

Solidarity

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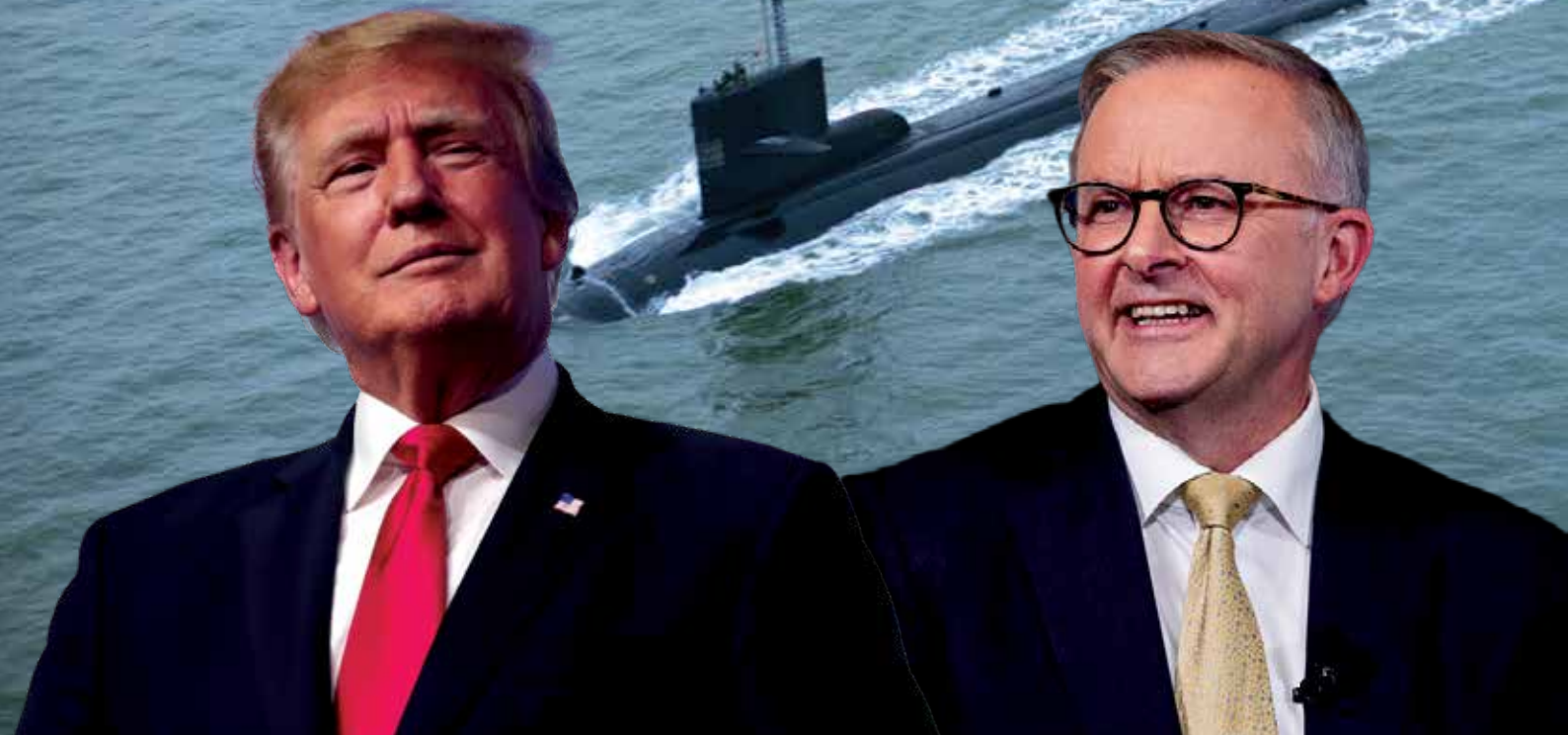
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Labor must cut ties with Trump

SCRAP AUKUS

BREAK THE

US ALLIANCE



PALESTINE

Universities and the right to protest

TRUMP

America First imperialism

LABOR

Why has Albanese been so hopeless?

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
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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
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Things they say

Perhaps our closest ally in the world. They have been with us even in our less advisable wars

Elbridge Colby, Trump's nominee for undersecretary of defense for policy, on Australia

An Australia that was fully self-reliant for all its security needs would need to spend much more on defence than now.

David M. Andrews, senior policy adviser at the ANU National Security College

We are a European nation at the end of the world.

Local Federal Labor MP Mark Butler explaining the case for AUKUS in a meeting with Port Adelaide resident reps fighting nuclear activities in their neighbourhood

One way or the other, we're going to get it.

Donald Trump on Greenland

An era of rearmament has begun. It brings us growth prospects for the coming years that we have never experienced before.

Armin Papperger, chief executive of Rheinmetall, Europe's largest producer of munitions

The image has changed from liberator to great disrupter to a landlord seeking rent.

Ng Eng Hen, Singapore's Defence Minister, on the US.

As long as it's done discreetly, and it's done by reputable weapons manufacturers, I don't have a problem.

Greg Melick, War Memorial council member on arms makers funding the Australian War Memorial.

Stalin, Mao, and Hitler didn't murder millions of people. Their public sector employees did.

Tweet shared by Elon Musk

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Warmongering panic over Chinese warships

LIVEFIRE EXERCISES by two Chinese warships off Australia's east coast led to howls of outrage across the mainstream media in February.

Defence analyst Michael Shoebridge declared, "an abject failure of the government's promise to comprehensively monitor these extremely capable Chinese warships", after the warning from the ships was picked up first by a Virgin pilot.

But Defence and government officials had to admit that China's actions were well within its rights under international law.

The action was a message from the Chinese government, but not, as Nine Papers' Peter Hartcher hyped it up, "a political act of intimidation".

The episode followed an encounter between an Australian surveillance aircraft and a Chinese fighter jet above the South China Sea earlier in February. China claimed the Australian aircraft had "deliberately intruded" into its airspace.

Australian navy vessels routinely take part in military exercises and operations in the South China Sea, including through the Taiwan Strait that separates Taiwan and China, less than 130 kilometres from the Chinese coast. The Chinese warships staged their exercises about 640 kilometres off Australia's coast.

ANU splurges on Julie Bishop's travel

ANU SPENT \$620,000 last year on travel and other expenses for university Chancellor Julie Bishop's Perth office, a leak to the Financial Review has revealed. Bishop herself spent \$150,000 on travel, including trips to New York, London and Japan. Her office also spent \$10,599 on accommodation in New York, and \$4320 for accommodation in London.

The university also spent \$2250 on speech writing for Bishop by her personal friend and former chief of staff Murray Hansen. His company received a total of \$35,000 for speech writing from ANU over four years.

This comes as the university is planning massive job cuts in order to save \$250 million. Management claimed Bishop's travel allowance has since been halved.

Protests follow attempt to deport Mahmoud Khalil



THERE HAS been a wave of outrage following Donald Trump's attempt to deport Palestinian activist Mahmoud Khalil. The Columbia University graduate, who played a prominent role in last year's encampment protests, was detained by plainclothes officers at his accommodation on campus. He has permanent residency and is married to a US citizen.

Tens of thousands of students protested in New York's Washington Square, with thousands more rallying at the University of California in Berkeley, Stanford University, University of California in Los Angeles, Chicago and Oregon University. Over 150 mainly Jewish protesters stormed Trump Tower, wearing t-shirts with the words "Jews say stop arming Israel" and chanting "Bring Mahmoud home now".

After being picked up in New York, Khalil was sent to a detention centre in Louisiana. Khalil was among protesters in March who staged a sit-in at a university library protesting the expulsion of three students for pro-Palestine activism. He has not been charged with any crime.

His arrest followed an online campaign by pro-Israel activists including Shai Davidai, an assistant professor at Columbia Business School who was temporarily barred from entering campus last year after the university said he repeatedly harassed and intimidated other employees.

His and other pro-Israel accounts tweeted at Secretary of State Marco Rubio saying Khalil was "known to have been on a foreign visa last year" and urging his deportation.

Khalil now faces a months-long court battle as lawyers argue that the Secretary of State's decision to cancel his permanent residency is in violation of the First Amendment's right to free speech. Trump has threatened that his arrest is the first of "many to come".

Now Victoria set to lock up more Indigenous people

THE VICTORIAN Labor government has become the latest to toughen bail laws for both adult and youth offenders.

This reverses changes made in 2023 following a coronial inquiry into the death in custody of Indigenous woman Veronica Nelson. The coroner admitted that the state's laws had a "discriminatory" impact on Indigenous people, who face "grossly disproportionate" rates of imprisonment. The changes will again throw more Aboriginal people in prison.

Committing any serious offence while on bail will now mean defendants are held on remand until their trial. Labor is caving in to a dishonest campaign about "youth crime" from Murdoch's *Herald-Sun* and online influencers. Despite an uptick in youth offences in the last year, crime rates are lower now than in 2016.

DONALD TRUMP'S tariff war is creating economic chaos—and political trouble for Anthony Albanese as he heads to the federal election.

