

Australian government to “recognise” Palestine, as it continues to support Gaza genocide

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At a press conference yesterday, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese declared that his Labor government would vote to “recognise” Palestinian statehood at a meeting of the United Nations General Assembly next month.

The announcement followed similar pledges by a number of countries, including France, the UK and Canada. Albanese stated that the decision on recognition followed discussions with the leaders of those nations.

The pledge is a cynical attempt to deflect mass opposition to the genocide, under conditions where Labor remains committed to supporting Israel politically, diplomatically and materially.

That aim is even more transparent in the case of Australia than the other countries that have made similar announcements. In line with Australia’s lockstep alliance with the US, which has opposed the moves to recognition, Albanese had declared less than a fortnight ago that his government would not recognise Palestine any time soon.

Widespread anger over Labor’s complicity was expressed on August 3 with a massive pro-Palestinian march across Sydney Harbour Bridge, involving as many as 300,000 people. Labor only made the announcement in a bid to head-off and contain those sentiments, and under conditions where it was following the lead of a number of other US-aligned imperialist powers.

The vote on recognition will do nothing whatsoever to obstruct or halt Israel’s genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza, or the extension of the ethnic-cleansing operation into the West Bank.

That reality was bluntly stated at a Sunday press

conference by Israeli prime minister and war criminal Benjamin Netanyahu, who declared that the recognition announcements are “not going to change our position.” Netanyahu last week outlined a plan for the permanent occupation of Gaza City, in the latest move towards a Nazi-like “final solution” to the Palestinians.

Just days after he had held a private phone conversation with Albanese, Netanyahu pointed to the political calculations underlying the recognition announcements.

He told a press conference: “Many of these leaders tell me in private conversations, ‘We agree with you. We understand what you’re doing. We would do the same.’ But they say, ‘We have to cater to public opinion at home.’ I tell them, ‘It’s your problem.’”

Labor is fully aware that the trajectory on the ground is not towards the establishment of a Palestinian state, but towards the obliteration of the Palestinian people. Last week, its Foreign Minister Penny Wong noted “there is a risk there will be no Palestine left to recognise.”

Neither Albanese, Wong nor any other government leader has attempted to explain how token recognition will alter that reality.

The government’s real position was made clear by Defence Minister Richard Marles. Appearing on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s “Insiders” program over the weekend, Marles was asked about Australia’s ongoing military exports to Israel.

Marles repeated the lie that Australia does not supply weapons to Israel. That assertion is based on the absurd premise that only fully assembled arms count as weapons. The Department of Defence itself classifies weapons parts and components as military exports.

The host David Speers noted that Australia supplies crucial parts for Israel's F-35 fighter jets, which are used to drop bombs on Gaza, as well as armoured steel used to produce military vehicles. Marles described Australia as an "F-35 nation," and stated that the exports would continue.

Much of the establishment press has sought to pump up Albanese's announcement, with breathless descriptions of it as "historic," even as many of the same journalists acknowledge it will have no concrete consequences for the Palestinians.

The overblown coverage has served to cover-over the fact that in the announcement, Albanese went out of his way to declare his support for Israel and to repeat the fraudulent pretexts for the assault on Gaza.

Albanese boasted of the Labor government's support in 1948 for the establishment of Israel, through massive ethnic-cleansing. He again presented the Israeli onslaught as a response to the Palestinian military operation of October 7, 2023. Australia had "stood with the people of Israel" since then.

Albanese stated that Israel's actions, including its starvation of Gaza, were in defiance of international law. But that has been true for the past two years. Labor has repeatedly ruled out sanctions or any other measures, despite clear obligations under international law for states to actively prevent violations of international law and war crimes.

To the extent that there is any concrete content to the recognition announcements, beyond the domestic calculation of deflecting mass opposition, it is of an entirely reactionary character. The aim is to deepen and entrench the subordination of the Palestinians to the imperialist powers and to Israel even more than is already the case.

Albanese frothingly declared that "there can be no role for the terrorists of Hamas in any future Palestinian state." As well as legitimising Israel's ongoing onslaught on Gaza, it is a declaration that the leadership of a bogus Palestinian "mini-state" would be determined by the major powers, making a mockery of the concept of self-determination which Albanese referenced.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has for years been a corrupt and pliant puppet of the US and Israel. But Albanese indicated that the "recognition" discussions were being used to render it even more subservient. PA

had reaffirmed that it "recognises Israel's right to exist in peace and security" and had pledged to halt payments to the families of Palestinian martyrs and those held in Israeli prisons. The organisation has also committed to "demilitarise."

In the highly unlikely event that some sort of token Palestinian state were created under these conditions, it would be a state of rubble in Gaza, Israeli settlements throughout the West Bank, with no armed force and with a "government" selected by the Zionists and their backers.

This is only a slight variation of Netanyahu's own plan to complete the subjugation of the Palestinians.

Workers and young people horrified by the genocide and seeking to end it should reject the "recognition" pledges with the contempt they deserve. A two-state solution was never viable. Discussion of it served to deflect the struggle against a Zionist regime, which, based on its ethno-nationalism and its character as an outpost of imperialism in the Middle East, is inherently expansionist.

As the Trotskyist movement, the Fourth International has always insisted, the only way forward is through the development of a socialist movement, uniting the working class throughout the region, Palestinian, Arab and Jewish, in opposition to the state structures imposed by colonialism. The aim must be the establishment of a united socialist federation of the Middle East, which alone can end imperialist domination and secure the social and democratic rights of the masses.

The genocide will not be halted by "pressuring" or appealing to the imperialist governments that are overseeing it, as part of a broader program of militarism that threatens world war. Instead, what is required is the independent mobilisation of the working class internationally against the Israeli genocide, including through strikes and industrial action to halt supplies to the Israeli state and cripple the Zionist war machine.



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