deal and has long called for the US to attack Iran.

The Israeli attack on the Iranian embassy in Syria in April, and its assassination of Hamas’s leader during his visit to Iran, are both part of an attempt to provoke Iran into all-out war. Netanyahu hopes that such a war would force the US to intervene more dramatically.

Regardless of whether Trump or Kamala Harris becomes the next US President, the US hostility to Iran will remain.

The US is still the strongest imperialist power in the region and the main source of death, destruction and chaos. As socialists, we must organise against the imperialist aggression of our state and its allies first and foremost.

That means opposing the preparations for war on Iran by Israel and any US or Australian involvement. It also means opposing all the other Western imperialist interventions in Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria and elsewhere.

But that doesn’t mean cheering for the Iranian state or the so-called Axis of Resistance.

Instead, we look to the revolutionary movements of ordinary people, rising up against their own capitalist rulers and the bloody wars they sponsor. The best way we can support them here and build solidarity is to organise against the genocide in Palestine and against the push for war on Iran.

# FIGHTING THE FAR RIGHT LESSONS FROM THE 1930s POPULAR FRONT

The Popular Front against fascism in France in the 1930s weakened resistance and meant restraining one of the greatest workers' upsurges in history, writes **James Supple**

FAR RIGHT and fascist parties have made sweeping gains in recent elections across Europe—and now stand on the verge of entering government in a series of countries.

The AfD (Alternative for Germany) recently came first in the regional election in Thuringia and a close second in Saxony.

Austria's fascist Freedom Party is leading in the polls for the upcoming general election on almost 30 per cent. Italy already has a fascist as Prime Minister.

And in the US, Donald Trump still has a real chance of taking back the Presidency in November.

Everywhere they are seeking to channel discontent in a racist direction, blaming refugees and migrants for the cost of living crisis.

Trump has pledged to deport between 15 and 20 million undocumented migrants. The Freedom Party in Austria says it wants to stop all asylum applications and enforce "re-migration" to deport migrants back to where they came from.

How can they be stopped?

Recent parliamentary elections in France were hailed as a success in halting their advance.

Marine Le Pen's National Rally (NR) is the most successful fascist party in Europe—and stood a chance of winning the election and forming government.

But it was eventually pushed into third place, after both the left-wing New Popular Front (NPF) and President Emmanuel Macron's party in terms of seats.

The result has been seen as a success for the NPF and its strategy, which grouped together more moderate left parties like the Socialist Party and the far left France Unbowed.

The NPR struck an alliance with Macron's party, where each party agreed to withdraw its candidate in constituencies where it was judged the

other had a better chance of winning.

Electorally this had some success. But it creates big political problems.

The left agreed to stand aside for notorious government ministers from Macron's party who have been responsible for savage attacks on pensions and the unemployed.

The fascists seized on this, declaring the left in league with Macron—and presenting itself as the only real opposition.

The alliance may have stopped the NR from winning the election. But NR still increased its vote by over six million, won its highest percentage of the vote ever and gained 53 seats. It remains within striking distance of power.

This approach, where the left allies with the political centre against the far right, is also being promoted in the US as a model for stopping Trump.

Democratic socialist Bernie Sanders wrote in the *New York Times* that, "It's time to learn a lesson from the progressive and centrist forces in France" where, he said, "despite profound political differences" the left and centrists "came together to soundly defeat right wing extremism."

Instead of building an independent left, figures like Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez are using the idea that Trump's election would mean the end of democracy in the US to corral the left into campaigning for the Democrats.

This means falling behind a party controlled by billionaires that is backing and arming Israel's genocide in Gaza.

## The 1930s

The French New Popular Front takes direct inspiration from the Popular Front government that came to power in France in the 1930s. This has become a popular model for the fight against fascism—yet the whole

experience ended in disaster.

The 1930s saw the rapid growth of fascism in France in response to severe economic crisis. In February 1934 fascist groups organised a violent demonstration of thousands near the French parliament, following a corruption scandal. Police shot 17 people dead.

This was widely seen as an attempt to overthrow the government and seize power. It led to the fall of the government and parliament appointing a more right-wing regime promising to impose law and order in its place.

Hitler had taken power in Germany just the year before. Now fascism looked to be coming in France too.