Albanese's effort to get an exemption for Australian aluminium and steel failed.

The impact of these initial tariffs will be modest. But Trump is also threatening to target beef exports and Australia's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, which US big pharma says reduces their profits.

Albanese's efforts to appease Trump failed. He has refused to call out Trump's genocidal plan for ethnic cleansing in Gaza or any of his outrages against migrants and trans people.

Instead he went ahead and handed over \$800 million as a down payment on nuclear submarines from the US, and offered Trump a deal on control of Australia's rare earth metals.

The US under Trump is a danger to the world, lashing out in all directions—bombing Yemen and giving Israel a green light for more death and destruction in Gaza and the West Bank.

But the Trump administration sees China as its biggest threat—promising growing tensions and even war. Australia's alliance with the US means it is dangerously exposed.

Albanese should tear up the AU-KUS nuclear submarines deal, close the US spy base at Pine Gap and end the growing US military presence at bases across Australia.

European leaders are giving Trump what he wants through agreeing to massive hikes in military spending. One of Trump's picks for the Defence Department, Elbridge Colby, has also called for Australia to boost spending to 3 per cent of GDP.

This would mean a 50 per cent increase, almost \$30 billion a year, at the expense of funding for health, education and other services.

Albanese's response was to say he was already "allocating significant additional resources for defence". Defence Minister Richard Marles said he could "understand" the US point of view.

Albanese's failure to stand up to Trump is also opening the door to Peter Dutton.

The Liberal leader has backed the call for more military spending, pledging to pour billions more into buying F-35 fighter jets.

Dutton's call to end working from home for public sector workers, insultingly announced just before Interna-

EDITORIAL

Albanese's grovelling to Trump fails—time to hit back

tional Women's Day, was another echo of Trump. It comes on top of plans to sack 36,000 public sector workers.

Albanese's support for Israel and efforts to smear the Palestine movement as antisemitic have also legitimised Dutton's even more strident attacks.

The admission by police that the Dural caravan, hyped as a "potential mass casualty event", was actually a "criminal con job" has exposed the opportunism of both major parties.

NSW Labor Premier Chris Minns branded it "terrorism" and used it to push new hate speech and anti-protest laws through parliament.

As a result, federal Labor's attempt to say that Dutton went too far has little credibility.

All of them were happy to hype up the threat and spread fear in the community, showing Albanese's claims to want to "lower the temperature" to protect "social cohesion" were hypocrisy.

Police now say all the major antisemitic attacks in Sydney since late last year were orchestrated by organised crime and were not ideologically motivated.

But don't expect Albanese or NSW Labor to apologise for blaming the protests for Palestine.

Election

Albanese has put back the election until May, meaning Labor must deliver a budget on 25 March.

Labor has announced an \$8.5 billion plan to boost the rate of bulk billed GP visits to 90 per cent.

It has also finalised a 5 per cent boost to school funding in NSW, with deals now in place in every state except Queensland to deliver the resourcing standard recommended by Gonski almost 15 years ago.

But the full amount won't arrive until 2034, more than another two elections away.

It is also turning its fire on Dutton—not over his policies but targeting his purchase of bank shares during the 2009 financial crisis and his profit of \$6.8 million on a string of investment properties.

But anger at the cost of living and Labor's refusal to act on the housing crisis and climate change, as well as its support for Israel, will see it lose seats at the election.

Labor's failures have boosted Dutton's chances. Many people hope



Israel unleashes more terror on Gaza, aided by Trump and Albanese

ISRAEL HAS flagrantly broken the terms of the ceasefire with Hamas, killing over 400 Palestinians, mostly women and children, as it renewed the bombing of Gaza.

It is clear now that Israel never intended go beyond phase one of the ceasefire agreement and actually withdraw from Gaza. Before the bombing began, Israel had already cut all aid and electricity for Gaza.

Netanyahu has declared, "Israel will, from now on, act against Hamas with increasing military strength."

It is also clear that Trump gave the green light to continue the genocide. Israel began bombing one day after Trump began bombing the Houthis in Yemen. Israeli government spokesman David Mencer said its strikes were, "fully coordinated with Washington".

Above: Relatives of Palestinians in Beit Lahia mourn the victims of Israeli airstrikes Photo: Abaca Press / Alamy Stock Photo

Since taking office, Trump has welcomed Netanyahu to the White House and approved nearly \$18 billion in military aid (including the 2000 pound bombs) to Israel.

In response to Israel's butchery, Prime Minister Albanese would not condemn Israel. All we got was a mealy-mouthed call for all parties "to respect the ceasefire and hostage deal" and for "peace and security in the region."

Not a word about what's needed—action to sanction Israel, or to shut down the US military bases like Pine Gap that are complicit in Israel's genocide. Yet Israel has violated the ceasefire in Lebanon and is also routinely bombing Syria as well as Gaza.

There won't be peace in the Middle East until Western imperialism cuts all support for Israel, and the terror state is smashed.

that more Greens or independent MPs can deliver change through a minority government. But crossbench MPs won't be able to force Labor to take the action needed—they can only block measures in parliament. If Labor and the Coalition unite, as they did over deportation laws in December, the crossbench is powerless.

The Greens' control of the balance of power in Senate has not

pushed Labor to the left.

We need to build a union fightback for pay and movements outside parliament to win the change needed. The movement for Palestine needs to keep mobilising all the way up the election and beyond. Construction unions need to organise for strike action against the attack on the CFMEU.

We will need to keep building resistance whatever happens in the election.

.....
Albanese's failure to stand up to Trump is also opening the door to Peter Dutton

Another election landslide as WA Labor backs mining profits

By James Supple

LABOR HAS held onto power by another overwhelming margin in WA, with the rump of Liberal MPs failing to make significant ground.

While there was a large swing of 18.2 per cent against Labor, this did not even rewind the electoral landslide of the last election held during the COVID period in 2021.

And much of the swing did not go directly to Liberal candidates. As a result the Liberals are on track to win just eight seats in total, with another five for the Nationals.

This is still fewer seats than they held before 2021. It was a humiliation for the Liberal Party.

The Greens increased their vote to 10.3 per cent, their best result in a Western Australian election for 15 years.

They are likely to control the balance of power in the upper house.

But there were warning signs for Labor and Anthony Albanese in the federal election, with bigger swings in outer suburban seats in Perth. Labor lost about 20 per cent of their primary vote in seats such as Armadale, Joondalup and Forrestfield.

It narrowly held the safe Labor seat of Fremantle against independent Kate Hulett after a 21.4 per cent swing.

The cost of living is as big an issue in WA as anywhere. The mining boom has put money into the pockets of mining companies and the rich but driven up rents and housing costs for workers.

Gas company profits

WA Labor has gone all in to back business and give the mining companies everything they want.

In 2023 it dumped new Aboriginal Heritage laws, designed to avoid a repeat of Rio Tinto's demolition of the Juukan Gorge caves, after a campaign against them by mining and agribusiness companies.

More recently it did the bidding of the mining industry in demanding that Anthony Albanese drop new Nature Positive laws amending federal environment legislation. Albanese complied.

The Labor government is backing a massive expansion of the gas industry, allowing onshore gas mining companies to increase exports and



Above: WA Premier Roger Cook with Anthony Albanese
Photo: Geoff Cook/
Facebook

approving a 50-year extension for Woodside's Northwest shelf Karratha gas plant.

Climate scientist Bill Hare, who is based in WA, said, "I don't think there was ever a state government so completely and utterly captured by the gas industry."

The state is already a massive gas exporter. If WA was a country it would have the third highest gas exports in the world, after only the US and Qatar.

As a result WA is the only state where carbon pollution has increased over the last 20 years, up by about 20 per cent.

Mining revenues have boosted government coffers, with a \$3.2 billion surplus on track for the 2024-25 year.

The mining companies are making billions but Premier Roger Cook has pledged not to increase any mining taxes or royalties.

As a result the government has handed out only modest measures to relieve the cost of living, such as power bill credits and payments of up to \$250 for children's school costs. It also promised to reduce public transport fares if it won the election.

Cost of living

The cost of living rose 11 per cent for a typical two-parent family and 14 per cent for single parents over the year to

August 2024, according to a report by the WA Council of Social Service.

Housing, rents, childcare and insurance have risen by more than the national average in WA since 2021.

Public sector workers have had to fight the government for pay rises.

In late 2022 nurses began strike action, with members voting to demand a 10 per cent pay increase.

But the union called off the campaign after WA Labor threatened it with deregistration for defying Industrial Relations Commission orders.

The union eventually paid a \$350,000 fine for defying orders not to strike.

Last year public sector workers including nurses and teachers received pay rises of 5 per cent as part of three-year deals worth 12 and 12.5 per cent. But this is still well behind the cost of living.

Public services are also suffering from underfunding. A report in February showed WA had the worst wait times for patients presenting at emergency departments, with just 32 per cent of those needing urgent care seen on time.

Serious action on the cost of living, public services and climate change will require a much more concerted fightback from the unions and movements for change on the streets.

