

What's the point of direct action?

Between crushing defeat & exhilarating possibility

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Graffiti at Webb Dock blockade, 'melbourne', March 22nd, 2024.

Some thoughts on anti-capitalist struggle as settler-accomplices on Wurundjeri and Boon wur-rung land, in anti-imperialist, anti-colonial solidarity for Palestine, for land back. E-mail thoughts etc.: whatsthepointofda@proton.me

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“Why don’t we riot?”—a comrade whispered to me, as hundreds of protestors faced off a wall of armed cops under the alcove, outside the exhibition centre.

It was October 2019, and the armed gang of the state was facilitating a 3 day international corporate mining conference. We were here under the ‘Blockade IMARC’ banner trying to block entry with our bodies and some push back. In the morning cops made some violent targeted arrests and inflicted mass pepper spraying.

I don’t remember my answer to my comrade. But I remember a feeling of surprise. Having grown into the white anti-authoritarian left on the streets since around Occupy Melbourne in 2011, such a tactic seemed distant.

Something a bit out there—too risky—something I did not have the agency to initiate. Something contained to some limited anti-fascism, with some machismo.

Something that happened at G20 in 2006, before my time. An arterial bloc that became a dead end arterial road. Something I heard about in whispers around Occupy Melbourne too. Crushed by the state.

That whisper has lingered, why didn’t more seem possible?

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K: “Fuck yeh, nice arm”—I heard a crowd member say to another, after they threw a projectile at cops. Moments earlier cops with shields had made a violent snatch and grab arrest of a comrade. Before that we had broken out of cop horse kettle. We were angry, and not just with words, but with some co-operative offense.

It was the morning of September 11th, 2024, and the state had mobilised over a thousand cops, including from interstate, to hold a military expo at the same exhibition centre. It was after 11 months of action in solidarity with Palestine against the Zionist entity’s genocide. Under the mobilising banner of ‘Disrupt land forces’, hundreds of us were holding a massive intersection and the cops wanted us out.

It never really kicked off into a riot (some would say the cops initiated one on their side). But then, and at other times, there’s been a feeling... that it could.

Images of a burning dumpster fire barricade against a huge line of riot cops shooting at protestors went worldwide. People got away with cutting truck air lines amongst the traffic in day light. Some ruling class bosses even decried the negative image of the city’s protests on its reputation.

Here we want to offer some crumbs and learnings as to the political shifts and experiments that have made some things feel more possible. And made defeat weigh down even more heavy.

We write about direct action networks: that is networks that attempt to tactically disrupt, resist, cost, threaten and destroy the colonial capitalist machine. We argue that the ‘doing’ of radical direct action networks raise the stakes of struggle by inflicting a small material cost against the colonial capitalist imperialist machine. We argue direct action shifts the range of acceptable tactics and discourse in a militant left direction. We also explore some of their contradictions and limitations, including pulls towards liberalism versus more expansive revolt.

Djab wurrung and direct action



No trees no treaty sign at Djab Wurrung Heritage Protection Embassy in 2019.

Some years ago, at a social event with comrades, we got to asking how we know each other. By the end of the go around, many people there realised they met at the Djab wurrung blockade in 2018.

There's something about political moments of sustained, large direct action that are connective and radicalising in making more things possible.

The Djab Wurrung Heritage Protection Embassy was a blockade and camp for land back. To protect women's country from 12.5km of highway duplication, two hours west of the city, on the Western highway. It started off small. It was bold and brave, initially led by Djab wurrung non-binary people and women. From a sign on a piece of cardboard, to a camp on the proposed route. Top camp, middle camp and bottom camp.

There was some openness to diverse tactics, from lock ons, to sabotage and disrupting contractor works along the route. The main tactics were camping and disruption of works to prevent the landscape being destroyed by contractors.

A big part of large direct action is they have a flame that draws in people beyond one's small circles. At some point at Djab wurrung, word spread enough that we weren't just meeting friends of friends. From feeling like we were struggling with the usual same people, suddenly things had gone viral.

M. E. O'Brien writes about the possibility of 'protest camps' as a kind of 'insurgent social reproduction' against racial capitalism.¹ It's here where people across race / class / gender / ability / sexuality work together in struggle. It's here that time and the daily alienation of life in the colony can feel different, as well as stuck in the same dynamics we want to undo.

Who's making the food and cleaning up? How do we as settlers do shit in solidarity and not from saviourism? How do we address interpersonal violence? How do we organise our own security against cops and vigilantes?

Key from the beginning too was settlers with time and energy having scope to take initiative in an organic and accountable way to maintain the blockade. This was a shift from a 'deference' politics of being completely passive, to a politics of responsibility and permissiveness.

In practice at Djab wurrung this meant settlers took active responsibility in maintaining camps along the route to prevent works happening. This meant taking initiative ourselves, accountable to conversation with Djab wurrung mob.

The zine 'Water falling on granite' talks insightfully about navigating dynamics as settlers within a blockade based on Indigenous leadership.² Early on at Djab wurrung the leadership dynamics felt more organic and collective, and later they became more toxic and pedestalled white deference politics, letting bad behaviour slide.

There was a lot of conflict in practice. It sometimes meant active discussions around the role of the state and police, whether its violence can be 'reformed'.³ There were competing pulls towards trusting the state and completely relying on building our own autonomous power.

At Djab wurrung we experienced some small wins against police. On March 19th, 2019, riot cops mobilised to dismantle middle camp. An emergency callout drew our networks out. Cops

¹ M. E. O'Brien — Family Abolition Capitalism and the Communizing of Care — Pluto Press (2023)

² Water Falling on Granite — Deference Politics, Indigenous Leadership, and Anarchist Relationality, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/anonymous-water-falling-on-granite>

³ <https://darknessoutside.home.blog/2019/09/01/resistance-from-beyond-the-coloniser-state-reflections-from-a-few-days-at-the-djabwurrung-heritage-protection-embassy/> For a fuller discussion around violence and the state

had to retreat because of external pressure and our numbers being too much for them. We all felt jubilant, smiling, dancing and cheering in the afternoon sun as cops scampered away.

One week in late October 2020, the state weaponised its policing the pandemic covid powers. On Monday, a contractor destroyed the culturally significant directions tree at middle camp as numbers to sustain camp had dwindled. It was crushing and humiliating as the contractor paraded the chopped-up tree around Ballarat.

By Friday, the cops evicted the last active camp, top camp. They arrested 45 people. People who went down in support had to evade pandemic cop travel blockades and risk thousands of dollars in fines as well as the usual police repression.

What was the point?

As of the spring of 2025, the highway duplication is still on hold, but some minor works had commenced.

A key learning is that internal dynamics in camps have to be worked through rather than pushed aside for the sake of the supposed 'larger struggle'. This means a care and attentiveness to your own political principles and not seeing First Nations peoples as monolithic, which can lead to dangerous liberal deference politics.

One main slogan of the camps was 'trees not treaty'. This exposed the state's hollow liberal treaty reforms because any treaty felt fake as the state destroyed sacred country. It felt fake too as the colony's murders of First Nations people continued with impunity.⁴

At Djab wurrung, direct action tactics meant blockade, sabotage and resisting police at times. This contrasted with simultaneous legal system tactics that arguably only came into play because of direct action pressure.

There is big learning here from active tensions in the Djab wurrung campaign. There are poles in direct action that draw people towards liberalism and recuperation into the system. There is another pole to draw people to that radicalises us towards deeper and more generalised struggle.

Klee Benally (2023) argues for an Indigenous rooted direct action that centres First Nations liberation.⁵ He similarly critiques an institutional "direct action" that we would call the liberal pole. Instead, he argues for radical direct action.

By radical direct action, Benally is arguing against action that appeals to the goodness of 'non-violent' protest in contrast to bad 'violent' protest. Instead, he argues for direct action in the tradition of militant anti-colonial struggle that seeks to cause effective damage and build autonomous power against empire. It is this pole of radical direct action, which we need to move towards to generalise revolt.