The events sent a shock through the working class movement. The fascist dictatorships in Italy, Germany and Austria had banned political parties and outlawed trade unions, sending working class activists to concentration camps.

In Germany, divisions between the two main workers' parties had allowed the Nazis to take power without serious resistance. A similar situation existed in France, with the Communist Party pursuing a policy of vicious sectarian hostility to the Socialist Party, and the trade union movement also divided.

After the fascist demonstration, the Communist Party organised its own protest against fascism and refused offers to work with Socialist Party members. This saw it suffer a setback, with the police attacking the rally and killing six protesters.

On 12 February the Socialist Party backed a trade union strike rally. The Communists threw their support behind it at the last minute.

The action was a huge success, with four and a half million taking part. In Paris, the Communist Party and the Socialists organised separate rallies, both converging on the Place de la Nation square.



When the two marches met, one observer recorded that, “to the astonishment of the party and union leaders, this encounter triggered off a delirious enthusiasm, an explosion of shouts of joy. Applause, cries of ‘Unity, Unity’.”

Socialist leader Leon Blum explained that, “By a sort of popular groundswell the people’s will had imposed unity of action on the working class.”

This kind of unity in struggle was the key to halting the fascists’ advance. It could have led to a united front of the kind advocated by Leon Trotsky, the Russian revolutionary then in exile in France.

He argued for committees of action against fascism, to defend unions and the left against fascist organisation locally and to unite the working class in struggle.

Such unity in action could have allowed revolutionary workers to prove that struggle from below was the key to stopping fascism and to winning gains for workers.

### Allying with ruling class parties

Instead the Communist Party, on the orders of Stalin in Russia, began looking for allies among the capitalist parties as a supposed defence against fascism.

Stalin wanted a military alliance between France and Russia against Hitler’s Germany, and used the Communist Party to further his foreign policy aims.

In an effort to secure such an alliance the Communists turned sharply to the right, promising to defend French military spending and the state and abandoning campaigns against colonialism.

The Popular Front was born as an electoral alliance including not just the working class parties but also the misnamed Radical Party, a middle class party that had frequently run government. Their involvement would drag the Popular Front to the right, forcing it to restrain strike action and limiting it to policies acceptable to the Radicals.

The consequences of this became clear as soon when the Popular Front swept to victory in the 1936 elections. With the country’s first ever Socialist Prime Minister, workers thought they finally had a government that was on their side.

In June 1936 the electoral victory triggered a massive wave of struggle. Over two million workers went on strike, with three-quarters of the



strikes involving factory occupations.

As one historian put it, “the strikes spared almost no section of industry”, stretching “from Renault’s huge Billancourt plant with its 32,000 workers to tiny workshops, from the relatively highly unionised mines and docks to the totally un-unionised employees of department stores.”

Workers’ occupations, which saw them determinedly secure control of the workplaces against their bosses, seemed to carry the threat of expropriation. Trotsky argued that it signalled, “the French revolution has begun”.

Yet instead of trying to continue and deepen the struggle, the Popular Front government set out to derail the movement.

The Communist Party was instrumental in this. Its leader Maurice Thorez said that “we must know how to end a strike”. He even declared that “Not everything is possible now”.

Significant concessions were made in order to end the strikes, with the introduction of a 40-hour week, paid holidays and large wage rises.

But these gains would be quickly eroded as the economic crisis continued and the bosses went on the offensive.

The following year the Socialist Prime Minister Leon Blum was forced to resign in the face of pressure from business, and a Radical leader took his place.

The right grew in confidence and the Popular Front government col-

**Above: Supporting the New Popular Front on a rally against the fascist National Rally in July** Photo: Jeanne Menjoulet/Flickr

lapsed completely in 1938.

When the new government reimposed a six-day working week, renewed strikes against this were brutally repressed.

In 1940 the Nazis invaded and occupied France. It was the same parliament elected when the Popular Front came to power in 1936 that voted to install the collaborationist regime of Marshal Petain. It had already expelled Communist Party MPs, with their party banned.

The Popular Front shows why alliances with capitalist parties and sections of the ruling class against fascism are a dead end.

This remains true today. Official politics is in crisis all across the developed world.

