

# Australian Labor government backs US bombings and wider war in Middle East

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Despite mass protests in major cities across Australia, week after week, since Israel launched its genocidal attack on Gaza last October, the Labor government has stepped-up its commitment to the onslaught and the escalating US war in the Middle East.

In the latest development, on Sunday morning Prime Minister Anthony Albanese declared his government's full support for Washington's bombings of alleged Iranian-linked sites in Syria and Iraq.

Albanese made it clear that this was on top of Labor's direct military participation in the intensifying US-UK strikes on Yemen, in retaliation for the Houthis' disruption of Israel's supply lines. The Houthis have stated they will continue to try to disrupt shipping in the Red Sea until the genocide ceases.

Speaking on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's "Insiders" television program, Albanese declared: "We support the actions of the United States. These are proportionate. These are retaliatory for the actions of Iran-backed organisations. And they are not an escalation. So, we think that the United States has got it right. It's important that, given the attacks that have occurred by groups backed by Iran, there be a response. There has been."

This was within a day of the US government sending nuclear-capable B-1B bombers to drop over 125 munitions on 85 targets in seven locations throughout Iraq and Syria, followed by Pentagon declarations that this was just the beginning. Many more such attacks will be conducted, clearly escalating the US offensive against Iran and Iranian-backed forces throughout the region.

Albanese echoed, virtually word-for-word, the White House's line. In announcing the attacks last Friday, Biden claimed: "The United States does not seek conflict in the Middle East or anywhere else in the

world."

That obviously flies in the face of the record. The US has kept pouring funding, weapons and logistical support to Israel to carry out the annihilation of Gaza, while flooding the region with warships, aircraft and soldiers, deliberately seeking to provoke a wider war.

Ever more clearly, the Israeli genocide in Gaza, which has already killed over 30,000 people, destroyed more than half the tiny enclave's essential infrastructure and displaced 1.9 million people, is part of a broader US war agenda.

American imperialism has been bombing, starving and invading countries throughout the region for decades, including the criminal 2003 invasion of Iraq that led to the deaths of over a million people. Washington is seeking unchallenged hegemony over the Middle East as part of its war drive against Russia and China.

Moreover, these latest strikes are patently illegal, taking place in defiance of the governments of Syria and Iraq, and being carried out without US congressional authorisation, let alone any approval by the American population.

Likewise, Albanese flatly rejected the objections of the Iraqi and Syrian governments that the strikes violate their sovereignty, backing the unlawful US aggression without any public support or even parliamentary vote.

The population is being kept in the dark as much as possible. The complicit corporate media has assisted this by burying nearly all mention of Albanese's interview on "Insiders."

Nor have any questions been asked in the media about Australia's active involvement in the bombings, in addition to the military personnel that the Labor government has dispatched to join the US-led forces attacking Yemen. It is likely that the ongoing US

strikes depend on satellite targeting information from the US-Australian facility at Pine Gap in central Australia, which covers the Middle East as well as the Indo-Pacific.

Albanese's interview further underscored the connection between the US offensive in the Middle East and its preparations for war against China, in which Australia is heavily involved.

The prime minister refused to rule out committing more Australian forces to participate in the US attacks. He said his government had not been asked for any further support, because "our concentration is on the Indo-Pacific," adding: "That's something that the United States and our allies certainly understand."

Albanese's declaration followed an even-less publicised February 1 phone call between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, just a day before the US strikes in Iraq and Syria began.

There is no mention of the conversation on Wong's official website, nor that of her department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

A perfunctory US State Department February 1 "readout," said the pair had discussed "holding the Houthis accountable" for their attacks on vessels in the Red Sea.

Almost certainly, Blinken would have told Wong about the impending strikes in Iraq and Syria, securing the Albanese government's prior acquiescence.

The State Department said the phone call also discussed "the importance of humanitarian aid reaching those in need in Gaza." That amounts to a cynical bid to counter the international outrage over the US decision, followed by Australia and other US allies, to suspend funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), the agency responsible for most of the extremely limited aid being permitted into Gaza.

In his interview, Albanese defended cutting off the funding. He insisted that Israel's allegations that 12 UNRWA staff were involved in the October 7 Hamas-led attack on southern Israel "need to be fully examined to ensure that every single dollar of aid is going to just that, aid."

In reality, the funding cutoff by the US and other imperialist powers underscores their collusion with the Israeli regime in bombing and starving the Palestinians

out of Gaza. This is part of a broader campaign of ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians, including in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Mass death by starvation and disease, as well as military slaughter, is the clear intent of Israel and all its backers, no matter what deceptive statements representatives like Blinken and Wong may occasionally make. As well as widespread famine, there is no clean water. Illnesses such as cholera and diarrhea are rife, with no functioning hospitals left to care for the sick.

On Friday evening, in another near-secret move, the Albanese government said Australians who were harmed or lost a close family member in the Hamas-led outbreak from the besieged Gaza enclave on October 7 would receive payments of up to \$75,000 each. That was because the government had officially declared the event a terrorist act.

There is no record of any such payments being offered to the thousands of Australian families whose loved ones have been killed, maimed or displaced by the Zionist terrorism. That underlines the Labor government's support for the Israeli barbarism.

Taken together, the intensifying genocide in Palestine and the US bombing operations demonstrate the political dead-end of trying to put pressure on the imperialist governments, including Albanese's, to change course, or relying on the International Court of Justice or the United Nations to end to the bloodbath in the Middle East.

As the WSWS has explained, stopping the imperialist violence requires the mobilisation of workers and young people around the world against all the governments responsible, and to block all shipments to Israel, as part of the fight for a socialist program to overturn the capitalist order, the root source of war.



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