For many of us settlers involved in the camps, Djab wurrung involved a material change in our lives that some would call 'sacrifice'. For some of us this meant losing wage labour options and more precarity. In the larger sense, we felt a sense of belonging to a larger solidarity struggle and acting more aligned with our values instead of just words. It's just that sense of purpose that comes from the 'doing' that made the internal messiness and the end of the camps under covid restrictions more crushing.

Now we come to try make sense of the surge of anti-imperialist action in solidarity with the Palestinian resistance.

⁴ Notably, Djab wurrung struggle connected with Black deaths in custody struggle, which came together with rallies on the streets. There was a significant Justice for Tanya Day campaign that activated people against her murder by the state and other actors' racist neglect.

⁵ Klee Benally (2023). No spiritual surrender: Indigenous anarchy in defense of the sacred

Block the boat

K: It's January 2024, and on the drive home from a dock protest, I'm a white leftist talking about covid, with a Palestinian man. Along with around 100 people, we had just blocked one of Melbourne's 3 big ports for 6 hours, before it was broken up by police. We were targeting "Israeli" ZIM shipping, but economic disruption more broadly. We have different perspectives on covid, but we both highly agree on distrusting government and against policing the pandemic. I reflect on how the last few months of action has brought me into working with people outside the traditional activist (white) left. It also makes me reflect on how the left helped normalise police repression during pandemic restrictions.

Gary Kinsman argues for a bottom up public health approach, and against cheering on the state weaponising the covid pandemic to intensify violent policing.⁶ Many new police weapons, first used against militant uprisings in prisons, were then used at public protests against reactionary mobilisations around covid restrictions and public health measures.

The Palestinian national liberation resistance factions united front—from Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Popular Resistance Committees to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—militantly breaking out of their open-air prison in Gaza on October 7th—pulled much of the anti-authoritarian, anarchist and communist left in two different directions.

The first direction argued there is not much we can do until we win over the masses here. The key tasks are to build symbolic solidarity through big inclusive rallies and gradually shift institutions of the left to better positions. We have to wait until we win over large sections of the settler public / material conditions change—until we escalate. We'll continue the usual routine rallies and public meetings.

On the other side, we were inspired by the resistance and felt exposed by our complicity. From this place, there was an ethos of urgency 'to do shit' and experiment disrupting the machine, and initiate some direct action solidarity. Action was prioritised regardless of whether we had won over large sections of the settler public or not.

By 'direct action' in the second camp, we mean a strategic and tactical emphasis on disruption, inflicting material damage and resisting police, with the numbers we have. In contrast, the first camp prioritised the politics of appeal, safety and optics through rallies to build numbers—a strategic patience that hoped to gradually build power.

Many of us were drawn into the second camp—but over time many drifted back into the first—and all sorts of combinations in-between. These two camps are presented not to create a simple false dichotomy, but to discuss competing and entangled strategic tendencies in struggle.

The first few months saw an upsurge in solidarity action around Palestine. But we were on the back foot. It took a few months for the 'research' and inspiration around targets to percolate.⁷ In retrospect, anti-imperialist direct action was put on the back-burner. Why did it take for October 7th for many of us to spring into solidarity action? This is a pertinent question given the existence of Palestine Action in the imperial core of the UK since 2020.

There had been some small direct actions against Zionist arms corporation Elbit Systems in the 2010s. Of note, in late May 2021, Elbit Systems' office in port Melbourne was temporarily and

⁶ <https://radicalnoise.ca/2023/03/27/from-silence-death-to-capitalismdeath-notes-on-aids-activism-the-covid-pandemic-and-pandemic-racial-capitalism-by-gary-kinsman-feb-20-2023/>

⁷ Declassified Australia is a key research player here. http://*https://declassifiedaus.org/2023/11/17/australias-role-in-the-bombing-of-gaza/

largely symbolically blocked, in solidarity with the Unity Intifada in Palestine. These networks were connected to mobilising to Disrupt Land Forces in Magandjin in 2022, a precursor of direct action networks for Palestine, and to Disrupt Land Forces in 2024.⁸ Notably, these actions did not maintain sustained pressure over time.

⁸ Precursor example on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/events/250751403465651/>



Palestinian flag flying at the 9th of January 2024 blockade of Webb Dock.

After October 7th 2024, ‘Block the boat’—a primer to disrupt israeli multinational ZIM shipping began to circulate internationally.⁹ The west coast of Turtle Island had previous success forcing ZIM from docking at their ports. They had success with the combined tactic of community members picketing the port, which allowed rank and file dock workers to refuse on Occupational Health and Safety grounds to cross the community picket line.

The new group ‘Unionists for Palestine’ (U4P) initiated rallies at the ports. From the start, the messaging around ‘blocking’ was mismatched by the ‘action’ of merely speaking out in the area of the port, without blocking the port.

On November 8th, under the ‘Block the Boat’ banner, the U4P rally at Webb dock unexpectedly turned into more than a rally. Much of the crowd supported the autonomous action of one Palestinian man who lied down and blocked a truck carrying ZIM containers, despite being told off by some U4P leaders. The action ignited a blockade of one road in the port, which lasted overnight.

‘The Boat that wasn’t blocked’ describes how white / subcultural activist norms undermined the spontaneity of the blockade, leading to its early demise.¹⁰ Ideas around ‘safety’ and ‘checking in’ served as a condescending drag on organic militancy. They also highlight norms around exaggerating actions that are dangerous. We’ll return to how dishonest norms around actions have repeatedly sawn off the potential of radicalising direct action by obscuring our actual impact, strategy and tactics.

The next U4P port action on December 2nd was cancelled last minute, leaving many of us feeling disillusioned, which only increased later in the month.¹¹ Another rally was held at Swanson Dock on December 19th, where speakers claimed false ‘victories’.¹² Meanwhile a ZIM chartered ship Cali sat without disruption a few hundred metres away, leaving soon after.

The disillusionment prompted discussions that seeded ideas and small networks into action. On December 20th, a group of just 8 autonomous actionists partly blocked Webb Dock’s truck entrance, targeting MSC Justice, which forms part of a route to the Zionist entity.¹³

On December 26th, about 20 autonomous actionists blocked Swanson East dock’s truck entrance for an hour early in the morning, this time targeting ZIM Sparrow, before retreating under threat of police violence.¹⁴ The action was not a majority white left direct action circle but involved coalition with Arab circles, and was multiracial and multiage.

For two weeks, November 10th to 24th, there was a “Block the dock” camp at Webb dock.¹⁵ While the camp had faint echoes of protest camps like Djab wurrung, Block the Dock served to highlight the idea of blocking the dock, focusing on maintaining the camp and solidarity with one Palestinian man’s hunger strike requests, rather than simultaneously disrupting the port.

It is likely if the camp escalated at such a choke point, they would be violently evicted by police, but more collective organisation could have emerged from this repression. This also was

⁹ Block the boat doc: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-d3SjT8dPanrPCPm8JP4b8kFN9wG2RD0NfapLFrvSFw/edit?pli=1&tab=t.0#heading=h.wh1aph10ghoi>

¹⁰ The Boat That Wasn’t Blocked: ‘Australian’ edition — <https://backlashblogs.wordpress.com/2023/11/14/the-boat-that-wasnt-blocked-australian-edition/>

¹¹ <https://www.instagram.com/p/C0SeGgWBU3j/>

¹² <https://www.instagram.com/unionistsforpalestine/p/C1BEoflBknu/>

¹³ <https://backlashblogs.wordpress.com/2023/12/25/the-dock-that-was-somewhat-blocked/>

¹⁴ <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C1VBhUkygZn/>

¹⁵ <https://www.instagram.com/p/CzdEFpUL-RA/> & <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cz77HzgR3AZ/>

at the time before ZIM's sub-contracted port of choice changed from Swanson East to Webb dock by January 2024.

Over the 23/24 summer, there was multiple water kayak 'flotilla' actions. The first water action on December 7th was the most successful, with authorities caught by surprise, suspending shipping activity on the Birrarung / 'yarra' river, for over 4 hours because of 'colourful characters' (as described on marine radio) / protestors in kayaks on the water stopping two tug boats.¹⁶ Tug boats are necessary for all the large ships to enter / exit the docks. The action ended as threats of police violence spread through communication with the police liaisons.

