

Australian Labor government whitewashes Israel's murder of aid worker

Oscar Grenfell
2 August 2024

An official report released by the Labor government yesterday is a transparent whitewash of Israel's murder of Australian World Central Kitchen (WCK) aid worker Zomi Frankcom and six of her colleagues on April 1.

The report was the culmination of a months-long damage control operation by Labor. Devised in collaboration with the Israeli state and likely the Biden administration, it was aimed at diffusing anger over the brutal killing of the WCK staff, without in anyway jeopardizing Australia's ongoing political, diplomatic and military support for the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza.

When Israel's killing of the WCK staff was revealed, Foreign Minister Penny Wong expressed her "deep concern," Labor's stock response to every Israeli atrocity. Wong dialed up the performative rhetoric, even claiming to be "angry."

But, the sole concrete action of the government was to announce an entirely non-binding investigation—a very limited fact-finding mission.

In reality it was a cover-up from the outset. Within hours, it was known that the clearly marked WCK convoy had been deliberately targeted by a series of missiles fired from a drone. Their movements had been known and approved by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) beforehand. In other words, this was a clear-cut war crime.

Labor's appointment of a military man, former Chief of the Defence Force Mark Binskin to lead the investigation was a clear signal of its character. His report is largely composed of IDF talking points, punctuated by his own approving commentary.

The status of Gaza and other Palestinian territories as illegally occupied by Israel is not mentioned. Nor is the fact that the Zionist regime had committed large-scale

atrocities prior to the murder of the WCK workers, including the slaughter of tens of thousands of women and children and the killing of almost 200 other humanitarian aid personnel.

Instead, the onslaught, which even the International Court of Justice has deemed to plausibly constitute genocide, is described by Binskin as an armed "conflict."

Roughly three pages of the ten-page report are simply a favourable account of Israel's response to the killing of the WCK workers. Binskin approvingly noted that the IDF, which a UN official recently described as "one of the most criminal armies in the world," had conducted an internal investigation.

Binskin, without a hint of criticism, reports that this in-house inquiry was over in less than 72 hours. Unsurprisingly, it found that the WCK massacre was an unfortunate mistake. The report cites minor disciplinary measures taken against some of the IDF personnel involved, describing this charade as the IDF having "taken full accountability."

Binskin's own assessment of the WCK attack comprises just four paragraphs. There seemed to have been a "break down in situational awareness." Officers had not read their briefings, for instance.

Like the IDF, Binskin essentially sought to pin blame on the victims. The WCK convoy was targeted, he claimed, because it was accompanied by contracted security, including armed individuals. This meant the Israeli army had a reasonable suspicion that Hamas fighters were involved, he suggested.

The WCK, however, was allowed by the IDF to operate in Gaza because it is an imperialist-aligned organisation, whose Washington based founder made public comments defending the Israeli onslaught. The assertion that it would have links to Hamas or

Palestinian militants is thus simply Zionist propaganda.

There is no reason to believe that the security had the slightest link to Hamas, and Binskin admits there is no evidence of that. Moreover, four months on, the Israelis have produced no evidence for the claim.

Yet, Binskin writes: “I cannot rule out that WCK inadvertently contracted security for the aid convoy with an entity that had links to Hamas.”

Binskin becomes ensnared in contradictions. He claims the WCK convoy was targeted because of the presence of the armed security, but then acknowledges that the IDF did not pursue those armed security personnel who survived the air strikes.

Elsewhere, Binskin writes that the three vehicles “were struck in relatively quick succession.” In the same sentence, he notes that there were two-minute intervals between each strike—indicating a planned attack.

As was obvious four months ago, the attack on the WCK convoy was a deliberate massacre, part of what UN officials have described as Israel’s attempt to starve the Palestinian population of Gaza.

The report, approved by the Labor government, not only whitewashes this past crime. It is a clear greenlight for Israel to continue carrying out such atrocities.

This naked cover-up exposes Labor’s fraudulent attempts to present itself as an innocent bystander to the conflict. It has provided political and material support to Israel throughout, while waging a vicious campaign against any opposition to the Israeli genocide, fraudulently branding it as antisemitic.

The timing of Binskin’s report is significant. It basically gave a clean bill of health to the IDF the very week that the Israeli regime, backed by Washington, is setting the entire region ablaze, including with the killing of a top Hezbollah military figure in Lebanon, and the assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran. Those actions are clear war crimes, aimed at provoking a regional conflagration, including with Iran.

Labor has not issued a word of criticism of these actions, signalling its tacit support.

The real position of the Australian ruling elite and its political establishment was summed up in the snap visit of opposition Liberal Party leader Peter Dutton to Israel this week. Dutton went full bore in hailing the IDF and

pledging support until its “victory,” i.e., the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. He received a personal audience with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the architect of the genocide, against whom the International Criminal Court has an active arrest warrant.

Dutton’s aggressive backing for Israel has likewise not been criticized by Labor, or any wing of the media establishment. Significantly, a number of his engagements were a repeat of those undertaken by Labor Foreign Minister Wong when she visited Israel in January.

On social media, many people have shared side by side images of Wong and Dutton’s respective meetings with Israeli President Isaac Herzog and its foreign minister and energy and infrastructure minister, Israel Katz.

In October, Herzog had declared that Israel was not just in a war with Hamas militants but with “an entire nation.” The Zionist regime would continue its bombardment “until we break their backbone.”

Katz oversaw a complete shutdown of utilities to Gaza in that month, and declared “Without fuel, even the local electricity will shut down within days and the pumping wells will stop within a week... This is what we will do to a nation of murderers and butchers of children.”

The images of Wong and Dutton with these criminals underscore Australia’s complicity in the genocide. Dutton is blunt and open in his backing of the Israeli horrors, going so far as to have opposed even a phony investigation into the killing of Frankcom.

Wong and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese prefer the camouflage of weasel words. But they are collaborating with a regime that is perpetrating some of the worst war crimes of the past eighty years. With the Binskin report, that has been extended to whitewashing and legitimising the cold-blooded murder of an Australian citizen.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact