

Anti-colonial solidarities in this moment

As we prepare to gather on Yagera/Turrbal country in solidarity with Palestinians everywhere, we are bearing witness to the full brutality of colonial power: a violence that Blackfellas have experienced since first invasion. We watch on with horror as the violence of colonial occupation is hidden under the vast web of white supremacy. Across the world, explicit and implicit regimes of white supremacy are being put to work to enable and legitimise the oppression, dispossession and genocide of Indigenous peoples, and the occupation of Indigenous lands.

In this moment, colonial states blatantly show us the violence that is required to keep them in power. This explainer aims to map and name this violence: from the outpouring of global support for racist colonial regimes, to the complicity of the media, systems of policing and surveillance, mass incarceration and regimes of racist control. By understanding these global structures from our own vantage point here in this colony, we can make sense of what we are witnessing in Palestine and build global solidarities informed by Indigenous sovereignty here.

Support for racist colonial regimes

Across the world, settler colonial states are declaring support for Israel: making public statements, sending weapons and lighting up public buildings with the colours of the Israeli flag. Australian governments were quick to continue their long-standing support of the occupation, condoning massacres, apartheid and now the indiscriminate war on over 2 million people trapped in Gaza. This unwavering support from Australia and other settler colonial states is the basis of Israel's impunity - the ability to act without consequences.

The Australian government extends this impunity to Zionists in Australia. It accepts public calls for genocide¹ of Palestinians, such as the Australian Jewish Association statement that “sometimes to eradicate pure evil, innocents die...pure evil must be eradicated from this Earth...flatten it [Gaza],”². This is consistent with Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong's refusal to condemn Israel cutting off food, water and electricity to Palestinians in Gaza – a widely

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>

² <https://twitter.com/iamthenas/status/1711876822198321338>



recognised war crime.³ Instead, Wong responded that the actions of Palestinians were “abhorrent”, but Israel’s war on Gaza “was difficult to judge from afar”.⁴

Australia maintains this steadfast support because it exercises and seeks to maintain this same impunity in relation to its own ongoing colonisation. Australia doesn’t object to Israel’s blatant injustices against Palestinians such as mass incarceration and dispossession because it has, and continues to, commit similar violence against Blackfullas here.

Media

In the Australian settler colonial context, the state and media racialise Indigenous people as less than human, savage and violent in order to justify their dispossession. Media presents even the most blatant acts of violence by the Australian state – including child theft, murder and disappearance – as well-intentioned. Rather than condemned, these acts are explained as ‘inevitable’ for a population ‘destined to die out’⁵. To ensure this is the only message heard, mainstream media also silences First Nations voices and communities that speak for truth, sovereignty and anti-racist action.

Darumbal and South Sea Islander journalist Amy McQuire draws parallels between Black and Palestinian experiences in media: “it’s very hard for Palestinians here to get a voice in the media, you won’t see it. It’s the same way they silence Aboriginal voices...there’s a very limited way you can talk about certain issues and if you step out of those confines you face consequences.”⁶

Despite global recognition that Israel is an occupying, apartheid state,⁷ mainstream media refuses to reflect this reality. Even as we watch Israel trap and indiscriminately bomb Palestinians in Gaza, Australian media tells us it is an equal conflict between warring parties. We’re led to believe that Israel’s response is justified, rather than the genocidal escalation of apartheid settler-colonialism.

This kind of messaging reinforces Israel’s impunity, it makes us numb to the suffering of Palestinians, it helps us feel like the brutality of settler-colonialism and apartheid are normal.

³ https://casebook.icrc.org/a_to_z/glossary/collective-punishments#:~:text=International%20humanitarian%20law%20prohibits%20collective,punishment%20is%20a%20war%20crime.