Subsequently, water actions did not stop any more shipping movements. While there are far few water cops than land cops, on the 21st of December, the ZIM Vela and tug boats just recklessly went through dozens of kayaks in a symbolic action that reached Al Jazeera.¹⁷ It became harder to time actions as authorities manipulated shipping information to make ZIM ship departures / arrivals inaccurate leading to one subsequent action targeting the ZIM Sparrow on 28th of December being completely foiled.

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1ACC8WhnMy/>

¹⁷ <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/newsfeed/2023/12/21/australian-protesters-on-kayaks-block-israel-linked-ship>



The ZIM Sparrow, a water block that never happened on the 28th of December, 2023.

The final water action targeted Webb Dock on January 11th, including bravely graffitizing the ZIM Danube with 'stop the genocide'.¹⁸ Notably, union health and safety representatives did not put a pin on stopping works on occupational health and safety grounds despite there being kayakers underneath the giant cranes.

In contrast to the land actions, the direct action networks for water actions leaned younger. The water actions too were much larger direct action than the usual, involving dozens of people. At this time there was some more openness to working with new networks, however limited by the level of vouching employed. The foiled plans, significant time preparation for action and lack of being able to repeat a stop of shipping movements contributed to a tactical shift to land. Although the possibility of doing both at the same time was not fully explored.

On the afternoon 9th of January, a key Webb Dock intersection was blocked for 6 hours.¹⁹ The action was multiracial and multiage, started off with around 40 people and expanded to over 100 people. One truck initially got stuck in the middle, aiding the ongoing blockade and slowing the police's response.

The block was timed to stop the 12 hour shift change at 6PM. Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) members did not cross the community picket line and understood what we were doing in conversation but said they said they couldn't appear to be on side either. Actionists had communications with the union too.

Initially people were united in not talking to police. With growing police numbers there was some liaison and their threats were passed onto the group. The group split in numbers on whether to leave / stay. This was reflective of the variety of different politics and networks that were working together at the time. The networks formed at this blockade led onto conversations that led into the 4 day picket.

Months of activities around the docks had built consciousness and ecosystems around the docks as a key site for material disruption. We recount this because the '4 day picket' did not come out of nowhere, but instead it came because a cascading series of actions, some of which felt very isolated and 'pointless' at the time. But action bred more action with momentum on our side.

The 4 day picket

¹⁸ <https://www.instagram.com/p/C18SVR3S6HE/>

¹⁹ <https://backlashblogs.wordpress.com/2024/01/20/until-a-block-becomes-a-blockade/>



One gate picketed at the 4 day picket from 19th of January, 2024.

On Friday 19th of January, Unionists for Palestine (U4P) called a picket at Webb Dock as ZIM Ganges was due to dock.²⁰ The action became known as the '4 day picket' and went global as still probably the most disruptive action in solidarity with Palestine on this continent.²¹ It disrupted 6 vessels and 50,000 shipping containers, potentially costing millions of dollars.²²

Authorities were caught somewhat by surprise by the picket lasting. There were bureaucratic delays on properly authorising eviction on public-private land over the weekend, and police resources were split in prioritising protecting the 'australian open' tennis.

While U4P called the picket, autonomous networks formed around the docks from months of activities, played a crucial role in agitating to maintain the picket, despite many U4P leaders wanting it to wind down. In the lead up, networking had led to a former MUA union official becoming involved and the MUA tacitly supportive in the background, if they did not bear any risk of being publicly supportive.

The picket had a diverse range of tactics: from lock-ons to picketing to de-arrests to breaking police lines. On multiple occasions, police were thwarted from breaking the picket as protestors broke police lines, forcing cops into tactical retreats.

There was an insurgent 'protest camp' vibe reproducing the struggle similar to what M. E. O'Brien writes about. Nearby workers at Searoad even sang karaoke to people at one gate. People had to navigate conflict including patriarchal assault from one man against a picketer. While U4P tried to have 'picket captains', autonomous networks resisted the idea the picket should be co-ordinated in such a hierarchical way.

The picket sought to only block Victorian International Container Terminal (VICT) workers and otherwise let through other traffic on Webb Dock drive. VICT workers only come in / out from their shift twice a day: around 6am and 6pm. Blocking the workers led to a lack of personnel operating the cranes at Webb dock, which then were placed in upright position, unable to function. This meant containers were stranded from being loaded / unloaded onto both the ships and trucks, making the selective picket turn into a blockade over time.

On the first Saturday morning, activists maintained an effective picket, controlling who would enter Webb Dock by speaking to all the approaching cars. The second evening shift on Saturday 20th January saw a minority of MUA members stood down without pay for refusing to board a bus arranged by VICT.²³ The picket celebrated as cops were forced to retreat from attempts to break it.²⁴

One member of U4P outlines that there was increasing pressure from the state and the bosses on the MUA to get workers back to work, especially leading onto the 3rd day of the picket, which split U4P, many of whom started to withdraw support.²⁵

On Sunday eve, workers returned to work via a secret boat entry to the port. ZIM Ganges had its transponder off as it entered Webb Dock under the cover of darkness, demoralising the picket, which had been broken. Into Sunday night and the Monday, numbers had dwindled. Meanwhile,

²⁰ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-01-22/port-of-melbourne-pro-palestinian-protest/103377156>

²¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/29/australias-pro-palestinian-activists-to-continue-targeting-israeli-ships>

²² <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/melbourne-mornings/webb-dock-port-melbourne-protest-zim-shipping/103377990>

²³ <https://x.com/unions4palestin/status/1748626641738473905>

²⁴ <https://x.com/FPMelbourne/status/1748624407499776460>

²⁵ <https://classconscious.org/2024/11/30/know-your-enemy-the-class-pressure-that-worked-to-split-unionist-for-palestine-in-2024/>

top cops switched to go harder, preparing to mobilise hundreds of cops to violently remove the picket that afternoon.

Workers on the Monday shifts still had to travel to work via boat, delayed one last time by a bold action where actionists temporarily boarded the Bhagwan Marine vessel, including lighting a flare, delaying its use by workers. At the same time the land picket was smashed up by around 200 cops.²⁶

The picket represented a peak of co-operation (and conflict) across political factions and broader networks. These networks mobilised hundreds of people, but did not generalise beyond that. While there were murmurings, and the weekly Sunday rally speeches supported the picket (including many attending afterwards), it begs some questions.

What would have happened if the mass rally escalated too, and marched along key highways beyond the CBD / including to the docks? It remains only the reactionary revolt by segments of workers and small business owners in the construction industry, over tea room covid restrictions and mandatory vaccination construction shutdown, to have taken the key West Gate Freeway in their thousands.²⁷ We'll revisit big questions of class struggle on this continent later.

The summer of heightened activity continued after the picket. Camp sovereignty was established on Invasion Day. The site, the resting place of 38 First Nations peoples that had first been part of the 'Black GST' campaign against the stolenwealth games in 2006, grounded struggle on the ongoing genocide against First Nations peoples. For some months the camp was a hive of activity and networking, from film screenings to skill shares on riot medicine.

This summer time saw an uptick in anti-colonial clandestine action targeting colonial monuments. Infamously, the captain cook statue in 'st kilda' was destroyed from the ankles invasion day eve, 2024.²⁸ In winter 2024, the head of king george near Camp Sovereignty was decapitated.²⁹ Over these months there was a heightened level of clandestine overnight actions elsewhere too: graffitiing and vandalising weapons supply chain premises.

The picket went international and impressed radicals overseas. Despite this, after the heavy repression—for some political networks debriefing—the docks were dead, and we needed to think 'Beyond ZIM' and refocus on F-35 supply chain factory pickets.

Some factors contributing to this were: the level of police repression at the docks was high, any relationship with parts of the MUA at Webb dock had soured and there was a desire to more directly fuck with israeli supply chains at known points of production.

