

Australian Labor government fully complicit in illegal war on Iran

Mike Head
3 March 2026

As the toll of civilian deaths and destruction rises, the fraudulent justifications offered by the Australian Labor government for being one of the first governments in the world to back the criminal US-Israeli assault on the people of Iran have been rapidly shattered.

Two of the most egregious claims by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his ministers are that the mass murder launched by the Trump and Netanyahu regimes is a war for the liberation of the Iranian people from oppression and that it must be supported, regardless of its illegality—that is, even if it overturns the post-World War II prohibition of wars of aggression.

Albanese, Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles and Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong began their statement of support, issued on Saturday night within three hours of Trump’s announcement of the war, by saying: “Australia stands with the brave people of Iran in their struggle against oppression.” They parroted the cynical claims of US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that their aim was to create the conditions for the Iranian people to overthrow the Tehran regime.

That was always a lie. This imperialist bombardment has nothing whatsoever to do with freedom from oppression, any more than the ongoing US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza or the US-Israeli partnership with brutal dictatorships throughout the Middle East, from General el-Sisi’s military regime in Egypt to the murderous monarchy in Saudi Arabia.

The only future that the US and Israeli governments have for Iran is the installation of an even more repressive and bloody dictatorship than the one they and the former British colonial power imposed for 26 years under the Shah—from the CIA/MI6-backed coup that overthrew Iran’s democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh to secure control of Iranian oil in 1953 to the Iranian Revolution that ousted the Shah in 1979.

That reality was underscored on Monday when Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth told reporters at the Pentagon: “No stupid rules of engagement, no nation-building quagmire, no democracy building exercise, no politically correct wars. We fight to win and we don’t waste time or lives.”

In other words, no rules apply—not even the laws of war—and no democracy is to be established in Iran.

Trump told American ABC News that several of the individuals he had thought could take over the country’s government had been killed in the US-Israeli missile strikes that assassinated Iran’s head of state, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and other senior leaders of the Iranian government. “It’s not going to be anybody that we were thinking of because they are all dead,” he said. “Second or third place is dead.”

That is, the objective was, and remains, installing a puppet

leadership, preferably drawn from within the existing clerical-capitalist regime, to take control of the oil-rich and strategically-located country, not to liberate the Iranian masses.

This goes hand-in-hand with repeated declarations by Labor ministers that the legality of the war is also a matter for the US and Israel—the very perpetrators of the aggression—to decide.

In Saturday night’s statement, Albanese, Marles and Wong tried to legally excuse their support for the war by saying Australia supported the US “acting to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and to prevent Iran continuing to threaten international peace and security.”

In reality, the Labor government is totally committed to US imperialism, which has thousands of nuclear weapons and is the chief threat to the world’s people.

When asked on Sunday by reporters whether the US-Israel attacks were legal, Albanese refused to answer. “Those judgments and statements (are) for the United States and for those involved directly in the attack,” he said.

That amounts to public support for what is a historic war crime that tears apart the post-World War II order, first by conducting a war of aggression and second by using diplomatic negotiations as a smokescreen to do so.

As the WWSW stated: “The assault was launched while US and Iranian negotiators were still engaged in talks mediated by Oman, which had concluded just two days earlier in Geneva. The attack on Iran is precisely what was described at the Nuremberg trials of Nazi leaders in 1945–46 as a ‘crime against peace’—the ‘supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole’.”

Article 2(4) of the UN Charter prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. The only two exceptions are authorisation by the UN Security Council, and self-defence in the face of an actual or imminent military attack. Launching strikes during active negotiations also violates Article 2(2) of the UN Charter.

Legal experts declare Iran war unlawful

Like most of their counterparts internationally, legal experts in Australia have declared the war on Iran to be manifestly unlawful. University of Sydney professor and United Nations special rapporteur Ben Saul told the media that international lawyers were “united” in that assessment.

The attack on Iran was “clearly a violation of the ban on the use of force under the UN charter and international law, which is the linchpin of the international order since 1945,” Saul told *Guardian Australia* on Sunday.

Saul also told Australia’s Special Broadcasting Service (SBS): “This case does not fall anywhere close to (the argument of) self-defence against an imminent attack... Iran has not yet enriched uranium to the point of building any kind of nuclear device. Experts are all on the same page that Iran does not have a nuclear weapon.”