Housing, rents, childcare and insurance have risen by more than the national average in WA since 2021

Resistance builds to antisemitism definition shutting down protest

By Luke Ottavi

UNIVERSITY MANAGERMENTS are launching a McCarthyist offensive against the Palestine solidarity movement, with a new antisemitism definition that threatens academic freedom and freedom of speech.

This comes after a transgender international student at Sydney University (USyd) was threatened with suspension or expulsion for writing pro-Palestine slogans on uni whiteboards, putting her at risk of immigration detention.

Melbourne University has also banned protests indoors in response to the sit-in at Mahmoud's Hall (the Arts West Building) last year that demanded it cut ties with Israel.

The dangerous new definition of antisemitism, drawn up by Universities Australia (UA) on behalf of all 39 Australian universities, is aimed squarely at silencing critics of Israel.

Amnesty International condemned it as a, "direct attack on fundamental freedoms, stifling freedom of speech, expression, assembly, academic debate, and protest," and stated, "It dangerously conflates legitimate criticism of Israel and Zionism with antisemitism."

Already Palestinian-Australian academic Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah, who has been smeared as antisemitic for her opposition to Zionism, has had her research funding suspended at the behest of Federal Education Minister Jason Clare.

The National Executive of the university staff union the NTEU has opposed the new definition, saying it, "is likely to have the effect of suppressing academic and intellectual freedom".

Branches of NTEU at UTS, La Trobe Uni and Sydney Uni have voted to support a National Day of Action alongside student activists on 26 March opposing the new definition. It has also been rejected by the Australian National Imams Council and the Alliance of Australian Muslims.

It is modelled on the widely criticised International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA) definition. Group of Eight universities chief Vicki Thomson describes it as, "ostensibly an Australian version of IHRA".

The new definition states that, "criticism of Israel can be antisemitic ... when it calls for the elimination of the State of Israel". This targets opposition to Zionism, the political ideology behind Israel's existence as a state that privileges Jewish people



Above: Protest at Sydney University against the antisemitism definition and its use to restrict free speech and the right to protest Photo: Solidarity

above others.

Israel is defined as "the national home of the Jewish people" to the exclusion of Palestinians under its basic law, the equivalent of a constitution.

As Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has explained, this means, "Israel is not a state of all its citizens", institutionalising discrimination against the Palestinian minority inside its 1948 borders.

Palestinians under Israeli rule in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza are not even citizens, cannot vote and are subject to military law. Yet Israeli settlers there are governed under civilian Israeli law.

Israel's discrimination and violence against Palestinians amounts to a system of apartheid, according to Amnesty International.

There is nothing antisemitic about criticising Israel's apartheid state and calling for its replacement with a state where Jews and Palestinians have equal rights.

The definition also wrongly seeks to conflate Zionism with Judaism, claiming that, "For most, but not all Jewish Australians, Zionism is a core part of their Jewish identity."

But as the anti-Zionist Jewish Council of Australia argues, "Zionism is a political ideology of Jewish nationalism, not an intrinsic part of Jewish identity. There is a long history of Jewish opposition to Zionism, from the beginning of its emergence in the late-19th century, to the present day."

Repression of protest

University bosses are desperate to put an end to the protests for Palestine that have set up encampments on their

manicured lawns, occupied buildings and shone a light on how Australian universities are complicit in genocide.

Universities play a crucial role in legitimising Israel through exchange and research partnerships, and by silencing criticism of Israel on campuses.

Universities like USyd, the ANU, and Melbourne University have already implemented a raft of anti-free speech and anti-protest policies.

In June, USyd enacted the Campus Access Policy (CAP), demanding that students and staff give management three days' notice for any demonstration on campus, and that no banner or informational stall could be set up without permission.

The ANU similarly has tight restrictions on what posters can be put up on poster boards around campus.

It is possible to defeat this repression. USyd was forced to drop CAP rules that demanded university management be notified 72 hours prior to any demonstration on campus, and get permission to use megaphones outdoors.

This is a result of students and staff consistently defying the policy.

Prominent Muslim cleric Sheik Wesam Charkawi was sacked by the NSW Education Department after he criticised "selective outrage" and Islamophobia behind the response to the video of Sydney nurses who threatened Israeli patients.

Wesam was reinstated after significant community pushback, including two student protests at Granville Boys High School where he works.

This is the kind of resistance that's needed to stop universities silencing the Palestine movement.

The National Executive of the university staff union the NTEU has opposed the new definition

Turning point for CFMEU as High Court decision looms

By Tom Orsag, CFMEU member

THE FIGHT against the administration of CFMEU is reaching a major turning point.

In late February, the Labor government-appointed administrator, Mark Irving, handed down a 94-page report to parliament about his work in the past six months.

Irving said he was waiting for the High Court decision on the union challenge to Labor’s law that imposed administration before pushing ahead further with the “cleaning out of the union”.

Uncertainty about the court outcome had stymied his efforts, he claimed. The decision is expected this month.

The media has also speculated that Irving is waiting until after the election to escalate the attacks on the union.

Irving’s report also confirmed that his aim is to break the militant union tradition of the CFMEU.

It declared that, “In the five years before the commencement of the Administration the CFMEU and its officers have been found to have breached industrial laws on 1163 occasions and incurred \$10,628,861 in penalties ...

“Unlawful conduct and simply paying enormous penalties had become part of the business model of the union. This must end.”

But these are breaches of industrial laws, not criminal matters. The Fair Work Act imposes some of the most extreme restrictions on strike action in the Western world. The CFMEU has been right to defy the law to stand up for safety and workers’ rights.

This is the real reason for administration and the targeting of the CFMEU—not any alleged “criminality”.

The bulk of Irving’s report to Parliament consists of three items. The first is the work of lawyer Geoffrey Watson from September, who the union appointed to conduct an investigation before the administration was even imposed.

Another concerns the supposed “recovery” of \$3.15 million belonging to the NSW branch. It was being held by the lawyers of sacked NSW Secretary Darren Greenfield and Assistant Secretary Michael Greenfield to cover estimated legal costs the union agreed to pay over their corruption charges dating back to 2021. Both maintain their innocence.



Above: Construction workers hold a stopwork rally in Brisbane on 19 February Photo: ETU Queensland and NT

The last item recommends a single official, former SA Secretary Marcus Pare, face further investigation and possible charges. While it’s claimed he was in contact with former bikie gang members, most of the allegations against him relate to misuse of union entitlements.

After six months, not one of the 270 elected officials of the CFMEU who Irving sacked in August has been charged with any crime, despite all the media mudslinging, especially from the Nine Papers. Irving, however, is desperately digging around to dredge up charges to justify the government takeover.

Delegates meeting

The combination of the imminent High Court decision on the challenge to administration and the looming federal election means the Victorian Building Industry Group of unions (BIG) joint delegates’ meeting on 26 March comes at a critical moment.

How the BIG unions, including the 600 CFMEU delegates, Electrical Trades Union (ETU), Plumbers Union (CEPU) and the Construction Division of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU), respond at the joint delegates meeting is crucial.

The meeting needs to be the springboard to call a national strike and protest against administration if the High Court case fails—not just for an election campaign to “Put Dutton Last”.

The signs are not good that the Victorian BIG unions will launch an industrial fightback. They have consistently refused to call stopwork protests

since the last national strike on 18 September, on the basis that the High Court challenge was the way to win.

Individual state branches in NSW and Queensland have called one-day strikes.

The two one-day strike protests in Queensland, most recently on 19 February, have targeted the newly-elected LNP government’s decision to rip up the Best Practice in Construction agreement, re-tendering government construction projects without the CFMEU and ripping up the heat policy—which allows work to stop when it reaches 35 degrees.

A breakaway section of the February rally marched to the Queensland Council of Unions building to protest the decision by its Assistant Secretary Jared Abbott to take on the job as the administration’s Executive Officer of the Queensland CFMEU.

The stopwork rallies in NSW and Queensland have both gone ahead in the face of opposition from the administration.

But in Victoria, Troy Gray of the ETU and Zach Smith, National Secretary of the CFMEU and the administrator’s appointed Victorian Executive Officer since mid-September, have not called any further action.

Instead they have put their hopes in the High Court challenge, funded by the ETU, Plumbers and AMWU at a cost of \$1.2 million.

Rank-and-file members and delegates’ need to pressure the BIG unions to call a national strike and protest if the court case fails—and to start planning for industrial action to fight administration.

After six months, not one of the 270 elected officials of the CFMEU sacked in August has been charged with any crime

Fightback underway as hundreds of jobs face the axe at UTS and ANU

By Jacob Starling

UP TO 150 staff and students rallied at UTS on 12 March against plans for cuts to jobs and courses.

Since the end of last year, universities across Australia have been threatening sweeping cuts, using the Labor Government's proposed international student caps as justification.

The University of Wollongong has already cut 91 full-time jobs and is planning another round of cuts. University of Canberra says it will slash 191 jobs this year. Managements at UTS and ANU are also leading the charge.

UTS management has proposed \$100 million worth of cuts, claiming that it is "vital" they return to a budget surplus by 2027. Around 500 jobs are under threat.