We go take a detour to an overview of these F-35 supply chain pickets before returning to the docks, where at the same time autonomous dock networks were building a campaign independent of Unionists for Palestine.

F-35 and anti-militarist Action: picket problems and promises

Over much of 2024, pickets and autonomous action targeted a few F-35 supply chain facilities: in particular, HTA in Campbellfield, AW Bell in dandenong and electromold in thomastown.

²⁶ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-01-22/port-of-melbourne-pro-palestinian-protest/103377156>

²⁷ <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/absolutely-outrageous-protesters-weren-t-union-says-setka-20210921-p58tde.html> & <https://redflag.org.au/article/inside-three-days-rage-melbourne>

²⁸ <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2gboz2xjQn/>

²⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/mar/16/severed-head-of-king-george-v-statue-may-have-resurfaced-at-irish-rappers-melbourne-gig-ntwnfb>

There was also a one-off early morning symbolic roof occupation and hit and run damage action of Rosebank Engineering in bayswater. We start by reviewing action at HTA.



HTA melbourne, campbellfield, hit with blood paint on 14th of February, 2024.

Actions at HTA In February kicked off first privately via trusted networks. They involved red blood graffiti, roof occupations and factory invasions that caused disruption and shut downs.³⁰ These actions caught HTA by surprise.

From March into April, symbolic publicly announced rallies and dawn community pickets drew more people to HTA.³¹ This facility was the smallest facility targeted in so-called Melbourne, with only about 4 workers.

It was contested from the start if the facility at Campbellfield was part of the F-35 supply chain, but HTA facilities elsewhere definitely are, making HTA anywhere a legitimate target.

After 12 weeks of once to twice a week pickets, HTA activists claimed the CEO's press comments on the facility having no F-35 involvement as a complete win.³² This came at a time energy for the pickets were fading. Work was simply shifted around the pickets, which required a lot of ongoing people power. Unlike other places, these pickets drew no police confrontation (but cops did harass picketers).

In an interview, Heat Treatment Australia (HTA) CEO cites clandestine sabotage, which involved damage to their electricity transformer, as one of the most dangerous actions targeting their facility in Campbellfield.³³ In contrast, the 'victory' claim by activists solely credits "sustained community pickets" to the boss giving a round of media interviews at the end of April.³⁴

This claim serves to downplay the diversity of tactics including sabotage that put pressure on the HTA CEO to talk to the media to try end action at the facility. HTA remains the only facility a complete picketing win has been claimed on this continent and the evidence for that is ambiguous at best, plainly false at worst, and erases a diversity of tactics.

Across 2024, a pattern began to emerge at pickets called at AW Bell and Electromold. Unlike HTA, these facilities were bigger in size and worker numbers, which we suggest meant there was more pressure on the state to break pickets for the bosses. The main tactic was to publicly call a picket in advance and mobilise networks in the lead up.

In response to public pickets, we saw police prepare to mobilise in advance. And we saw the F-35 supply chain facilities adapt to the timing of the picket. This led to companies either: A) adjusting their shift times to calling in workers before / after the picket; and B) liaising with the cops to smash the picket for a moment so workers could come through. Weapons supply chain and manufacturing bosses (especially at AW Bell) openly clamoured for more police powers.³⁵

On our side we tried to adjust through use of chains / locks. Authorities responded swiftly to these with bolt cutters and angle grinders. We prepared and expected to be mass pepper sprayed, so tactically blocked up with outer-wear to goggles to minimise harm and counter surveillance. And lastly, there was attempts at pickets called via private networks. This commonly happened at a time earlier to a public picket, in an attempt to out-manoeuvre a shift change. However, sometimes companies just planned to move the shift change to much later in the day, avoiding any morning confrontation.

³⁰ <https://www.instagram.com/p/C3TmyQHSjdD/>

³¹ <https://www.greenleft.org.au/2024/1401/news/protesters-say-australian-company-hta-implicit-gaza-war-crimes>

³² <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/after-12-week-community-picket-hta-denies-role-f-35-fighters-israel>

³³ <https://www.3aw.com.au/tom-elliott-calls-for-police-to-act-on-yet-another-pro-palestinian-protest-in-melbourne/>

³⁴ <https://www.instagram.com/p/C6a-paZhnDU/>

³⁵ <https://dandenong.starcommunity.com.au/news/2024-09-10/defend-the-defence-industry-semma/>

The worker / union dynamic was very different to the docks. At some facilities, a small minority of workers agreed with us and quit their jobs or were fired. There was not the same significant union coverage as with the MUA at the docks, where a delegate could potentially put an occupational health and safety 'pin' (if available) on attempting to actively cross the picket line.

The bosses and many workers at weapons supply chain premises arguably have some converged interest in the company continuing business as usual because of their degree of specialisation and core work being in militarism / imperialism. Whereas at the docks, workers can call for ZIM Shipping to be dropped by the bosses, while still continuing most of their work. That said, a spring 2025 'pivot Lovitt' campaign argues the machines at that firm can be repurposed for life sustaining production instead of death-making.³⁶

At present, these small-medium sized businesses rely on lucrative state defence contracts for their survival. This investment is touted by the state as a domestic saviour for the deindustrialisation of capital investment in manufacturing offshore. The greens too have slid to right in touting nationalist domestic weapons manufacturing as necessary.³⁷

F-35 jets are vulnerable to supply chain disruption because these fighter jets spend extensive time in maintenance, relying on just-in-time logistics parts from places around the world, including this continent.³⁸

While the pickets of facilities sometimes caused minor disruption, at other times they did not disrupt anything. They required a lot of people power. And police went hard on making us want to regret trying through their violence. Creative crowd tactics against police, from barricades to resisting police kettles, work best when they're open to moving around, which was somewhat opposed to how these pickets had us fixated on an entrance or two.

Protest tactics against police also require a level of militancy / action against liberal protest culture that was not necessarily present / able to be sustained at many pickets. The use of a symbolic barricade fire at one picket at Electromold received extensive liberal backlash largely on the basis it was 'putting everyone at risk', when there was not even an arrest attempt.

An article on the 'Smash EDO' campaign against a UK Arms manufacturer in the 2000s shows the level of sustained direct action and diverse tactics required over time to materially hit facilities in the imperial core.³⁹ The campaign involved clandestine sabotage, public confrontational rallies and linkages with other radical struggles. In contrast, here we have been unable to sustain action over time, nor particularly had the radical political vision or commitment that could lead to that.

Autonomous underground networks have sometimes successfully made daring damaging hits (such as at HTA). But there has been a lack of a sustained above ground network that has stood in solidarity with a diversity of tactics. A weakness of autonomous action here at times is the lack of consistent above ground groups, which then can create a vacuum for action and politics to be watered down, particularly on social media.

Reflective of these politics is a common dishonest tendency on social media to claim minimally disruptive or not disruptive at all actions as 'wins' / 'blockades' / 'shut downs'. One example of

³⁶ <https://www.instagram.com/p/DQVhP4tCT0V/> & <https://linktr.ee/pivotlovitt>

³⁷ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-03-22/greens-unveil-first-ever-defence-policy/105083166>

³⁸ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-10-06/f-35-jet-fighter-supply-chain-israel-gaza-weapons-transfers/105783858> & <https://declassifiedaus.org/2025/10/01/secret-cargo-f35-parts-pipeline/>

³⁹ <https://crimethinc.com/2023/11/17/revisiting-the-smash-edo-campaign-a-pressure-campaign-targeting-an-arms-manufacturer-1>

this was the ‘blockade’ outside Thales weapons factory in bendigo on December 5th 2023.⁴⁰ The ‘blockade’ started after workers entered the facility, so it blocked very little. When our rhetoric does not match material reality, we lose the stakes of struggle and fall into liberalism.

One zine produced over the 23/24 summer, “Towards a decolonized solidarity and action” reflects that we need a “radical honesty and integrity” around actions otherwise we are lying to ourselves.⁴¹ We kid ourselves as if we are doing more than we are, which prevents ourselves from having frank discussions of strategy and tactics of where we can have more impact.