⁴ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-10-10/penny-wong-responds-israel-siege-gaza-difficult-to-judge/102950768>

⁵ Watego, Chelsea. *Another Day in the Colony*

⁶ Amy McQuire at Black-Palestinian solidarity night 2023 <https://www.icrr.com.au/events>

⁷ <https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-jerusalem-israel-race-and-ethnicity-racial-injustice-83b44a2f6b2b3581d857f57fb6960115>



This is made possible by the relentless dehumanisation of Palestinians as “human animals”⁸ and racist dog-whistling to render Palestinians unimportant and ‘ungrievable’ to the public.⁹

It is crucial to understand that maintaining these violent settler colonial fictions is in the interest of settler-colonies like Australia. These racist myths reinforce the basic premise that colonial brutality is justified, and that Indigenous people are ultimately responsible for the violence they endure. Mainstream media helps hide the realities of violent colonisation and seeks to fragment transnational solidarities. The eerie similarities in media representations of Indigenous peoples in Palestine, so-called Australia, Aotearoa / New Zealand, Canada, the United States, and in many other currently and formerly colonised states is not a coincidence. It is the evidence of a long-standing strategy of colonial control.

Policing and surveillance

Police and the military have always been fundamental tools of Australian colonisation. From the frontier wars, to the Native Mounted Police, to the ongoing NT intervention, to today’s violent overpolicing of First Nations communities, police serve the settler state, and operate to establish and maintain so-called Australia. Claiming to act for all people on this continent, they have in fact always been on the frontline of violent colonisation through displacement, murder and criminalisation of First Nations people.

Just as police persecute dissent and resistance against this colony,¹⁰ they are currently attempting to stop protests against Israel’s occupation and the current massacre of Palestinians in Gaza. While hundreds of police guarded a national monument lit up in support of Israel, the NSW Government declared Sunday’s pro-Palestinian protest illegal and threatened to charge protesters for attending.¹¹ They swiftly followed this with surveillance and targeting of community sentiment, protest activities and potential future demonstrations under the banner ‘Operation Shelter’.¹² The Opposition Leader’s threats to deport protesters¹³ further

⁸ https://www.huffpost.com/entry/israel-defense-minister-human-animals-gaza-palestine_n_6524220ae4b09f4b8d412e0a

⁹ <https://www.versobooks.com/en-gb/blogs/news/2339-judith-butler-precarioussness-and-grievability>

¹⁰ <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/protestors-arrested-amid-huge-police-presence-at-sydney-blm-rally/utgt9g4is>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/may/02/aboriginal-protesters-evicted-by-police-after-camping-out-for-years-at-deebling-creek-development-site>

<https://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2012/05/15/3503059.htm>

<https://triplea.org.au/listen/topics/news/features/watch-the-82-commonwealth-games-protest-doco/>

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/oct/11/pro-palestine-rally-sydney-sunday-protest-march-nsw-premier-chris-minns>

¹² <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-10-11/nsw-police-announce-operation-shelter-to-respond-to-protests/102962382>

¹³ <https://www.2gb.com/they-should-be-deported-dutton-calls-for-action-on-protestors-with-visas/>



demonstrates the use of Australian laws to punish anti-colonial resistance and keep the colony white.

Australian governments have made their support for a fellow coloniser—Israel—clear, and are deploying police to enforce it. Racialised policing is in the DNA of this colony. Protecting (predominantly white) Zionists and unjustly policing racialised Palestinians is business as usual for Australian police. Their core business has always been, and continues to be, the protection of settler colonial interests.

Mass incarceration

From missions, prisons, slave labour, detention & processing centres to ‘care homes’, incarceration is core to controlling Black and racialised communities in the Australian colony.

Similarly, Israel has created the world’s largest open-air prison by trapping over 2 million people in Gaza. In the West Bank, Israel has surrounded Palestinians with the separation wall and hundreds of checkpoints that control their movement. One in every 5 Palestinians have been arrested and charged by Israel,¹⁴ living under the constant threat of arbitrary administrative imprisonment and mass-arrest.¹⁵

The Australian parliamentarians who declare their support for Israel simultaneously lock up Black kids as young as 10 and build new prisons to incarcerate future generations. Here in Queensland, states across Australia, and in other settler colonies, governments are finding new ways to restrict and surveil our movements¹⁶ and criminalise protests.¹⁷

Exporting racism

Australia is a world-leader in legislating and legitimising racism to maintain a racially divided world. From the 1897 Queensland Protection Act which informed South African apartheid legislation, to the development of brutal refugee detention and restricted migration laws that were later used in Europe and the US, Australia’s racist policies have been taken up by colonial powers around the world.