The corporate logic driving cuts at UTS is a dire threat to public interest learning and research. Academics who are not bringing in external funding (such as partnering with corporations) and courses with less than 80 people are on the chopping block.

Their plan also involves reducing the number of subjects offered, decreasing casual staff hours and restructuring faculties. They plan to merge the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences with the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building to create a new "Faculty of Creative Industries".

Members of the staff union the NTEU joined the protest demanding that not a single job be cut.

Professor James Goodman addressed the rally, connecting these cuts to the corporate mindset of UTS management: "Behind all of this is the concern about UTS's credit rating, this notion that we can't run a deficit because we have to maintain our rating with these unaccountable credit rating agencies.

"There's plenty of other universities that don't have the credit rating that UTS has, and they manage perfectly.

"There are many, many alternatives available. We have to force back the demand that this come out of staffing."

ANU cuts

At ANU, the NTEU estimates that 638 full-time equivalent jobs are threatened, 12 per cent of the current ANU workforce. In October, ANU announced that it aimed to make cuts of



Above: Around 150 UTS staff and students rallied against the cuts on 12 March Photo: Solidarity

\$250 million by 2026 in response to a deficit, including \$100 million worth of cuts to staff jobs and salaries.

Simultaneously, ANU is profoundly restructuring courses, reducing the majors available to students. The College of Health and Medicine has been amalgamated into the College of Science, cutting 50 administrative jobs, and the Fenner School of Environment is being incorporated into the new College of "Systems and Society", alongside cybernetics, engineering and computer science.

Students have reported that the human rights major, the geography major, and the film studies major have all fallen victim to the cuts.

Some tutorials have doubled in size, while others are held only half as frequently as before. Some lectures are now entirely online, while others have been combined with their tutorials to form three-hour "lectorials". All of these changes significantly affect the experience of staff and students for the worse.

When the cuts were first announced, over 400 staff and students marched to the ANU Chancelry, demanding that jobs and pay be protected, and rejecting the Vice-Chancellor's proposal for staff to give up their 2.6 per cent pay rise scheduled for that year.

In an all-staff ballot the following month, 89 per cent of the 4700 votes cast rejected this pay cut. However, since then the NTEU has been negotiating with management on a voluntary redundancy scheme, capitulating to the Vice-Chancellor's claims that job

cuts are necessary.

The NTEU instead been campaigning for a vote of no confidence in management, pointing to the financial mismanagement and deficits that existed at ANU even before the international student caps were announced.

The deeper cause of the problem is the increasing corporatisation of Australian universities. In 1989, 80 per cent of the funding for higher education came from the federal government. Today, it is only 35 per cent.

Increases in government funding are now often tied to a focus on the military, like the ANU Nuclear Systems Engineering major, funded by the Department of Defence to create a workforce for the AUKUS nuclear submarine program.

Universities have become increasingly dependent on international student fees. This makes them vulnerable to the government's effort to cut international student numbers. Instead of covering the extra cost for the loss of student fees, the government is forcing staff and students to pay through cuts to jobs and courses.

To stop these cuts, students and staff must mount a coordinated and militant fightback.

In 2012, when USyd announced that 340 staff jobs would be cut, hundreds protested. Through student strikes and occupations, half of the academic jobs were saved. In 2016, when the Sydney College of the Arts was closed, a 65-day occupation saved half of the jobs threatened to be cut. This is the kind of response necessary to save jobs again.

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At ANU some tutorials have doubled in size, while others are held only half as frequently as before

Racist policies drive incarceration crisis—fight for self-determination

By Paddy Gibson

INDIGENOUS INCARCERATION, suicide and child removal rates are all accelerating, according to the Closing the Gap report released in February.

Indigenous people are already the most incarcerated group on the planet. But the jails are filling faster than ever, with a 30 per cent increase in Indigenous prisoners since Albanese took office in 2022.

More than 5 per cent of Indigenous men are now behind bars and almost 1 per cent of Indigenous women.

Aboriginal children in regional areas are facing constant demonisation and over-policing. This is part of a broader racist “law and order” campaign by state governments.

In March, NSW Labor Premier Chris Minns disgracefully greeted news of a surge of Aboriginal kids on remand with a self-congratulatory press conference, saying, “The Greens don’t like these statistics ... but I’m not done yet.”

Victorian Labor has also announced more punitive bail laws, repealing changes to the Bail Act made after a long campaign by the family of Veronica Nelson, an Aboriginal woman who died in horrific circumstances while on remand in 2020.

The Albanese government is also to blame. Since the failed Voice referendum, Albanese has retreated from Indigenous Affairs, leaving communities to suffer the vicious racist backlash that accompanied the “No” vote and the sharpest edge of the cost-of-living crisis.

Before being elected, Albanese promised his government would create “real jobs” for Indigenous people, replacing the exploitative Community Development Projects (CDP) scheme.

On CDP, more than 40,000 Indigenous people across regional and remote areas are forced to do “activities”, including work for employers, to receive meagre Centrelink payments, often quarantined onto a BasicsCard.

But Labor’s newly announced Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program is only offering 700 jobs in its first two grant rounds in 2025, and a maximum of 3000 jobs over three years.

Self-determination

Labor’s refusal to fund a proper jobs program will leave almost all CDP participants in dire poverty and Aboriginal organisations battling for



resources to assist communities in crisis.

John Hartley, from the Kubirriwarra Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation, spoke to *Solidarity* following a large community meeting in Mossman in North Queensland, organised by business owners after windows were smashed and ATMs damaged on the main street.

Hartley says that demonisation of Aboriginal youth by the LNP government has created a licence for racism to be expressed more openly.

“There were people in this meeting saying they would bring their dogs into town to attack our kids or hit them with waterbombs outside shops. I made it clear this would not be happening.

“We don’t agree with destructive behaviour and it should stop. But there needs to be understanding of the frustration and angst of many of these young people. The recent cyclone displaced many Aboriginal families, forcing them into town and further overcrowded conditions.

“People look to a law and order response, but jailing is an abject failure, just look at the statistics. They want to move the kids on—but to where?

“There are no facilities available for young people where they can feel safe, the services are overloaded.

“I look at these kids and I don’t see criminality. I see a cry for help. They are screaming out, We are here. Notice us!

“We recently submitted yet another grant application for a cultural

Above: Indigenous workers in Ampilatwatja protesting the CDP scheme with support from trade unions in 2010

centre, to create a hub for our community. A place to run programs to help deal with trauma, with drug and alcohol addiction, where young people could come to get employment and training.

“We were knocked back but the government seem to have endless resources for locking our people away.

“And we have a constant fight to access and protect our lands.

“In February the Douglas Shire Council cut off water to a camp we have at Cooya beach, where we are regenerating the landscape with native plants. We picketed the local boat ramp until the water was reconnected. Now we are taking on a destructive sand-mining operation”.

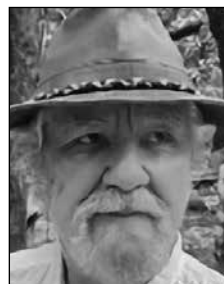
Hartley says any real change needs to address these deeper issues of respect for Aboriginal culture and rights to land.

“We started a partnership with the local school. Our people are now employed to teach our language to all children. Break-ins at the school dropped from 350 in a year down to none.

“Non-Indigenous enrolment also increased at the school. So we have the solutions.”

Governments want to keep Aboriginal people locked up and under control, rather than resource organisations that can lift up their people and assert their rights against a racist system.

Like the Kubirriwarra stand at Cooya beach, every job and every inch of land will need to be fought for.



John Hartley
Photo: Kubirriwarra Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation

Huge Greek general strike demands justice over Tempe train crash

By Marina Dionysiou

WORKERS IN Greece staged the country's largest general strike in decades on 28 February, on the two-year anniversary of the Tempe train crash in 2023.

There were huge rallies in Athens and Thessaloniki as well as across the Greek mainland and islands and even internationally. The crowd in Athens was estimated to be over one million people.

There were an estimated 380 demonstrations globally, including here in Australia in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth.

The crash in the Tempe Valley in Greece was an unprecedented state crime. Two trains, one carrying cargo and one carrying more than 350 passengers, crashed while running in the opposite direction on the same line. Fifty-seven people died with many others injured.

Train workers and unions had repeatedly warned that an "accident" like this was waiting to happen. The privatisation of the train system has meant prioritising profits over safety and people's lives. The result is mass understaffing (with just 590 workers now employed compared to 3200 before 2012-2015) and run down trains and technology, including the breakdown of communications systems and signals that caused the crash.

Kyriakos Mitsotakis' right-wing government attempted a cover-up over the crash. The site was bulldozed before a proper forensic investigation could take place, meaning large amounts of materials from the crash were removed, hiding and destroying evidence in the process. The government tried to blame the station master on shift as the only one responsible for the crash, while there were many vile and sexist attacks on Maria Karys-tianou (the mother of a victim) and the other families of victims fighting for justice.