The brave and daring action at F-35 facility Rosebank engineering on February 19th, 2024—combining both a rooftop occupation and a property damage hit and run shows direct action networks caught in two places.⁴² In one place, a desire for a public ‘accountable’ action where some people get arrested, and potentially test a legal principle in court. And the other place, an action that evades arrest while getting away with damage.

Police responded to Rosebank heavily—treating it as an armed robbery—not allowing people to gather at the facility to support people on the roof. For those arrested, heavy charges lay over their head for months, but were later dropped (a deliberate police tactic), for a small fine plea deal. It showed a way of policing that tries to separate different forms of action, and polices actions with a middle range of tactics hard, which we will now turn to.

The missing middle

[W]e see that the guerilla fights it’s wars like fleas causing the enemy damage similar to what the host experiences when attacked by fleas. A huge area to defend, a small enemy (the fleas) spread out everywhere, fast and hard to capture. If the battle lasts long enough to exhaust the host then it will fail in the battle due to its weakness while unable to locate the flea(s).—Bassel al-Araj⁴³

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El: “Was it worth it?” I overheard a comrade react, having watched some of us force cops back that wanted to get behind our position. There was a cost to us: cops assaulted us with their batons and chemical weapons. It was the 22nd of March, and over a hundred of us were blockading the road into VICT at Webb dock.

It was the second action under the banner of ‘Action for Rafah’ (A4R), which mobilised comparable numbers to parts of the 4-day picket but by surprise (80+).

After the 4-day picket in January, a permanent police presence was maintained at the docks when ZIM ships docked.

The first Action for Rafah on February 21st 2024 at Webb dock saw a network initially mobilise privately. Actionists gathered and ran around the police check point.

Once established, the picket callout went public. On February 21st, police were able to manoeuvre where they wanted. Just before the tactical retreat after 11PM, cops had setup a kettle with multiple police cars encircling the protest, just as riot cops and dogs arrived.

⁴⁰ <https://x.com/wagepeaceau/status/1731839401582305632>

⁴¹ <https://backlashblogs.wordpress.com/2023/12/29/toward-a-decolonized-solidarity-and-action-zine/>

⁴² <https://x.com/akaWACA/status/1759309142152655292>

⁴³ ‘Live Like A Porcupine, Fight Like A Flea’ — Bassel al-Araj, <https://eirigi.org/latestnews/2024/3/1/on-the-shoulders-of-giants-basel-al-araj-live-like-a-porcupine-fight-like-a-flea>

Despite the injury costs of blocking the cops on the 22nd of March instead, it was a tactical win. However in response, cops escalated their level of repression. After nightfall, multiple riot cop units arrived with 'less than lethal' weapons, and mounted police were deployed.

In response, we made a spontaneous blockade of materials in the area in front of their deployment zone. Despite the looming threat of being shot at, this moment felt joyous and fun. One part of the barricade was lit on fire as many of us drummed to demonstrate collective power. Meanwhile, police cars left stranded behind our barricade did not escape the night without damage. There was a riotous feeling in the air that you don't get at many actions in this place... that was soon extinguished under the drone of police helicopter.



Barricades against the cops at Webb Dock, 22nd of March, 2024.

The 22nd of March faced a lot of criticism as a dangerous ‘escalation’ by our side.⁴⁴ We reject these narratives as misguided and playing a counter-insurgent role. As A4R put out, the barricade was a successful and participatory defensive tactic against the state, slowing 80 riot cops, including mounted police.⁴⁵

There is something unifying to actions that confront the state’s police across borders. Here we were shot with CTS flash bangs that the Zionist entity also uses in Palestine.

After a splashy summer of action into autumn—a combination of counter-insurgency from the state and from the movement—and internal limits to autonomous networks, led to increasing difficulties in sustaining actions at the docks. We’ll return to more of those limits later in the piece. Here we focus on the importance of ‘middle range’ protests and police repression.

An analysis of the Stop Cop City movement describes how the state targeted hard for repression ‘middle range’ actions: those that were combative and participatory.⁴⁶ This served to cut off private clandestine direct action tactics from the fully open larger scale public protests that focus more on a politics of safety.

We argue Victoria Police has quite successfully targeted ‘middle range’ protest here too, under the policing regime of ‘strategic incapacitation’, at both the docks and weapons supply chain premises, and elsewhere.

Strategic incapacitation is a policing innovation that combines elements of pre-existing ‘escalated force’ and ‘negotiated management’ models of policing.⁴⁷ Under this paradigm, police distinguish between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ protestors to selectively use heightened violence on those they deem ‘bad’—protests that police view as unruly, refuse police negotiations and are more radical in form and tactics. In addition, the paradigm involves increased use of police intelligence to assess protest and media to propagate police propaganda to pressure compliance.

We saw police intelligence improve markedly in autumn 24 after summer 23/24. ‘April 15th’ 2024 became the next flashpoint for global disruptive solidarity with Palestine, which crews in Naarm mobilised for.⁴⁸ Police were prepared for an action at Webb dock and thwarted one on April 15th at nearby aerospace military corporation Boeing that was called privately that morning.

Cops rocked up when the action was meant to begin, ensuring nothing happened. Internally, many people desired another dock style mid-range action. And the fact the alternative action at Boeing was completely stymied was demoralising. However, the port did not escape the day unscathed, as an autonomous crew blocked and painted up a freight train overnight.⁴⁹

In January, avenues to get more networks into blocking the dock were relatively open. An action callout that went through large WhatsApp networks did not lead to more police attention. By March / April, police intelligence seemed to have their eyes on large group chats on WhatsApp / Signal.

⁴⁴ <https://www.instagram.com/p/C42Mqrqxh8p/>

⁴⁵ https://www.instagram.com/p/C44sL4DxHI_/?img_index=6

⁴⁶ <https://crimethinc.com/2023/12/12/dont-stop-continuing-the-fight-against-cop-city-six-more-months-in-the-movement-to-defend-the-forest>

⁴⁷ Kristian Williams (2004). *Our Enemies in Blue: Police and power in America*. See Chapter 8. Also see: <https://mals.au/2019/12/08/what-is-strategic-incapacitation/>

⁴⁸ <https://sub.media/april-15th-coordinated-economic-blockade-to-free-palestine/>

⁴⁹ <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C5z0R-fr4Wa/>

The last ‘Action for Rafah’ (A4R3) style mid-range action was pre-emptively prevented by police.⁵⁰ Initiators built up a large signal announcement chat for another dock action over the weekend starting on Friday 5th May. There was some unusual police movements over the weekend around the docks, but nonetheless there was a callout to assemble in a nearby port Melbourne park on Saturday morning.

People who made it were then harassed by scores of cops in the dark, including getting their details taken. The action was cancelled before it began. Cops had been brought in from outer Melbourne, showing a high-level planned police response.

After the failures of A15, there was a lot of people keen for an action. In meetings before A15, people had come to the conclusion A15 was not the right time because we had less of a surprise factor, with police expecting action. The growing vacuum of a mid-range action in effect led to some sense of ‘pressure’ to do something soon that clouded some judgment.

One of the internal tensions at the docks was between an ‘initiation’ group and enabling full participation from networks around that, who at times disagreed with the ‘initiation’ group. Another tension that lay connected to that was between the desire to escalate and maintain pressure and at the same time the concrete desire to tactically maintain surprise to keep course with a successfully strategy.

What made A4R action possible was the element of ‘surprise’. Asymmetrical warfare means the state gains an extraordinary upper hand when they know a disruptive action is going to happen. Despite initiators knowing the warning signs that cops had infiltrated the signal announcement chat, an afternoon action was called again that weekend by some, as people impatient on the side of the desire to escalate just wanted to try things.

That afternoon people who got there early found cops stroll into the meeting place to harass them. The action was quickly called off. Scores of actionists were harassed on the way there and out of the meeting place. While the call to escalate abstractly to ‘do things’ against genocide is good, in this case the call to act versus tactically retreat to another day was a mistake. It would then make it harder to know what to do next.