¹⁴ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/8/why-are-so-many-palestinian-prisoners-in-israeli-jails>

¹⁵ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/19/israel-carries-out-mass-arrests-of-palestinians-after-jail-escape>
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/24/a-war-declaration-palestinians-in-israel-decry-mass-arrests>
https://www.btselem.org/administrative_detention

¹⁶ <https://digitalrightswatch.org.au/2021/09/02/australias-new-mass-surveillance-mandate/>

¹⁷ <https://www.edo.org.au/2023/09/08/rise-of-draconian-anti-protest-laws-in-australia-is-highlighted-by-un-special-rapporteur/>



This trade means Australian colonialism continues beyond its borders. Other colonial powers and corporations, including Israel, profit from the active trade of tools of oppression tried and tested on Indigenous peoples, including surveillance technology, personal data and weapons.¹⁸

In fact, the weapons Israel is using to control and kill Palestinians right now - including white phosphorus, which is banned by international law - are made by Israeli weapons manufacturer Elbit Systems.¹⁹ Elbit has a factory here on Turrbal Country in Meanjin/Brisbane and has multiple collaborations with Australian governments, police, universities (RMIT) and militaries.²⁰ This is the ongoing transnational colonial trade network; occupiers share policies, practices, arms and money to oppress Indigenous communities and maintain their colonial control.

Moving to solidarity

Colonising powers aim to separate our struggles, in order to fragment our resistance and make Indigenous and racialised peoples easier to control. The similarities that we can see in this moment between the repression of Indigenous peoples' globally are not a coincidence. From racist stereotypes to state surveillance, violent technologies of colonial control continue to be necessary because Indigenous peoples *keep resisting colonisation*: forging global networks of solidarity that actively threaten the legitimacy and power of the colonising state.

Now, as always, we must take our lead from Aboriginal and Torres Strait activists and thinkers, and ground our global solidarities in Indigenous sovereignty here. Blackfullas have long stood in solidarity with Palestinians in their interconnected anti-racist and anti-colonial struggles. Indigenous and intersectional anti-racist solidarities are crucial to fracturing the global colonial order that chokes all occupied peoples.

We know that the legitimacy of colonial regimes relies on making some of us complicit; recruiting us to justify the violence of the colony and reproduce its founding myths. For those

¹⁸ <https://bdsaustralia.net.au/how-israels-occupation-has-gone-global-antony-loewenstein-presents-the-palestine-laboratory/>

<https://bdsaustralia.net.au/campaigns/dont-buy-hp-products/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/11/nsa-americans-personal-data-israel-documents>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/21/x-blue-users-will-need-to-send-selfie-data-to-israeli-software-company>

¹⁹ <https://bdsaustralia.net.au/campaigns/stop-elbit/>

²⁰ <https://www.australiandefence.com.au/news/elbit-systems-awarded-afp-system-upgrade-contract>

<https://www.tenders.gov.au/Search/CnAdvancedSearch?SearchFrom=CnSearch&Type=Cn&AgencyStatus=-1&Keyword=Elbit&KeywordTypeSearch=AllWord&DateType=Current&DateStart=01-Jan-2021&DateEnd=01-Nov-2022&SupplierName=Elbit>

<https://www.defenceconnect.com.au/land/10128-elbit-systems-of-australia-s-centre-of-excellence-rmit-partner-to-protect-australians-from-natural-disaster>



of us seeking to resist our colonial complicity in order to actively support anti-racist struggle, we must begin by following the lead of Indigenous and Palestinian communities in this moment.

In this moment, we come together to build the tools necessary to fight the transnational system of colonial white supremacy that deals in death, land theft and racial violence. As always, we stand behind Indigenous sovereign activists in insisting that the only pathway to a safe and just world is through connecting the struggles of oppressed peoples everywhere. In centering Indigenous peoples' sovereignty, we learn from the people who have been fighting colonisation the longest; people who have the clearest view of its many disguises.