Yet the government is widely seen as complicit in the crash, which has become a symbol of the failures of the Greek state. Polls show that 72 per cent of those asked believe the government has attempted to cover up the crime.

The strike saw the organised working class united to demand "the collapse of the murderers' government".

Schools, hospitals, hospitality venues, the public sector, trains, ports,



Above: Part of the general strike in Athens on 28 February Photo: Workers Solidarity Greece

factories and shops were all shut for the strike. Striking train, bus and even taxi drivers worked for free to take protesters to the rallies.

The Greek Palestinian community, Pylos survivors (from a shipwreck where 650 refugees were killed) and migrant workers were all present, alongside countless banners and contingents from unions, and high-school and university students holding occupations.

They defied the government's desperate attempts to scare people away, including by unleashing thousands of cops who violently attacked protesters with tear gas.

Mitsotakis' New Democracy party controls a majority of seats and has survived a confidence motion in parlia-

ment. But one thing is clear: neither his government nor the weak parliamentary opposition can bring the justice that people are demanding.

Follow up strikes and marches took place a week later on 8 March, International Women's Day, organised by the Movement for the 8 March strike. Rallies and strikes are continuing, with another general strike planned on 9 April.

The workers' movement needs to fight to escalate the strikes and nationalise the entire transport system. In doing so it is important to also address the failures of other public services like education and health, and demand a society organised to meet workers' needs not bosses profits.

Serbian students and workers rock government

HUGE STUDENT-LED protests have rocked Serbia. They erupted on 1 November, when the Novi Sad railway station collapsed and 15 people were killed. Memorial protests spread to more than 200 towns and cities.

The collapse was a symbol of the corruption and cronyism of the government more generally.

When pro-regime thugs attacked protesters at Belgrade University, students occupied six public universities. Classes in universities have been put on hold for the past four months.

But students are also aware of the importance of reaching out to the broader population. In January, students in Belgrade held a 24-hour occupation of an important intersection and walked hundreds of kilometres to support student blockades in Novi Sad and Kragujevac.

Hundreds of taxi drivers volunteered to drive the students back to

Belgrade and 700 were housed by the residents of Kragujevac overnight.

Workers have heeded the call from students to take matters into their own hands. Teachers' unions organised strikes. The Serbian Bar Association has put lawyers' activity on hold and some theatres have closed.

Public transport, pharmacies unions and energy workers have protested, and workers at the public broadcaster have covered the student protests, against the wishes of their bosses. It is estimated that 250,000 have joined protests in a country of only 6.5 million people.

The current protests have drawn comparison to the mass movement of 2000 which spelled an end to Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's genocidal regime. The mass movement could again bring down the regime.

Finnian Colwell

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The strike saw the organised working class united to demand 'the collapse of the murderers' government'.

Trump wants a deal with Putin to loot Ukraine for US interests

By Jasmine Ali

DONALD TRUMP and Vice President JD Vance's public dressing down of Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky at the Oval Office sent shockwaves across the Western political establishment.

In the past, Zelensky received praise and standing ovations from both former US President Joe Biden and Western European nations including the UK, France and Germany, who presented him as a hero defending freedom and democracy.

But the war in Ukraine has always been a proxy war between Russia and the US-led NATO alliance, part of the imperialist scramble for power and profits.

Russia should never have invaded Ukraine. But the conflict followed concerted efforts by NATO since the collapse of the Soviet Union to expand eastward, threatening Russia's borders.

The US disregarded Russia's insistence that Ukraine not be allowed to join NATO and refused to negotiate.

It also built up Ukraine's armed forces, encouraging Zelensky with promises he would have support to defeat Russia.

David Arakhamia, the parliamentary leader of Zelensky's Servant of the People party, led Ukrainian negotiations with Russia shortly after the invasion in 2022. He has confirmed that the two sides were close to a peace deal where Ukraine would accept neutrality and agree not to join NATO.

Instead, then British Prime Minister Boris Johnson travelled to Ukraine and urged Zelensky to reject the deal and "make war".

Zelensky's strategy of relying on Western imperialism to counter Russian aggression saw him pledge to make Ukraine an outpost for Western imperialism. It would become a "big Israel", as he put it, a highly militarised state serving US imperialist interests and backed with Western weaponry.

This has backfired badly, especially for ordinary Ukrainians who have died in huge numbers and seen large parts of their country devastated.

US and European states—and Australia—have poured massive military spending and aid into Ukraine but this has not resulted in a swift end to Russia's attacks, rather more than



Above: Donald Trump meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin during his last term in office Photo: White House

three years of war.

Ukrainians are tired of the war. A Gallup poll in December showed a majority of Ukrainians want a negotiated end to the fighting, with just 38 per cent still believing that "Ukraine should continue fighting until it wins the war".

Growing numbers of Ukrainian troops are deserting or dodging conscription. Officially 90,000 troops have deserted but officials admit the real figure is much higher. "Entire units have abandoned their posts," the Associated Press reported in November.

At the Oval Office meeting, Zelensky's demand for security guarantees from the US as part of any agreement was sharply rebuked by Vance and Trump.

Zelensky has now agreed to sign an agreement handing over billions of dollars worth of Ukrainian minerals to the US and has accepted an initial ceasefire proposal. But the terms of any long-term peace settlement with Russia will be sharply contested.

Trump's imperial reset

Trump's shifting of US policy on Ukraine is not the result of support for Putin or a desire for global peace, as he sometimes claims, but a reset of US imperial strategy.

With the war turning in Russia's favour and little prospect of any Ukrainian victory, Trump wants to stop pouring money into the conflict.

Trump is also demanding Western European governments commit to increased military spending to take on more responsibility for funding NATO themselves.

Both Peter Dutton and Anthony Albanese have criticised Trump's position on Ukraine, worried about the implications for Australia's own alliance with the US.

Albanese has sought to cement this through the \$368 billion AUKUS agreement to build nuclear-powered submarines, to try to draw the US further into projecting power in the Pacific and South China Sea.

Although Trump replied "what's that?" when asked about AUKUS, he remains committed to the alliance.

The decline of US power has meant that China, which has both the world's largest manufacturing base and a growing military, has emerged as the US's most important rival.

The disastrous failures of the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have also resulted in regional powers such as Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia exerting more influence in the Middle East.

While Trump is keen to cut US commitments to Ukraine in the immediate term, he wants to pivot against China, creating the increased possibility and danger of unthinkable war.

Trump's focus on both China and Iran is indicated by the imposition of a tariff war on Chinese goods. Trump has also become bullish against Iran, demanding that it end its nuclear program.

We must continue to demand an end to the war in the Ukraine, the withdrawal of Russian troops and oppose NATO or Australian troops and military support being sent to Ukraine.

We must also step up efforts to force Labor to ditch its support for nuclear-powered submarines and war-mongering aimed at China.

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British Prime Minister Boris Johnson travelled to Ukraine and urged Zelensky to reject a deal and 'make war'

TRUMP, IMPERIALISM AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Trump’s bullying and threats against US allies are part of a crude effort to restore US power, and a display of naked imperialism, writes **James Supple**

IN A desperate effort to maintain US power, Donald Trump is shaking up the system of alliances that has allowed it to dominate the world since the end of the Second World War.

He is lashing out at allies in an effort to grab advantage for the US, using tariffs to try to bludgeon action from Canada and Mexico over immigration and drug imports, and to try to restore the declining economic power of the US through rebuilding its manufacturing base.

After the US has poured hundreds of billions into Ukraine to fight a proxy war with Russia, Trump now wants to come to terms with Putin and carve up the country, declaring that the US will “get that money back” by taking control of Ukraine’s mineral wealth.

But despite his bluster and bullying there is a logic to Trump’s actions.

His “America First” approach is a response to US decline. He has long been obsessed with the idea that other countries are “taking advantage of” the US over its alliances and on trade.

The so called “rules based international order” was always a cover for imposing US power.

The US has threatened punishment against other states that break the rules but has continually flouted them itself, such as when it invaded Iraq in 2003 or with former US President Joe Biden rushing to arm Israel even as it carries out war crimes in Gaza.

But according to Trump, as his Secretary of State Marco Rubio has put it, “The postwar global order is not just obsolete; it is now a weapon being used against us”, as other countries pursue their own interests while the US sacrifices to preserve the “global order”.

For decades the NATO alliance has allowed the US to dominate Europe through providing a security guarantee to defend European countries, initially against Russia during the Cold War.

Now Trump has threatened to abandon US allies in Europe who fail to increase defence spending, com-

plaining, “Europe is in for a tiny fraction of the money that we’re in [for]”.

In response European states are rearming, pouring billions more into military spending.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has announced an extra \$26 billion per year while the European Union plans an immediate \$250 billion spending plan.

Russia and Ukraine

Trump’s desire to impose a peace settlement on Ukraine so it can stop funding military aid comes in the same context.

Since 2021 the US has provided \$200 billion in weapons and aid to Ukraine, making it by far the largest single recipient of US foreign aid.

The US has used Ukraine as a proxy war in an effort to weaken Russian power and send a message to China about the costs of defying the US.