Decades of austerity and attacks on workers as part of the neo-liberal offensive are hollowing out support for mainstream parties.

This has produced huge inequality, as the earnings and wealth of the rich have skyrocketed.

The major parties have again and again turned to racism to try to rebuild their support. This is only legitimising the far right.

Stopping the far right requires fighting the racism coming from both the political mainstream and the far right.

And it means building socialist organisation to fight for real improvement to workers’ wages, conditions and public services—and that isn’t afraid to target capitalism as a whole.

# CRITICAL CARE— NURSES’ UNIONS AND THE AIDS CRISIS

In November 1982, the first case of AIDS was diagnosed in Australia. In the 1980s, life expectancy for those diagnosed with AIDS was three years. **Geraldine Fela’s** new book tells the story of the nurses on the frontline of the response. She spoke with *Solidarity’s* **David Glanz**.

**Can you describe the impact of AIDS and the moral panic at the time?**

AIDS hit in the aftermath of the gay liberation movement in Australia and brought with it a very vicious backlash. Initially the main people affected by HIV or AIDS were gay men. It seemed to a lot of people to confirm homophobic ideas that there was something sick or perverted about gay people.

In the peak years of the crisis around 7000 people died of AIDS or AIDS-related illnesses, the vast majority of them gay men.

People suddenly became sick with terrible cancers or pneumonia, and would very quickly waste away and die. Extraordinary advances in treatment mean people with HIV now live full, healthy lives. You can have HIV and have a zero viral load, which means that you can’t transmit the virus.

But at the time for lots of people it was a death sentence. It had a terrible impact on a very small and tight knit community.

**What happened when the reality of caring for patients with AIDS ran up against the medical hierarchy?**

Hospitals were, and to a large extent still are, very hierarchical workplaces. Florence Nightingale, who was a nurse during the Crimean War, developed a framework of nursing that was based around Victorian ideas of womanhood. The British Empire spread it around the world.

This resulted in a strict gendered division of labour in hospitals. Nurses weren’t all women in the 1980s and 1990s, but you still had this mascu-

linised figure of the doctor that dealt in hard facts and medication, and the nurse, paid substantially less and performing lower status care work.

In the context of HIV, though, doctors could do almost nothing.

The care that nurses gave became more important. Even more important was that the patients didn’t subscribe to hierarchical ideas of how hospitals should run. They were young people who had come through the 1970s, a lot of them involved in the gay liberation movement. They pushed back, demanding a say in their treatment.

The elevated role of nurses combined with the growing industrial militancy of nurses’ unions had a transformative effect on the kind of healthcare that was provided.

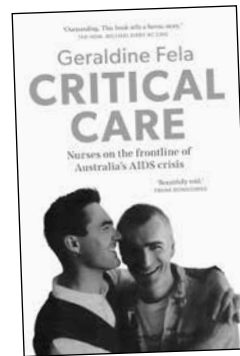
**What else was going on to shape the way in which nurses felt that they could actually have a say?**

Nursing had moved from hospital-based training into universities. Nurses had also been exposed to the social movements of the 1970s, for Black liberation and land rights, women’s liberation and gay liberation.

They had much more radical ideas about how people should be treated and how hospitals should be run.

At the same time, there was an explosion of industrial militancy. The organisations that represented nurses historically often hadn’t been affiliated with the trade union movement. For example, in Victoria, the nurses had a professional association that wasn’t affiliated to Trades Hall until the late 1970s.

Nurses’ unions started fighting for better conditions and better wages, but they were also pushing back against their subordinate role in the



**Critical Care: Nurses on the frontline of Australia’s AIDS crisis, By Geraldine Fela, UNSW Press, \$49.99**

healthcare system.

This radical rank-and-file elected leaders that reflected their politics, people like Irene Bolger in Victoria, Jenny Haines and Bronwyn Ridgway in NSW.

Nurses’ unions provided crucial leadership to shaping a public health response that was about empowering communities themselves to respond to the problem.

Doctors and surgeons wanted hospitals to profile people based on whether they thought that they might have AIDS, which meant profiling gay men or drug users or sex workers, and forcing those people to undergo tests before they would deliver any treatment. This would have been a huge barrier to accessing treatment, and extraordinarily humiliating and discriminatory.