Australia was “in the business of trashing the United Nations Charter and international law,” Saul concluded.

Donald Rothwell, a professor of international law at the Australian National University, said the attack on Iran was not justified and the government risked being seen as complicit. “There is no basis under the UN charter with respect to the exercise of the right of self-defence, nor is there any UN security council resolution authorising any use of force for an intervention in Iran,” he stated.

“There’s no evidence of an armed attack, there’s no evidence of Iran preparing to attack Israel or the United States, and there’s no evidence that Iran had nuclear weapons capable of launching such an attack,” Rothwell said.

Rothwell pointed out that Trump had “loudly proclaimed that the United States had ‘obliterated’ Iran’s nuclear weapons capability after the June 2025 airstrikes, and did so again in the recent State of the Union address. The fact is that neither Israel or the US were facing any imminent peril of a nuclear strike from Iran.”

Rothwell said the notion of pre-emptive self defence, which the George W. Bush administration cited in 2003 to invade Iraq on the basis of lies that Saddam Hussein’s government had stockpiles of “weapons of mass destruction” had been “widely condemned by international law scholars and discredited.”

Emily Crawford, a professor of international law at the University of Sydney, said the US and Israeli actions were “not even close” to being compliant with international law. “Every colleague I’ve been speaking to, every bit of research that I’ve been seeing says that there was no evidence to suggest that Iran was going to strike the US in any way such that it would justify the US striking them,” she said.

The Albanese government’s contempt for international law underscores its hypocrisy in continuously accusing Russia, in Ukraine, and China, in the South China Sea and elsewhere, of breaching the “rules-based order” of international law.

More than that, Labor’s support for the criminal war on Iran, like its backing for the barbaric genocide in Gaza and for the US-NATO proxy war against Russia, displays its commitment to Washington’s entire drive to reassert its global hegemony, which necessarily means ripping down the post-1945 order that sought to prevent another catastrophic world war.

As the WSWS has explained, the objectives of US imperialism—the domination of the planet—cannot be achieved peacefully. War against Iran is, for the United States ruling class, an essential stage in its preparation for the coming conflict with China by turning the Middle East into a giant base for war and cutting off critical oil supplies to China.

Under the Albanese government, Australia has become even more of a platform for US wars globally, with bases opened up further for US warplanes, ships and submarines, and billions of dollars poured into the acquisition of submarines, long-range missiles and other weaponry for a war against China.

Another lie by the Labor government is that Australia is not

involved in the Iran war. The truth is that the government is directly participating in the onslaught through the Australian military’s integration into the US military-intelligence apparatus.

That includes the Pine Gap US satellite communications base near Alice Springs in central Australia. It collects data for military operations from many regions including Iran, which is crucial for US and Israeli intelligence, as it was during the 2001 and 2003 US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

The government’s claims of non-involvement were further exposed yesterday, when Marles, who is the defence minister, revealed that Iranian drones had hit Australia’s Middle East headquarters, at the United Arab Emirates Al Minhad Air Base near Dubai. He described that facility, which acts as a logistics support base for missions across the region, as “very important for us.”

Marles said the Australian Defence Force had more than 100 personnel in the region. The ADF has had troops stationed at the Al Minhad base since 2003, when Australian forces were sent to join the invasion of Iraq. The base also hosts US and UK command facilities. According to the Defence Department website, the Australian base is currently engaged in up to 12 military operations.

War will not be stopped by appeals to this government or any other capitalist government, or the UN. That has been proven by two and a half years of protests in Australia and around the world against the Gaza genocide. Far from relenting in their support for the atrocities, the Labor leaders are going further.

In 2003, the Labor Party, then in opposition, sought to cover up its backing for the criminal invasion of Iraq, suggesting that the US should seek a UN mandate before laying waste to the country. Now in office, Labor is participating in a war that is clearly illegal.

Political conclusions must be drawn. The mass anti-war sentiment seen in the opposition to the Gaza genocide can be taken forward only through a direct political struggle against the Labor government, as part of an international movement of the working class against all the governments involved and the capitalist system itself, the source of war.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact