

Australian government in cynical damage control over Israeli murder of aid worker

Oscar Grenfell
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In Australia, as internationally, Israel's cold-blooded murder of seven World Central Kitchen (WCK) aid workers in Gaza has further inflamed opposition to the Zionist regime's war crimes. Along with three British nationals, a Polish man and a Palestinian, those killed in the air strike included Lalzawmi "Zomi" Frankcom, an Australian.

When images were first posted on social media yesterday morning Australian time, showing Frankcom's bloodied passport and lifeless body, along with those of the other victims, they triggered considerable shock and anger.

The response of the Australian Labor government has been very different. It has engaged in the most cynical and hypocritical hand-wringing. The clear aim has been to placate popular hostility, without in any way deviating from support for the Israeli regime and its ethnic-cleansing operation in Gaza.

The government rhetoric has evolved. Having been vaguely "concerned" by Frankcom's murder, the Laborites have since decided that they are in fact "angry."

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's first response was dismissive, bordering on contemptuous. Asked about the initial reports of Frankcom's death during a radio interview yesterday morning, Albanese responded that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) were "investigating" and that he was "very concerned about the loss of life that is occurring in Gaza."

Albanese did not directly address the fact that a close ally of his government, Israel, had murdered an Australian citizen. He did not bother to offer condolences to Frankcom's family.

Asked a follow-up question by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) host, Albanese

responded: "Well, I just told you that Foreign Affairs and Trade are seeking further investigation of that, and I've been briefed that that is what they are doing." The impression was that Frankcom's death was an annoyance to the government.

DFAT released an anodyne statement in the morning, describing Frankcom's death as "distressing."

By the afternoon, Albanese's handlers had clearly told the prime minister that his indifferent response to Frankcom's death had not gone over well with the public.

At an unrelated media conference, Albanese declared that Frankcom had been "doing extraordinarily valuable work." He stated: "We are contacting the Israeli Ambassador to ask for accountability here. The truth is that this is beyond any reasonable circumstances—that someone going about providing aid and humanitarian assistance should lose their life."

The setting for Albanese's remarks was jarring to say the least. He was speaking at the Brisbane production facility of German arms manufacturer Rheinmetall. Albanese and other government ministers were announcing, as they have several times before, Rheinmetall's decision to make 100 armored vehicles capable of carrying heavy weapons at the facility.

Labor is presenting this as a boon to the Australian economy, though it will involve only 600–1,000 jobs. The production of the vehicles is part of Germany's remilitarisation and will contribute to the US-NATO instigated carnage in Ukraine. Labor is also touting the expansion of war production capabilities in Australia, as part of its aggressive alignment with US militarism including the preparations for war with China.

Rheinmetall, which helped arm the Nazi regime using slave labour in World War II, is not only a major supplier of the war against Russia in Ukraine, but also

of Israel. It has been involved in the Zionist regime's development of weapons, including missiles. None of the assembled journalists pointed this out to Albanese.

That evening, Albanese made an unscheduled appearance on the ABC's "7:30" program, largely repeating his earlier comments. "[W]e expect full accountability for this tragedy," he piously intoned. When the interviewer Sarah Ferguson asked if Australia would "change its position on the war in Gaza?" i.e., its full support for Israel, Albanese squirmed and effectively confirmed that it would not.

At roughly the same time as Albanese's appearance, Foreign Minister Penny Wong emerged with a statement on X/Twitter. Despite Frankcom's murder clearly falling within her portfolio, Wong was nowhere to be seen throughout the day. "The death of any aid worker is outrageous and unacceptable," Wong's statement declared. She "condemned this strike." But as thousands of hostile comments noted, Wong did not even name Israel.

The charade culminated this morning with a press conference by Albanese. The prime minister revealed he had spoken to his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu last night. Albanese said he had voiced "anger" over the death and "expressed very clearly that we need a full and proper explanation for how this has occurred."

Who does Albanese think he is kidding? Netanyahu and his fascist cronies are genocidal maniacs, who have slaughtered more than 30,000 Palestinians, over 13,000 of them children, in the past six months. In the days before the attack on aid workers, Israel demolished Al-Shifa Hospital, the largest medical facility in Gaza, and massacred 400 people in its surrounds.

That follows dozens of documented attacks on hospitals, the murder of hundreds of health workers, the killing of more journalists than in all conflicts over the past forty years, and the list could go on.

Netanyahu has already given his explanation for the murder of Frankcom and her colleagues. Smirking throughout a short video statement, the Israeli leader said: "This happens in war."

The WCK workers were killed shortly after passing through an Israeli checkpoint. It has now been confirmed that their convoy was hit with three separate Israeli strikes. Pictures of one of the vehicles shows a missile having gone directly through the WCK insignia

on its rooftop as though through a target.

The charity, one of the few that Israel had permitted to operate in Gaza, has since announced a full suspension of its activities. That is, this was one calculated and premeditated crime among many, clearly aimed at advancing Israel's openly stated objective of starving the Palestinian people.

Albanese, Wong and their Labor colleagues are accomplices in these atrocities. They have insisted on Israel's "right to defend itself" through the carpet bombing of a territory that it illegally occupies. The Pine Gap spy base in central Australia, jointly operated with the US, has almost certainly provided targeting information via the US for Israeli strikes. Australia supplies key components for the F-35 fighter jets that have been dropping their payloads on the people of Gaza. And above all, Labor is marching in the closest of lockstep with the Biden administration, which is arming, funding and overseeing the genocide.

The one thing that rang true in their pantomime over Frankcom's tragic death were comments by Albanese and Wong, denouncing opponents of the genocide for threatening "social cohesion." Whatever their contortions, Labor supports the slaughter and is hostile to the mass of workers and young people who want it to end.



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