After murder of aid workers, Australian government tries to hide its complicity in Gaza genocide

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Since Israel murdered seven aid workers in Gaza on Tuesday, including Lalzawmi "Zomi" Frankcom, an Australian, the federal Labor government has engaged in a cynical pantomime of "concern," "upset" and "anger." The posturing over Frankcom's tragic death is a transparent attempt to cover up Labor's complicity in a genocide that it has supported politically, diplomatically and militarily for the past six months.

Foreign Minister Penny Wong, a callous war hawk, posted pictures of herself to X/Twitter placing flowers for Frankcom at a monument to fallen aid workers. Wong's social media team turned off comments on the post, knowing that it would otherwise be inundated with denunciations of the foreign minister's hypocrisy and insincerity.

To the extent that the government has taken tangible actions, they have aligned entirely with Israel's own damage-control operation, which is being carefully calibrated with the Biden administration.

Labor has called for a "transparent" investigation to ensure "accountability." But all of its statements have indicated that such an investigation can and should be undertaken by Israel itself. As with police killings in Australia and deaths in custody, the perpetrators are to investigate themselves.

Labor also called for the Israeli soldiers directly involved in the drone strikes to be stood down from the military. Israel obliged yesterday, because such action dovetails with its attempts to present the attack as a mistake which can be palmed off on relatively junior figures within the army.

More generally, the calls for an investigation are premised on there being a mystery as to what occurred. The details, however, are already well known. Israeli forces, using drones, conducted separate strikes on three clearly marked vehicles of the World Central Kitchen (WCK) aid group. The WCK convoy had been through an Israeli checkpoint and received clearance to travel along the roads where it was bombed.

This was a deliberate act of state murder. Its aim was to block food supplies from reaching the Gazan people, as part of what UN officials and rights' groups have documented to be an Israeli strategy of starving the entire population. WCK and multiple other charity groups have been compelled to suspend their operations.

The response of Australia, along with the US and other Israeli allies, has at times descended into a through the looking glass absurdity.

An Australian media article, for instance, reported that US President Joe Biden had expressed "anger" at the attack on the WCK. He also "noted it was not isolated given nearly 200 [aid workers] have been killed so far since the war began last year." Yet no outrage was expressed over the earlier deaths.

In a similar vein, after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu brushed off the murders as something that "happens in war," Wong blandly stated: "These responses suggest the gravity of the death of seven humanitarian workers is yet to be appreciated by the Israeli government."

For the past six months, the Australian government and virtually the entire political and media establishment, have proclaimed Israel's "right to defend itself." The Zionist regime has been presented as waging a difficult, though just war, against an existential "terrorist" threat. Opposition to its actions has been slandered as a manifestation of antisemitism.

But now, half a year later, Wong can blurt out that the Israeli government does not "appreciate the gravity" of its own killing of aid workers.

Despite the posturing and the statements of anger, Wong has made plain that in practice, there will be no deviation of support for Israel's war.

Along with ruling out sanctions, a withdrawal of aid or any other concrete measures, a spokesperson for Wong told the media: "As the Foreign Minister has said consistently, the Australian government believes Hamas has no place in the future of governance of Gaza."

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That is, the government supports the entire pretext of Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza, and accepts that it will continue indefinitely. Given that Israeli officials have frequently described the entire Gazan population as Hamas or potential Hamas, that is a green light for an onslaught that will only end when the entire Gaza Strip has been ethnically-cleansed.

As with the Biden administration, Labor has, since late November, sought to obscure its role in the genocide with crocodile tears over civilian deaths and suggestions of "humanitarian ceasefires." It has never deviated, however, from the line that a "sustainable ceasefire" requires the complete defeat of Hamas and Israeli victory, under conditions where Zionist leaders declare that their aim is to annex Gaza.

The response to the WCK massacre, together with postures of concern over civilian deaths, are shifts in rhetoric, not substance. Their political character is evident from Labor's record throughout the genocide, which has at times included more open and aggressive support for the Israeli assault.

On October 16, Labor and the Liberal-National Coalition joined hands to pass a motion proclaiming that Australia "stands with Israel and recognises its inherent right to defend itself." To that point, at least 2,750 Palestinians had been killed and 9,700 wounded, as Israel carpet-bombed the strip.

Throughout October and into November, Albanese and other government leaders brushed off the massive Palestinian casualties. Albanese repeatedly described the deaths as the exclusive responsibility of Hamas, repeating the Israeli line that civilians were used by the group as "human shields."

Government leaders explicitly justified acts by Israel that were clear war crimes in violation of international law. On October 9, Israel cut off all water supplies to the Gazan population. The next day, Labor's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles responded to a question about this by declaring: "Well, I think Israel is justified in acting to defend itself in this moment."

Asked if that extended to inflicting "collective punishment" on the Gazan population, a war crime under the Geneva Convention, Marles said: "We are not sitting in the chair of the Israeli Defence Minister now. And so, the particular judgments as to how this is pursued is really a matter that Israel is executing as we speak."

Wong caused outrage. Asked a similar question, about whether withholding water and essential supplies from more than two million people while bombing them constituted "collective punishment," she said that it was "difficult to judge from afar," and reiterated Israel's "right to defend itself."

The extent of Australia's military involvement remains shrouded in secrecy, with Labor concealing the details of 350 approved defence exports to Israel since 2017, including 52 in 2023.

It is known, however, that F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jets have played a key role in Israel's bombardment of Gaza, which they could not without Australian involvement in the global supply chain necessary for their production.

As reported by *Declassified Australia* in November, "no bombs could be dropped on Gaza by an F-35 without parts manufactured for the F-35s by Melbourne company, Rosebank Engineering (RUAG Australia). The company is the sole global producer of the F-35's 'uplock actuators' that open and close the weapons bay doors to drop its payload."

Frankcom and her colleagues were killed by missiles fired from an unmanned Hermes 450 drone, produced by Elbit Systems, the main Israeli weapons manufacturer. Australia has extensive ties to Elbit. In February, Labor awarded the company a $917 million contract to provide "advanced protection, fighting capabilities and sensors" for Australian army infantry vehicles. Elbit has a Centre of Excellence for Human-Machine Teaming and Artificial Intelligence in Melbourne, established with funding from the Victorian state Labor government. AI is playing a crucial role in Israel's targeting of mass air strikes.

It is highly likely that the joint US-Australian Pine Gap spy base is involved as well. The facility in central Australia collects data from US satellites covering vast swathes of the globe, including the Middle East. Statements by a former employee to *Declassified Australia* in November, that Pine Gap would undoubtedly be providing targeting information for Israeli strikes, have never been refuted by the government or the military.

Labor's support for the genocide is one component of its participation in the broader eruption of US-led imperialist militarism, from the US-Israeli threats against Iran, to Washington's proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and its preparations for a catastrophic war against China. No one should be taken in by the posturing over several civilian deaths by a government that is involved in a war drive that threatens the existence of all of humanity.

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