US Senator Richard Blumenthal argued in 2023 that, “For less than 3 per cent of our nation’s military budget, we’ve enabled Ukraine to degrade Russia’s military strength by half ... All without a single American service woman or man injured or lost.”

But after three years of war Russia has again gained the upper hand, slowly seizing more Ukrainian territory as Ukraine’s army falters. Trump thinks the war has been a waste of money and wants out.

Trump’s humiliation of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is a brutal confirmation that this is a proxy war where the US is calling the shots. Trump has threatened to negotiate directly with Russian President Vladimir Putin to impose a settlement if Ukraine refuses to toe the line.

Trump’s moves are not a result of any supposed love for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

They are consistent with his view that US support for alliances and the international order are seeing it ripped off.

.....
Trump has long been obsessed with the idea that other countries are ‘taking advantage of’ the US
—————

Trump also views China as the US’s key challenger, and wants to focus all its resources to meeting the threat. Russia and China have forged a close partnership as part of an effort to weaken US power.

Trump seems to think he can strike a deal with Putin to pull Russia away from China.

There is talk of easing sanctions on Russia, joint economic projects in rare earth mining and the Arctic, and Russia rejoining the G7.

Marco Rubio said this explicitly in a recent interview, arguing, “The big story of the 21st century is going to be US-Chinese relations”.

“But I think having a situation where the Russians are permanently a junior partner to China, having to do whatever China says to do because they are dependent on them, I don’t think that’s a good outcome for Russia and it’s not a good outcome for America or for Europe or the world.”

Trump has presented himself as working for “peace” through bringing an end to the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. But he is no isolationist trying to stay out of conflicts abroad.

Instead, just like previous US Presidents, he is determined to boost US power. Trump has even promoted the idea of territorial expansion through seizing control of Greenland, the Panama Canal, Gaza and even Canada.

This is not just a passing whim. Trump has repeatedly insisted he wants Greenland, currently part of Denmark, raising it directly in a phone call with the Danish Prime Minister and telling the head of NATO, Mark Rutte, “we need that for national security” and insisting “I think it’ll happen”.

Trump sees his America First approach as a more ruthless and open pursuit of US interests.

The US has always been a brutal imperialist power out for its own advantage. But previous US Presidents have sought to disguise these aims through talk of spreading freedom,

democracy and liberal values. With Trump, the mask is off.

US imperialism

Imperialism is a product of the competition that is built into capitalism.

As companies outgrow national boundaries they take part in competition for profit on an international scale, struggling against companies based in other nations. Rival firms need the backing of their own state to strike trade deals and secure markets and raw materials.

This means that economic competition spills over into competition between states looking to advance the interests and profits of their rival companies and national economies.

This can take the form of economic coercion as well as open war.

Imperialism is not simply an issue of the most powerful nations such as the US dominating others, but a system of competition between a range of larger and smaller powers.

States like Turkey and Iran are able to seek influence and greater power in their local region. Russia is a much weaker power today than during the days of the Cold War, but still wants to recover the territory and wealth it had when it controlled Eastern Europe.

Trump's pledge to "make America great again" and bring back the American dream both point to the fear that the US is fading as an economic and imperialist power.

This has been a concern of the US ruling class for decades.

After the Second World War the US was at the peak of its power, with dynamic industries able to outcompete its rivals.

It designed a world order based on free trade that would allow US companies to dominate the world economically through access to markets.

But the US has been losing ground economically to its rivals since the 1960s.

It has continued to use international institutions like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation, alongside its alliances with European states and others, to promote free trade and economic globalisation. But instead of ensuring US dominance, this has allowed the rise of competitors like China.

China is now the world's largest manufacturer and exporter, following decades of rapid economic growth. It is also challenging US's dominance of



Above: Donald Trump presiding over a meeting of administration officials during his first term Photo: White House

the tech industry from AI to semiconductors and communications. Its economic strength and population means it also has the potential to develop military power eventually surpassing the US.

The US remains the dominant global military power.

But recent decades have also shown the limits of its ability to impose its will by force.

The US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were conceived as a way to control Middle Eastern oil and reassert US power for decades to come.

Instead the US's failure in Iraq strengthened Iran, its major opponent in the region. The US eventually had to cut and run from Afghanistan, pulling out its troops and allowing the Taliban to take over again in 2021. These wars came at a cost of \$4 to \$6 trillion.

A more unstable world

Trump's America First approach is unlikely to work as a solution to the decline of US power.

Many of his goals, like the takeover of Greenland and Canada, seem far fetched.

But it threatens to produce an even more chaotic and dangerous world. Already a massive increase in arms spending is under way, as US allies fear they can no longer rely on Trump to protect their interests.

If the US retreats from using its power to impose order around the globe it will open up the space for rival states to assert themselves.

We have already seen this in Syria, where it was Russia, Iran, Turkey and other states that competed for influence during the civil war after 2011.

The bloody war in Ukraine and Israel's genocide in Gaza are two further examples of the horror resulting from a more unstable world.

The US obsession with China is a recipe for further instability, with the danger of a catastrophic war between two major nuclear-armed powers. It means more turmoil in our local region, with Australian governments feeding the drive to war through their own military build-up alongside a growing US military presence at bases in Australia.

Trump's new world order shows a declining superpower flailing around in the hope of restoring its former glories.

In the 20th century, capitalism produced the most horrifying and bloody wars in human history, with two world wars followed by conflicts in Korea and Vietnam that also claimed millions of lives. But it also produced mass anti-war movements that have helped stop wars.

Imperialism and war remain a central feature of today's world. We need to build a movement capable of stopping the drive to war, and ensuring that our rulers can never again sacrifice masses of working class people to the slaughter.

This ultimately requires fighting to end capitalism—and for a world run in the interests of people not profit.

AS THE THREAT OF DUTTON LOOMS WHY HAS LABOR BEEN SUCH A FAILURE?

Erima Dall looks at Labor’s drop in support and why it has disappointed its supporters

IF LABOR loses the upcoming election, it will be the first time since 1931 that a government has been unseated after one term.

After the 2022 election, the Liberals were declared to be “in the wilderness” for the long term. Peter Dutton’s rise to party leadership added to that assessment.

Dutton, the ex-Queensland cop, is a racist and union hater, who joked about Pacific islands going underwater and was once voted by doctors to be the worst health minister in living memory.

With Dutton leading the opposition, Labor should have this election in the bag. Except they don’t. One poll put Labor’s primary vote at just 25 per cent.

The election will be close. The Liberals need to win 19 seats to form a majority, which is a tall order given the rise of the Teal independents. But if Labor loses just three seats, they will be back in a minority.

A Dutton victory would be disastrous. He wants to build state-funded nuclear power, compound discrimination against Indigenous communities by bringing back the cashless welfare card and sack public servants while imitating Trump’s bigotry against transgender people and racism towards migrants and refugees.

Yet rather than mount any challenge to Dutton’s right-wing agenda, Albanese has paved the way for Dutton and in many instances has tried to outflank Dutton from the right.

Labor has dropped any policies or issues, such as negative gearing, that could be regarded as controversial or attract criticism in the mainstream media.

But this approach means people have little reason to vote for Labor. Polling shows that on cost of living, wages and the economy, up to 44 per cent of voters believe “it makes no difference” who wins.

Albanese wants to be seen as a “responsible leader”—responsible,

that is, for the interests of the rich and powerful. He has done everything to position Labor as the reliable choice to run Australian capitalism.

Albanese immediately embraced the AUKUS defence pact between Australia, the US and the UK and Scott Morrison’s associated commitment to spend \$368 billion on nuclear-powered submarines.

Even with Donald Trump now US President, Labor has doubled down on the US alliance, shackling itself to a far-right thug who wants to start a war with China.

On climate, Labor has failed to stand up to the fossil fuel industry and has approved multiple new coal and gas projects. Its Safeguard Mechanism relies on flawed carbon offset schemes and its 43 per cent emissions reduction target will not keep global warming under 1.5C.

On First Nations rights, Labor has done nothing since the failure of the Voice referendum. And on refugee rights, Labor has adopted so many draconian Liberal policies that the Coalition boasts that “they are running the immigration system”.

Nowhere has Labor’s capitulation to the right been clearer, and starker, than on Palestine.

The Labor government has refused to impose even the smallest sanction against Israel, while telling lies that Australia does not export weapons to Israel. Albanese has attacked the pro-Palestine movement as antisemitic. He backed the NSW state Labor government introducing draconian anti-protest laws.

Domestically Labor’s historic low point is the attack on the CFMEU. In response to unsubstantiated allegations, Labor did the bidding of the bosses and corporate media and attacked one of the country’s most militant unions. Democratically elected union officials have been sacked and the union put under the control of government appointed administrators.

.....
Albanese came to power determined to stand for nothing except the hope that Labor would get a second term

Albanese was very willing to junk any principles and turn on workers who had been among Labor’s most reliable supporters. In the process, Labor has handed a blueprint to any future Liberal government to similarly attack more unions.