Learnings from the splashy 2023/2024 summer & autumn at the docks

‘Evict ZIM’ chronicles the saturated surge of activity against ZIM shipping over summer 23/24, which continued into the next year.⁵¹ In contrast to some places overseas like in Athens, action at ports has mostly been initiated from sections of the proletariat outside the workers employed at the site. There is one notable exception to this being with some more radical union officials and members in the so-called Sydney branch of the MUA.⁵²

The piece “Official myths and enduring fantasies” discusses critically the dynamics of actions against ZIM shipping in Naarm.⁵³ They conclude that we need hybrid coalitions present in the

⁵⁰ See Action for Rafah Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/action4rafah/>

⁵¹ <https://www.instagram.com/p/DEWi6RphcLw/> & <https://www.instagram.com/p/DEZFunIBGFD/>

⁵² <https://www.instagram.com/p/C4-Vuw2R9Mk/>

⁵³ Official Myths and Enduring Fantasies — <https://backlashblogs.wordpress.com/2024/03/19/official-myths-and-enduring-fantasies/>

4-day Webb dock picket. What we suggest has become more apparent since the writing of the piece is the limits of ‘community pickets’ as police repression increases.

Pickets were only possible with a lower level of police attention, when the police effectively ‘let us’ selectively picket traffic. After the 4 day picket, cops quickly learnt a picket was a way to an economically destructive blockade and upped repression, including blocking the roads themselves to then preclude the possibility of pickets. To counteract this, networks need to generalise coalitions / revolt / asymmetrical warfare further, or they will give into police repression that strategically incapacitates ‘middle range’ activity.

April 30th, 2024 was the last time a direct action stopped the cranes at the docks as of spring 2025. This action saw actionists scale the cranes unfurling banners to “stop the genocide”, resulting in 14 arrests.⁵⁴

May 25th, 2024, was the last time there was a rally near the docks in so-called Melbourne, called by Unionists for Palestine until the 3rd of October, 2025.⁵⁵ In the leadup, the area was covered by anti-imperialist graffiti.⁵⁶ The rally came after many U4P leaders decided to only undertake dock actions that the MUA branch leadership were on board with, effectively retreating from the dock for a year and a half.

As much as direct action networks have spoken to targeting ZIM, the actions were rather more general economic disruption of capital circulation. This praxis is also a serious reversal from the ‘workers in Palestine’ call for action that foregrounds “prioritizing trade union solidarity *first*.”⁵⁷ We suggest the degree to which that is possible depends on the extent autonomous and radical union / worker networks pre-exist. Without that existing, solidarity is still possible, but it looks quite different to the traditional route.

The period of heightened solidarity with Palestine has been a significant departure from other times of struggle because of direct action networks. The degree of hybrid middle range action is larger than happened amidst the time of massive marches against the imperialist Iraq war.

Tendencies on the left argue that autonomous direct action networks make not only mistakes, but are entire dead-ends. In arguing for the possibility of autonomous direct action, we do not shy away from its failures and limits. We turn now to dissecting detractors of autonomous direct action to questions on class struggle in racial capitalism.

Tensions in struggle: opposition to autonomous direct action, and protest counter-insurgency

B: We were glued to our screens on something that wasn't Daniel Andrews' covid restriction announcements. A fluro reactionary revolt of thousands had taken to the west gate bridge, over mandatory vaccination. They effortlessly evaded PORT (riot squad) on the way back, before heavier repression in the coming days. While we thought it was fucked how careless minimising the pandemic “fuck the jab”, reactionary masculinity and nationalism this was (vs say healthcare workers)—it was

⁵⁴ <https://www.instagram.com/p/C6XJ5NuSO7Q/> Heavy charges were later withdrawn for more minor charges.

⁵⁵ <https://www.unionistsforpalestine.com.au/25-may-rallies-ports> & <https://www.instagram.com/p/DPSpy-IxE7kL/>

⁵⁶ <https://www.3aw.com.au/resident-shocked-after-spotting-anti-semitic-graffiti-on-melbourne-foreshore/>

⁵⁷ <https://www.workersinpalestine.org/guidetoaction> The call for action there does prioritise Palestinian factions with links to the more conservative and repressive Palestinian authority. The Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions has historically been aligned with Fatah.

also a bold small insurgency. And the state was weaponising the pandemic for repressive / policing purposes. We went down later in the day to get a taste. The feeling was tense, angry and baffling. We saw a white man giving the salute to a phalanx of cops marching up Elizabeth St. We saw a brown man getting ready to throw a brick at the cops.

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"[W]e may begin to ask why it is that the white proletariat in the US poses such a persistent problem to this universality of class struggle? As we can see that the diagnosis of what is insufficient to overcome this is to be found in organizational composition itself, we must extend this to the inquiry of why organized formations of the left appear to be at such a distance from the militancy of the racialized and colonized proletariat?"—Richard Hunsinger.⁵⁸

"The choice is not between danger and safety, but between the uncertain dangers of revolt and the certainty of continued violence, deprivation, and death. There is no middle ground."—Who is Oakland: anti-oppression activism, the politics of safety, and state co-optation.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ <https://richardhunsinger.substack.com/p/unsettling-accounts>

⁵⁹ <https://escalatingidentity.wordpress.com/2012/04/30/who-is-oakland-anti-oppression-politics-decolonization-and-the-state/>



A block of Lorimer St and Todd Rd on 18th December 2023, in the weapons / imperialism precinct of 'port melbourne'

There are many on the left that write off small autonomous direct action networks completely. We argue they are a small but significant part of struggle that contributes to changing the terrain and possibility for future larger insurgent revolt.

Radical direct action networks put a cost on production / circulation of capital, and contest internal counter-insurgency on the left—opening up some more solidarity in moments of rupture. In doing that, they shift the ‘overtone window’, meaning the framing of ‘acceptable discourse’ and action, to the militant left. We also explore questions around struggle here, with white supremacy / benefits in the imperial core pulling many into class comfort with the ruling class over class conflict.

First, we go back to direct action networks. At the docks, it was these networks which catalysed action from merely speaking out about ‘blocking the boat’ at the docks to actually *shutting* them. The traditional left brake on such action until certain numbers / unions on board / material conditions have changed was instead challenged by people taking action autonomously together. Cascading action then played a role in Unionists for Palestine calling a picket.

Along the arguments of Joshua Clover’s *Riot Strike Riot*, we’re seeing insurgency increasingly take place at circuits of capital circulation: from ports to highways—to police stations, key places of white supremacist, anti-Black state violence.⁶⁰ Material conditions are shifting tactics from the era of the ‘strike’ to the era of the ‘riot prime’.

The old left traditional strike as the sole panacea for the proletariat is looking increasingly impotent in the last few decades because capitalism in the deindustrialised imperial core is in a crisis of profitability.⁶¹ Unions have increasingly turned to class collaboration rather than struggling against the entire system as available concessions to win become limited in this environment.

This is not to create some dichotomy between ‘strike’ or ‘riot’ either. Clover addresses how parts of the left idealise the strike as a more clean, more respectable tactic. Whereas the history of the strike is a history of violence from below. This stands in contrast with the ‘negotiated management’ regime of union bureaucrats between labour and capital that sets the parameters for a more limited, liberal strike. A militant strike has riotous potential.

Before a rise in anti-imperialist direct action, we saw Blockade Australia networks target ports against climate breakdown. Additionally, there was a large anti-border pro-refugee action in December 2017 at the port of Melbourne.⁶² We are seeing circulation of capital targets used by reactionary movements too, such as we saw with people taking the West Gate Bridge against vaccination.

Workplace politics and opposition to autonomous direct action

One section of the anarchist left argues we only can build power that can win through workplaces and unions. One example is a piece examining Just Stop Oil in the UK pausing further action after heavy state repression.⁶³ They argue that undertaking escalating autonomous action involves unrealistic sacrifice, breeds state repression that keeps things small and sends people

⁶⁰ Joshua Clover (2016). *Riot. Strike. Riot: The New Era of Uprisings*

⁶¹ See podcast for a good explanation: <https://thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org/post/2021/07/05/joshua-clover-on-riots-and-strikes/>

⁶² <https://www.instagram.com/p/CtpnscOhC8Z/> & <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/dec/18/refugee-advocates-blockade-melbourne-port-in-protest-at-offshore-detention>

⁶³ <https://arcup.org/2025/05/06/activists-dilemma/>

to prison. Instead, they say workplace union organising is the way for mass support, which also spreads risk over more people.