Nurses’ unions in NSW and Victoria in particular led the way in opposing compulsory testing in hospitals, and fighting for universal precautions.

Nurses fought for an attitude that you treat every single person who comes into a hospital as if they might have HIV. That is now the absolute common sense way that hospitals deal with all infectious diseases.

In early 1992, the AIDS working group of the Australian Nursing Federation held a conference.

In that conference the nurses put a motion that said we will not participate in compulsory testing of a single patient. This was an example of nurses threatening a work ban for the rights of patients with HIV and for the rights of patients from affected communities.

Doctors and surgeons also wanted to quarantine people with the virus. That happened in parts of the world, Cuba for example, with compulsory testing of communities considered at

risk and people put under public health orders controlling their movement.

Elements of that did take place in Australia. Mass compulsory testing was used in Aboriginal communities. Prisoners were subject to compulsory HIV testing. And there were individuals, often people engaged in sex work or injecting drug users, who were put under public health orders that controlled their movements.

But that was not the overarching story of the response. Another path was taken, which was about giving communities the information and the tools that they needed to control the spread of the virus.

Money was poured into AIDS councils, which were gay community-led organisations that distributed frank, sex positive information about how to stop the spread of the virus. Needle exchanges were established, which at the time were illegal, to stop the transmission of the virus through injecting drug use. Similarly, there were outreach programs funded for sex workers. This meant that in Australia, unlike the US, HIV never spread substantially beyond the gay community.

The gay community fought for this. And nurses and their unions backed them, and were crucial in providing some industrial muscle to win it.

The nurses' unions also did educational work within their membership.

HIV was shrouded in panic and fear at the time. Most people didn't really understand how it was transmitted. The nurses' union spread that information to their membership in a really effective way.

Tragically COVID was the exact opposite of the HIV response. We weren't given information to help stop the spread ourselves. Instead, we had a punitive, coercive response to the virus.

We saw this in Melbourne with the public housing tower lockdowns, where people were imprisoned in their homes for months on end through rolling quarantine. The result, I think, will be terrible years down the track, with trust in accessing healthcare severely diminished.

**First Nations people were seen as being particularly at risk of dying from AIDS. Tell us about the work of Auntie Gracelyn Smallwood and others in helping Indigenous communities protect themselves.**

When HIV first started spreading, there were people in the medical establishment saying it would be the end of



**Above: Nurses in the 1980s staged militant strikes as a new generation entered the workforce, like the 1986 strike in Melbourne**

Indigenous Australia.

Indigenous communities rejected that and said, no, we can find solutions. Auntie Gracelyn Smallwood, a Birrigubba, Kalkadoon and South Sea Islander woman, helped establish the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled medical service in Townsville in the late 1970s. She was influenced by the Land Rights and Black Power movements and the politics of self-determination and community control that came with them.

When HIV emerged, she went around helping community health services develop responses to HIV around health promotion. The most famous example was Condoman, the First Nations superhero who was all over posters. His line was, don't be ashamed to use condoms.

That campaign was developed at a workshop that Auntie Gracelyn and other Aboriginal healthcare workers ran in Townsville with people from the community. They developed a health promotion campaign that spoke directly to their communities with a really clear safe sex message.

Importantly it cast First Nations people as the solution in responding to the virus, not just potential victims. That response was replicated in community controlled health organisations across the country.

Today, the rate of HIV in Indigenous communities is on a par with the non-Indigenous community. The social oppression that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face means that for many transmissible

viruses, that's not the case.

**How were nurses and others able to fight back against the rampant homophobia that characterised Australia in the 1980s?**

Nurses played an important role as part of initiatives that gay community organisations took to confront and challenge homophobia. They ran workshops and speaking tours through union branches of HIV positive nurses to dispel some of the myths and fears people had about the virus.

There are also some horrible stories. There are countless examples that people gave me, particularly in hospitals outside Sydney and Melbourne, where the nurse unit manager would say, 'who wants to look after this person? They've got AIDS', and 50 per cent of the room would say, not me. I had one nurse tell me that when she was caring for a man with AIDS, the other nurses asked her to use a different toilet.

There were other nurses who stood up and challenged that.

Sometimes the leadership of the union might have a very good progressive policy on HIV, but what actually happened at the hospital was down to the rank-and-file and their ability to carry it out.