Labor’s failure on the cost-of-living crisis has resulted in widespread disillusionment and could cost them the election. Real wages are back at 2011 levels.

Yet Albanese has refused to take any kind of bold action, hiding behind the pathetic excuse that incumbent governments world-wide are suffering the consequences of run-away inflation.

Albanese came to power determined to stand for nothing except the hope that Labor would get a second term.

After Bill Shorten’s shock defeat at the 2019 election, Albanese, the parliamentary leader of the Labor left, became party leader and quickly abandoned rhetoric about inequality, dumping modest reforms to tax the wealthy and tackle the unaffordable housing market by restricting negative gearing.

Labor also refused to challenge Scott Morrison’s Stage 3 tax cuts—a \$20 billion giveaway to the wealthy—until overwhelming public backlash forced them to slightly revise the policy. Even then, the cuts still hand money back to the rich.

The government’s recent announcement of \$8.5 billion towards Medicare bulk-billing incentives is a small step in the right direction but co-payments have already become well established. And it is nothing compared to the \$368 billion for nuclear submarines, money that could also easily cover including dental care into Medicare. In any case, Dutton was quick to match the bulk-billing announcement.

Labor has thrown some crumbs, such as funding for aged care pay rises, three days of subsidised child-

care, increased parental leave and some modest industrial reforms like “same-job same-pay” and redefining “casual” work. But there is still no right to strike and Labor’s crumbs have been outstripped by interest rate rises, rampant power bill increases and rising grocery prices.

Managing the system

Labor’s failure to deliver meaningful change stems from its commitment to managing capitalism. Labor is committed to trying to hold parliamentary power within capitalism rather than challenging the system, let alone organising to overthrow it.

Labor once paid lip service to full employment, free public education and a welfare safety net, and even opposed privatisation.

But possible reforms have always been subordinate to first ensuring the profitability of business. Under capitalism, it is the minority that owns and controls “the means of production”, the owners of factories, tech platforms and supermarkets—the 1 per cent—who hold real economic power.

This is why a strategy for change based on winning elections to parliament is a dead end. Elections can change governments, for better or worse, but it is the capitalist class that makes investment decisions that determine whether people are employed or not.

Labor accepts that they have to make conditions favourable for business and that means profits come first.

That means keeping wages down and restricting welfare spending while fossil fuel companies keep polluting and make billions.

It also means leading a nationalist agenda to shore up Australia’s imperialist interests. Labor is boosting military spending, tying itself even closer to US imperialism and the drive to war on China.

This is what has characterised Labor since the 1980s, when they embraced pro-corporate, user-pays, neoliberal economics.

The Whitlam government was the last Labor government with a progressive reform agenda. Whitlam was elected on the back of massive social movements and union strikes demanding change. His government abolished university fees, doubled school funding, created Medibank and increased health spending by 20 per cent. Budget outlays doubled overnight.

But when the “stagflation” economic crisis of the 1970s ended the post-war boom, Labor could no longer fund reforms through uninterrupted



growth. Whitlam froze his own reform agenda in late 1974 and began to back-pedal, drastically cutting public spending.

After the infamous “Whitlam dismissal” in 1975, the Labor party dramatically changed course. As the system went into recession in the 1980s, Labor embraced austerity. The Hawke and Keating Labor governments of the 1980s and 1990s did in Australia what Thatcher did in the UK and Reagan in the US—privatising public assets, restraining strikes and tying wages to productivity increases in enterprise bargaining.

Decades of these pro-business policies have eroded Labor’s once-loyal working-class base and its primary vote has collapsed from over 50 per cent to the low 30s we see today.

Working-class seats like Lalor and Werriwa are no longer safe for Labor.

In 2014, Labor won the state seat of Werribee, which falls within Lalor, with a 56.6 per cent primary vote. In the recent by-election, this plunged to 28.9 per cent. Werriwa, Gough Whitlam’s old seat and a Labor stronghold for 90 years, is at risk this election.

Albanese champions Hawke and Keating’s commitment to corporate capitalism. Albanese stands proudly in their tradition of sacrificing Labor supporters and the interests of ordinary working class people to the interests of big business.

Disillusionment with Hawke and Keating in the 1980s and 1990s led directly to John Howard; this time disillusionment with Labor is dangerously boosting Dutton and his Trump-lite policies.

History shows that real gains come

Above: Marching against Albanese’s support for Israel’s Melbourne Photo: Matt Hrkac

from struggle not parliamentary manoeuvring. It was protests and strikes that were crucial to ending Australia’s role in the Vietnam war. Protests stopped uranium mining. After tens of thousands of workers demonstrated against Howard’s anti-union Work-Choices legislation, it was the union movement that was central to defeating the Howard government in 2007.

Just as working class industrial power broke the penal powers of the industrial courts in 1969, strikes could break Labor’s administration of the CFMEU.

Challenging Labor and standing up to the threat from the right will take a serious fightback from unions and social movements.

For sections of the climate movement who thought Labor would seriously tackle climate change, the Albanese government has been a bitter lesson.

Union leaders have also looked to Labor rather than industrial struggle; instead of standing up for militancy, and defiance of anti-union laws, many have shamefully collaborated with Labor’s attack on the CFMEU.

The most important task of the left and of socialists is to build struggles that can put real change back on the agenda. We need to build leadership and rank-and-file confidence in the unions and movements that will not put the brakes on struggle when it comes into conflict with the system.

For that we need stronger socialist organisation committed to fanning the flames of resistance and linking the struggles into a fight to overturn the system that is dragging us to war and climate catastrophe.

FIGHTING RACISM, FASCISM AND THE FAR RIGHT WILL TRUMP LEAD TO A FASCIST AMERICA?

Adam Adelpour looks at the difference between fascism in power and other forms of far right politics, and the lessons from history on how to stop them

DONALD TRUMP'S actions since his inauguration in January, sacking public servants, arresting Palestinian protesters, threatening Panama, Greenland and Gaza, have been shocking.

Elon Musk, the world's richest man, made headlines when he did a fascist salute at Trump's inauguration. Musk's Department of Government Efficiency has attacked dozens of federal agencies and attempted to sack tens of thousands of workers.

Trump's executive orders released members of armed far-right militias imprisoned for storming the US Capitol. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents have been unleashed to terrorise communities.

In the last decade we have seen the rise of the far right and fascist politics globally. So it is not surprising that some people are asking if the US is descending into fascism.

These developments are truly alarming. Understanding the rise of fascism in the 20th century is key to understanding how to fight today.

The key features of fascism

The first step is to understand what fascism is. There is a lot of confusion about the term.

German fascism is known for its extreme racism and antisemitism, leading to the Holocaust and the murder of six million Jews. But the defining aim of fascist movements is to annihilate working class organisation and liberal democracy, root and branch, as both the fascist movements that took power in Italy in the 1920s and Germany in the 1930s did.

The Nazis physically destroyed trade unions, banned all political parties, and imprisoned working class activists in concentration camps, whether they were social democrats (similar to Labor Party members) or Communists.

Every element of society from sports clubs to marching bands was

put under Nazi control.

Fascism performs a service for the ruling class in a situation of severe economic and political crisis.

The Great Depression in Germany saw industrial production collapse by 42 per cent and unemployment explode to 5.5 million—30 per cent of the total workforce.

The German ruling class faced a strong trade union movement that had made important gains in the revolutionary years following the First World War.

To solve the crisis for the ruling class, trade union and socialist organisation had to be smashed.

This wasn't possible using the usual parliamentary channels, it required physical confrontation—something that the Nazis with their street gangs could provide.

Fascist groups may run in elections for parliament like other parties. But crucially, they seek to build up a paramilitary force that can break strikes, smash working class organisations, and terrorise minorities.

By the end of 1931, the Nazi party had 800,000 members. By 1933, the party had built a paramilitary wing, the Storm-troopers, with a force of 400,000.

As the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky wrote: "The historic function of fascism is to smash the working class, destroy its organisations, and stifle political liberties when the capitalists find themselves unable to govern and dominate with the help of democratic machinery."

This explains why the German ruling class was prepared to let Hitler take power in 1933, even though he never won the votes of a majority of Germans.

The fact fascism was a mass movement meant it could achieve for the ruling class what the normal military and police could not.

Trotsky argued that support for

The defining aim of fascist movements is to annihilate working class organisation and liberal democracy

fascism was based among the middle class—small farmers, shop owners, landlords living off rent, professionals and managers. These groups were over-represented in the Nazis' membership.

The Depression ruined the middle class on a mass scale. Businesses went broke, while others lost well-paid jobs and their life savings.

Their ruin created a frenzied rage among the middle classes that fascism directed against the working class and against Jews, who they said were responsible for the collapse of the economy.

Fascists and the far right today

Donald Trump is a far-right racist and populist, not a fascist. He is not working to organise a street army to annihilate liberal democracy. But Trump is more than willing to encourage and embolden those who are fascists and want to build a real fascist movement.

Trump is part of a global wave of fascist and far-right politics that is quite complicated and has different currents.