We argue the piece cherry-picks obstacles for autonomous direct action that could equally be applied to union organising. Unions here, bound up largely with the traitorous ‘australian labor party’, face conservatising pressures. No action at the docks was possible in the short term if we took a lead from them alone.

We see unions here commonly use ‘community pickets’ too when they are ordered by courts to return to work in an enterprise bargaining dispute. Here they do not want to risk total implosion defying the narrow bounds of legality under the law, because of heavy anti-union repressive laws. Even more anarchist or communist influenced unions, would have to pick the risk of imploding a structure due to state repression to win a dispute.

There is no road to struggles for small gains to revolution without risk and repression. To single out direct action led by actors who do not work at the workplace they are disrupting as uniquely difficult is to obscure the interconnected challenges different strategy and tactics face confronting the state.

Autonomous direct action tactics can have small wins when adapted to the political context. Overseas, they have successfully closed down factories in the imperial core: for example through the work of Palestine Action in the UK, who shut down factories in both Oldham and Bristol.⁶⁴

In the UK, Palestine Action built a direct action formula that put pressure on the Zionist entity from the imperial core unlike any other group—until they’ve struggled to adapt from ‘terrorist’ designation by the state. Through a strategy of sustained guerilla direct action, they managed to do material damage over time on the entity’s weapons arm Elbit Systems and its connections.

Notably, their direct action was not separate from the ‘mass’ or ‘above ground’, despite being highly critical of march A to B rallies. For a time, they outwardly drew people into direct action. Kashmiri and Arab communities came out in mass support when Elbit factories were shut by actionists in their neighbourhoods.

They created a dilemma for the state and capital: continue operating and it’ll cost you exponentially more security, to repairs, to days lost without work—and your operations will no longer be profitable.⁶⁵

Palestine Action drew people into unity through disruptive material action, rather than a shared subcultural politics, to try impose an arms embargo from below. However, this has now faced some limits. A zine by Samidoun points out keeping a network aligned with your politics is central to combating repression / resisting liberalism.⁶⁶

As state repression has increased, they’ve remanded actionists and the formula has broken down. Solidarity with political prisoners, and trans-national action against prisons have become more central. We have much to learn from how Palestinian prisoners are the compass of their liberation struggle.

An anonymous contributor critiques the Palestine Action leadership for moving towards a liberal pole of “free speech” that has seen hundreds symbolically arrested by police, rather than

⁶⁴ <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2022/01/11/elbit-systems-arms-factory-in-oldham-shut-down-following-fierce-campaign/> & <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/sep/06/israeli-arms-manufacturer-elbit-systems-closes-uk-facility-targeted-by-palestine-action>

⁶⁵ <https://guerrillahistory.libsyn.com/bonus-how-to-shut-down-an-arms-factory-w-palestine-action-guerrilla-radio-episode>

⁶⁶ <https://samidoun.net/2025/07/what-to-do-when-you-too-become-a-terrorist-new-zine-launch/>

drilling down on materially raising the costs for Western imperialism through sustained radical direct action, and focusing more on evading police arrest.⁶⁷

Palestine Action understood workers at Elbit System as having a converged interest with their bosses / militarism, and sought to impose a cost on imperialism from the proletariat who were not employed as workers there.⁶⁸

A piece on pickets on Bisalloy, further unpacks the analytical oversight of employee led only action.⁶⁹ Proletarian power is built through self-activity in community. Class fractions outside the person employed at a particular site can contest the rule of capital / colony.

Blocking the flow of capital at the docks or production at weapons supply chains, puts an internationalist proletarian cost on the imperialist colony (however small). The class interests here are class solidarity against Western imperialism across borders, rather than a narrow part of the class in the imperial core bound up with jobs in militarism.

We think workers that cross community pickets, from Stop Adani to Palestine blockades have chosen the wrong side. That said there are significant material differences between a blockade at a place of circulation and that blocking a place of weapons production for imperialism. We have seen at the docks that still attempting to find ways to link class fractions together creates more power.

We live in the ruins of decades of betrayal by the ALP, especially since the Accords of the 1980s, which has seen union participation and militancy decline markedly in the name of a neoliberal 'social peace' with the bosses.⁷⁰

Meanwhile, work has become more precarious, with more of us casualised and part-time, working multiple gigs, moving from job to job, with more barriers to join unions (and exclusion of sex workers in registered unions). Most of us do not work in places that are key capital chokepoints to shut down. And for some of us, we are part of the proletariat that face additional precarity in relation to ability to work, unwaged care work and reliance on social wage from the state / family.

These factors complicate traditional 'factory model' union organising as the only strategy and tactics for many. It is therefore in the coming together in class fractions elsewhere too, where we have found some limited power.

On this continent, we have seen more impact, however small, from people initiating direct action outside their workplace than within it, for Palestine. Other than the more radical sydney branch of the MUA, union led disruptive action for Palestine has come from the rank and file, challenging hostile union leadership.

ASU for Palestine have led walk-outs / rallies in the melbourne CBD over the past two years (on the 22nd of February 2024 and 10th of September 2025).⁷¹ The union only endorsed the rally, not the walk out component, and specifically emailed delegates to tell them they did not endorse the walk out.⁷²

⁶⁷ <https://abolitionmedia.noblogs.org/20549/>

⁶⁸ <https://newleftreview.org/sidecar/posts/tactics-of-disruption>

⁶⁹ <https://heatwavemag.info/blog/blockade-060725/>

⁷⁰ A good read on this. Elizabeth Humphrys (2019). How labour built neoliberalism. Australia's Accord, the labour movement and the neoliberal project.

⁷¹ <https://solidarity.net.au/unions/asu-members-walk-off-work-for-palestine/> & <https://redflag.org.au/article/community-sector-workers-to-walk-out-for-palestine-again>

⁷² https://www.instagram.com/asu4palestine_vic/ , <https://www.instagram.com/p/DNnHoM0yEnM/> & <https://www.greenleft.org.au/2025-09/event/protest-strike-palestine>

Overseas in Italy, the Autonomous Collective of Dockworkers (CALP) have managed to link class fractions together in internationalist solidarity with Palestine and strike at the ports, which later led to a riotous general strike in September 2025.⁷³ CALP are a radical break from trade union bureaucracies that prioritise negotiating with the boss over organising from below. We do not yet see the same autonomous base union radical fabric and level of anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist class consciousness here.

Part of the 'block everything' radical fabric in Italy is extensive migrant and Palestinian youth organising, including in logistics.⁷⁴ People took an autonomous lead, including blockading Leonardo's weapons factories, which the state tried to repress. It was this radical fabric / flank that eventually pushed the bigger union structures to have to belatedly do something.

Traditional workplace organising strategy and tactics can complement organising in other places for those it makes sense to prioritise. People will struggle where they are, and for many traditional workplace strategy and tactics has not been the best placed to enact material cost for Palestine. Workplace organising that has become effective has an autonomous rank and file character and defiance against class collaborationist union leadership.

Class struggle in the imperial settler-colonial core

This brings us to broader questions of imperialism's contradictions between the core and periphery. Borrowing from Suarez's analysis of European class struggle, 'social peace' in racial capitalism is stabilised in the Global North through border imperialism and the wages of whiteness, with the formation of a racially segmented welfare state and labour market.⁷⁵ These material benefits to many workers in the imperial core mean asymmetric relative material comfort to us here that reduces class conflict. Meanwhile, imperialism and colonialism exports intensified racist class war and misery to the Global South / Third World, undocumented / deportable migrant workers, Indigenous peoples and poor people.