Where you had a strong political rank-and-file, who were often influenced by the gay liberation movement or social movements more generally, you had that policy put into practice and homophobia pushed back.

One of the lessons is the power and the importance of the rank-and-file.



**Geraldine Fela**

# REFUGEES PROTEST 24/7 FOR PERMANENT VISAS



**Above: Refugees marching on Immigration Minister Tony Burke's office in Sydney**

**By James Supple**

REFUGEES HAVE begun a series of continuous 24 hour protests for permanent visas, with encampments in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane as well as protests in Adelaide.

Pressure on the government is building, with 25 federal crossbench MPs writing to the Prime Minister to call for a “pathway to permanency” for them.

They are among 8000 refugees who have been living in limbo for at least 12 years, after their claims for asylum were rejected under the unfair Fast Track process. Around 1000 who were detained on Manus Island and Nauru and later medevaced to Australia are also being denied a permanent visa.

The protests began in Melbourne, where refugees have been camping out for over 50 days, first at the office of then Home Affairs Minister Clare O’Neil and now outside the Department of Home Affairs in the Docklands after she switched portfolios.

A rally there on 16 August drew 400 people with a contingent from the United Workers Union joining the protest, which was addressed by a state Greens MP.

A small group of Nazis gathered nearby in a failed attempt to intimidate the rally but had to slink off after being drowned out by the crowd.

There are now rallies at the encampment every Friday at 5.30pm.

In Brisbane hundreds are protesting outside Treasurer Jim Chalmers’ office in Logan.

Refugees in Sydney have been outside the office of the new Home

Affairs Minister, Tony Burke, in Punchbowl for almost a month.

Both Burke and Jim Chalmers have now met with delegations from the protests.

At the end of August several hundred refugees marched through Punchbowl to the office chanting “permanent visas now”.

“There’s been 150 to 700 people each day”, Kalyani Inpakumar of the Tamil Refugee Council told *Solidarity*. “People might come in the morning before work and then go or they’ll come after work.”

“When we started, between 25 and 30 people would sleep every night. Now, it’s a little bit less because people have families and need to go to work,” Iranian refugee Shah said.

“We had a community meeting where 65 people attended and ten leaders were nominated who organise everything”, Kalyani added. “There’s a lot of consultation, so I think everybody feels part of the protest.

“We’ve been getting meals from our community. We’ve had three meals a day provided for the last 25 days.”

## Life in limbo

In late August the torment of living without a permanent visa claimed another life, as 23-year-old Tamil asylum seeker Mano Yogalingam committed suicide in Melbourne. He had arrived in Australia with his parents at the age of 11 after fleeing Sri Lanka.

Vigils for Mano drew big crowds at the refugee encampments, and were followed by another vigil for Sasi-karan Selvanayagam, a Tamil refugee who died later the same week.

Living on bridging visas without

permanent status means the refugees find it harder to get work and are denied the right to study or travel. Many have been left separated from partners and children and are unable to travel to see elderly parents or attend funerals.

Labor has so far refused even to review the claims of Fast Track refugees, despite admitting that the process the Liberals used was unfair. It’s one example of their shameful commitment to the same border protection and anti-refugee policies as Peter Dutton.

“When I finished high school, I got an offer from Macquarie University to do a three month intensive program, and I was going to do a Bachelor of Psychology,” Sariah, a 19-year-old Tamil refugee told *Solidarity*.

“I had to pay \$17,000 for the three month course. Three weeks in the Immigration Department called me and they said that I’m not allowed to continue my studies, and I was forced to withdraw from my course.

The refugees are supposed to have access to Medicare but this expires when they have to renew their visas.

“I came here in 2013,” said Shah. “I’m paying tax every year but I can’t even use Medicare. When my Medicare expired, I had to apply again, and they gave me three months’ Medicare.

“But that took two months to arrive. So I only had Medicare for one month. When I don’t have it, I can’t go to hospital, I have to pay \$130 to see a GP.

“We have called Australia our home for 12 years,” said Shah. “The only thing we ask is for a permanent visa.”

Everyone needs to support their fight and build the pressure on Albanese to give them permanent visas.

**In late August the torment of living without a permanent visa claimed another life**