Some are classic fascist groups like Golden Dawn in Greece and Jobbik in Hungary that organise gangs of street thugs, mass marches, and stage violent attacks on migrants, refugees and left-wing activists in the mould of the Nazis.

In other cases fascist organisations have dropped their Hitler salutes, the use of clear fascist insignia, open Holocaust denial and overt use of street violence to try to present themselves as normal political parties running in elections. This is the model of Marine Le Pen's National Rally (formerly called the National Front) in France, Austria's Freedom Party and the AfD in Germany.

Marine Le Pen's father established the National Front as a party with a core of wartime Nazi collaborators and other fascists that sought to use

elections to legitimise its ideas.

More recently Marine Le Pen has publicly tried to distance it from this history, hiding its overtly fascist politics and changed the name of the party. But National Rally maintains its fascist core and links with violent fascist gangs.

The AfD in Germany is more explicit than the French National Rally. Its leadership includes fascists like Bjorn Hoocke, the leader of the party in Thuringia, who has been fined for using Nazi slogans.

But they, too, are trying to use elections to build a larger fascist party while hiding some of their more explicit Nazi politics.

Because these “Euro-fascists” do not yet have mass fascist parties with street armies as Hitler did, even when they join government they do not have the ability to impose a fascist regime.

Georgia Meloni in Italy is another example. She is a fascist who began her political life in a fascist party called the Italian Social Movement. But although she is Prime Minister she is not running a fascist state; her anti-migrant and anti-refugee policies are disgusting but trade unions, the ability to openly protest and the institutions of liberal democracy still function.

Racist populism

Mainstream political parties that are not fascist, nevertheless, play a role legitimising racism, for example pulling politics to the right and giving oxygen to fascists that help them grow. These include racist populist parties like Reform UK and the likes of Trump in the US.

The racist immigration policies and racist scapegoating that the major parties use to deflect from their own failures also creates fertile ground for the far right.

The Democrats’ embrace of anti-migrant policies under Joe Biden in the US is one example. In February 2025 Trump actually deported less migrants than Biden did in the same month the previous year.

There are dangers with characterising Trump as a fascist.

Firstly, it plays down the seriousness and the physical threat of a genuine fascist movement. Secondly, thinking the Trump administration is akin to Hitler coming to power in 1933 encourages the idea he is unstoppable and that it is impossible to protest or organise against him.

Trump is far from invincible. The anger about cost of living that helped bring Trump to power can rebound against him. An Ipsos poll in Febru-



Above: The scale Trump’s rallies are sickening, but he is not building a fascist movement
Photo: Gage Skidmore/Flickr

ary found 53 per cent of Americans disapproved of how he is handling the economy. This is the highest level of dissatisfaction at any point in his first and second Presidencies.

Lessons from Germany

One of the key lessons from the rise of fascism in Germany was the failure of the working class movement and the left to build united action against the Nazis.

The Nazis may have had 400,000 storm troopers, but working class organisations—the Communist Party, the trade unions and the SPD (the social democratic Labor-type Party)—contained many millions. Together they could have stopped the Nazis.

Under the influence of Stalin the Communist Party viewed the SPD as just as bad as the fascists. This ignored the fact that the SPD had millions of working class members and depended on trade unions—and the fascists wanted to destroy them.

When Hitler took power in 1933 the Communists called for a general strike. But they had isolated themselves from the wider working class and no one answered.

Trotsky called for the Communists to organise united action against the fascists alongside members of the SPD. This would have meant organising joint efforts to defend SPD and union meetings against fascist violence.

This lesson about the need for united, mass working class action remains critical today—to fight the racist populists like Trump, or against the Euro-fascists or classical fascist groups.

In Greece, Golden Dawn became the third biggest party after the global financial crisis and waves of austerity after 2007.

But it was successfully pushed back. After the left-wing rapper Pavlos Fyssas was murdered by fascists in 2013, 600,000 joined a general strike. Through many other mobilisations, based on uniting workers’ organisations and the left, Golden Dawn was broken.

In France last year, before the second round of parliamentary elections, 800,000 protested against the National Rally, helping prevent their victory in the election.

The rise of fascists and the far right can be stopped. Pushing back the mainstream climate of racism that fuels the far right is crucial.

Trump’s bigotry can be beaten through mass action against deportations and for trans rights.

There have been inspiring migrant-led protests against Trump’s deportation regime. After ICE arrested Palestinian Mahmoud Khalil, a prominent activist in the Columbia University Gaza protests, hundreds of Jewish activists occupied Trump Tower in New York.

During Trump’s previous term, in 2020, the Black Lives Matter rebellion saw a massive, multi-racial movement on the streets that helped boot Trump from office.

This time the stakes are even higher. Trump and the far right can and must be fought.

As part of that fight, we also need socialist organisation to build the struggle to smash the capitalist system that creates the racism, crisis and despair that allows the far right and fascism to fester.

ISRAEL AIMS TO RE-START WAR AS IT STARVES GAZA

By David Glanz

ISRAEL IS pushing the ceasefire in Gaza to breaking point as more than two million Palestinians are struggling to survive without electricity and clean water.

According to the first phase of the ceasefire agreement, which officially ended on 1 March, negotiations should have been well under way for a permanent ceasefire and a total Israeli withdrawal. But Israel has flouted talks.

It has ignored the ceasefire agreement by keeping troops in the Philadelphi corridor along the Egyptian border with Gaza after the deadline for their withdrawal. In addition, there are almost daily reports of Israeli airstrikes in Gaza.

Israel is trying to smash Palestinians into submission. It has cut off aid supplies and electricity, crippling water purification plants. The main plant in Khan Younis has reduced production from 17 million to 2.5 million litres per day.

The medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières said on 11 March, “Israeli authorities are yet again normalising the use of aid as a negotiation tool.

“This policy, which amounts to collective punishment, must be immediately stopped. The blockade on all supplies is ... having deadly consequences.”

A United Nations report says Israel carried out genocidal acts against Palestinians in Gaza by systematically destroying women’s healthcare facilities and that it used sexual violence as a war strategy through forced public stripping and sexual assault.

The report said Israeli forces deliberately attacked the Basma IVF clinic, Gaza’s main fertility centre, destroying about 4000 frozen embryos, along with 1000 sperm samples and unfertilised eggs—an explicit act of genocide.

Shamefully, Labor Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong has yet to say a word about these vicious crimes.

Year of war

With US President Donald Trump making it clear that Israel is free to act as it chooses, the Netanyahu government is preparing for new assaults.

The Chief of Staff of the Israeli military, the IDF, told army commanders that “we must be prepared for 2025 to be a year of war”.

The Trump plan to ethnically



Above: Palestinians living among the rubble in Jabalia, Gaza, as Israel again cuts off humanitarian aid
Photo: Imago/Alamy

With Trump making it clear that Israel is free to act as it chooses, Netanyahu is preparing for new assaults

cleanse Gaza is still alive. Environmental Protection Minister Idit Silman of Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud party said the “only solution for the Gaza Strip is to empty it of Gazans”.

She added that Netanyahu’s government is “committed to the idea of encouraging emigration” of Palestinians from Gaza. “God has sent us the US administration, and it is clearly telling us—it’s time to inherit the land.”

An attempt at mass expulsions could trigger anger and upheaval across the region. Because of that Trump is being publicly cautious, saying “nobody is expelling any Palestinians” from Gaza.

But the US and Israel have confirmed reaching out to officials of three East African governments, Somalia, Somaliland and Sudan, to discuss using their territories to resettle Gazans.

The US has rejected a proposal by Egypt for a reconstruction of Gaza that does not involve any further displacement of its population.

Instead, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said the government would establish a “migration administration” with the goal of expelling Palestinians as quickly as logistics allow.

Free-fire zones

Meanwhile, Israel is striking at will on the West Bank and in Lebanon and Syria—with no Western condemnation.

Thousands of Palestinians have been cleared from West Bank camps, including Jenin, Nur Shams and

Tulkarm. People fled with only what they could carry.

Israel is turning the former camps into free-fire zones while banning the UNRWA aid agency from operating on the West Bank.

Israeli troops killed at least 12 people while clearing Nur Shams, both fighters and civilians. On 11 March in Jenin, the IDF killed at least three armed fighters, wounded another and arrested ten.

Southern Lebanon remains under attack despite the ceasefire deal there. Israel said an airstrike killed the head of Hezbollah’s southern air defence unit, Hassan Abbas Izz Al-Din.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said the IDF would remain indefinitely in five parts of the demilitarized zone in south Lebanon “regardless of any future negotiations”.

As Israeli fighter jets struck southern Syria and the capital Damascus, Katz confirmed that Israel would keep also control of 400 square kilometres of Syria. The land is next to the Golan Heights, Syrian territory seized by Israel in 1967. It includes Mount Hermon, which positions Israeli artillery within range of Damascus.

Israel is using defence of the minority Arab-speaking Druze population of southern Syria as an excuse to demand complete demilitarisation of the provinces of Quneitra, Daraa and Suweida.

Strengthening the movement of solidarity with Palestine and all victims of Israeli aggression remains a key task for Australian activists.

Solidarity