As Gerald Horne writes, white supremacy pulls settlers into a militarised identity politics of whiteness, which recruits workers into class collaboration rather than class struggle against the ruling class.⁷⁶ However, this pull can be pushed towards internationalism and anti-colonialism.

The radical and militant Industrial Workers of the World in World War 1 broke with class collaboration in opposing the imperialist war and the Labor party, but its anti-racism had little to say on Indigenous people.⁷⁷

Anti-Vietnam war movements in the 60s and 70s here militantly confronted US imperialism, including street demonstrations where crowds resisted cops and damaged the US embassy with rocks, aid was collected for the National Liberation Front (of North Vietnam), and maritime unions struck against the war and complicit ships.⁷⁸ Importantly, material disruption by mar-

⁷³ <https://notesfrombelow.org/article/internationalist-solidarity-at-the-port-of-genova>

⁷⁴ <https://soundofsolidarity.podbean.com/e/block-everything-inside-italys-general-strike-for-palestine/>

⁷⁵ <https://mronline.org/2025/06/18/the-migrant-genocide-toward-a-third-world-analysis-of-european-class-struggle/>

⁷⁶ Gerald Horne (2007). *The White Pacific: US imperialism and Black slavery in the South Seas after the civil war*. & Gerald Horne (2020). *The Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism: The Roots of Slavery, White Supremacy*

⁷⁷ Verity Burgmann (1995). *Revolutionary industrial unionism: the Industrial Workers of the World in Australia*

⁷⁸ Glen Anthony Davis (2001). *The relationship between the established and new left groupings in the anti-Vietnam war movement in Victoria*. & <https://archives.anu.edu.au/exhibitions/struggle-solidarity-and-unity-150-years-maritime-unions-australia/opposition-war>

itime unions came from people of colour and internationalists.⁷⁹ There is a tradition of blockades here too. In 1998, thousands joined the Mirrar people in Kakuda in an 8-month blockade that killed off the proposed Jabiluka uranium mine.⁸⁰

But we need to be sober with these examples in a place Krauatungalung elder Djuran Bunjilinee / Robbie Thorpe calls a “nazi’s wet dream”. ‘australia’ is an ongoing illegal occupation, originating through british military invasion; violent frontier wars fought against by militant First Nations resistance that still continues.⁸¹ The federation of 1901 was founded on First Nations genocide, slavery and mass deportations of people of colour. ‘white australia’ of 1901 has merely shifted to multiracial white supremacy of 2025.

Whiteness, settler-colonialism and imperialism do give a material short-term interest to many settler workers in breaking global proletariat solidarity in the name of some privileges / a labour aristocracy.⁸² This material reality presents a consciousness barrier to dismantle to up the ante here, towards the class’s joint interest in anti-capitalism.

We saw with the insurgency against covid measures a section of the class challenge them on the basis of settler individualism that dismissed the eugenic threat of covid, and the far-right also recruit from the failures of the state policing the pandemic. In 2025, we see anti-Black panics on ‘crime’ expanding police / prisons, Operation Inglenook targeting Asian migrant sex workers (amongst others) and the mass deportation of criminalised migrants and refugees, as a racist street movement grows.⁸³ We need to urgently break racist nationalism and the counter-insurgent reactionary and fascist role many of the white and settler proletariat has played in alliance with the ruling class.⁸⁴

One part of fighting back is radical anti-imperialism that stands against Western militarism, with refugees, migrants and the Global South / Third World. Another part of this is front line solidarity with Indigenous peoples, including land defence, which we saw at the Djab wurrung heritage protection embassy.

Anti-colonial solidarity action and combating counter-insurgency

In 1971, Koori activists challenged the anti-apartheid movement to act against the “racism in their own back-yard”.⁸⁵ The challenge led to more solidarity with the Black Power struggle for land rights. The Black Power movement was the radical wing of the Indigenous struggle and embraced the threat of violence against the white colonial system, including defacing colonial

⁷⁹ <https://www.3cr.org.au/yillamin/episode/combating-liberalism-2-year-anniversary-al-aqsa-flood>

⁸⁰ <https://commonslibrary.org/the-jabiluka-blockade-22-years-on/>

⁸¹ See Frontier War Stories for a listen <https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/frontier-war-stories/id1519631920>

⁸² See pp. 278–9. Dan Berger (2006). *Outlaws of America : the Weather Underground and the politics of solidarity*, for a discussion of interests. [82] Some like J. Sakai in *Settlers The Mythology of the White Proletariat* (1983), argue the vast majority of white people will continue to play a counter-insurgent racist role as a labour aristocracy in settler-colonies until material conditions break down their benefits more.

⁸³ <https://www.sydneycriminallawyers.com.au/blog/sex-workers-unite-to-condemn-racist-raids-against-asian-migrant-workers-in-brothels/> & <https://www.hrlc.org.au/news/albanese-govenment-passes-deportation-laws/>

⁸⁴ See Chapter 11. Harsha Walia (2021). *Border & Rule*.

⁸⁵ “Whiteness and Blackness in the Koori Struggle for Self-Determination” by Dr. Gary Foley <https://vuir.vu.edu.au/27479/1/Strategic%20considerations%20in%20the%20struggle%20for%20social%20justice%20for%20Indigenous%20People.p>

monuments and using resistive violence against the police.⁸⁶ We suggest the dilution of the anti-imperialist framework in much of pro-Palestine solidarity here has also undermined solidarity with radical First Nations struggle.

One litmus test of anti-colonial struggle is their orientation to the state and its armed forces. We see parallels with critiques of the dominant Palestine solidarity politics in the US for being largely performative rather than taking risks and becoming a material threat.⁸⁷ Within this liberalism is a lack confrontational politics against the police, who are not seen as the enemy. The radicalising potential of Palestine is 'death to empire' / 'australia' too, as part of the world system of imperialism, which is upheld by the police and military.

We agree with the zine 'Bring the war home: Recovering anti-imperialism', which argues the Western Palestine solidarity movement has walked itself into liberal dead-ends instead of turning to expansive militant anti-imperialism.⁸⁸

In contrast, action against apartheid South Africa and against the US's invasion of Vietnam militantly stood in solidarity with armed resistance of the African National Congress's Umkhonto we Sizwe and the National Liberation Front's Viet Cong. The point of solidarity action wasn't to merely protest, but to become a threat to destroy the institutions abroad and here that are bound up in imperialism.

Here solidarity with Palestine is often limited to 'human rights' and civilians, with the national liberation politics of resistance factions completely silenced. We are sold a liberal myth that it was peaceful marches and boycotts that were the most effective solidarity actions. Instead, it was a diversity of tactics and militancy that worked in solidarity against the Vietnam war to the anti-apartheid movement: actions that boldly took risks, including highly disruptive action, counter-violence, shutting down ports, and solidarity that did not shy away from supporting anti-imperialist armed resistance, bombings of infrastructure and aeroplane hijackings.

We also point to the potential popularity of action, who the traditional left that tend to be sceptical of both small direct action and riots dismiss. People's ideas and consciousness change rapidly from blockades to riots. The uprisings for Black liberation burning down the 3rd Precinct in July 2020 was more popular than Biden or Trump.⁸⁹ This is not to suggest anything on that scale has happened here.

Notably, militant anti-colonial action in recent decades has taken the form of prison riots, usually led by First Nations people, or people without citizenship in immigration detention, and First Nations uprisings in the streets against state murders, such as at Palm Island and Redfern (with little outside support). These small insurgencies do not take the form of traditional workplace struggle.

We reiterate here that one of the limits to the sustaining of direct action here is combating liberal counter-insurgency that has nipped more sustained radicalisation in the bud.

The 'doing' of below ground and militant action shifts the parameters of what people are willing to do and the range of discourse. The marxist anti-imperialist guerilla Red Army Faction

⁸⁶ Kathy Lothian (2007), *Moving Blackwards: Black Power and the Aboriginal Embassy*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt24hfb0.6?seq=1>.

⁸⁷ 10 Anarchist Theses on Palestine Solidarity in the United States. <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/anonymous-10-anarchist-theses-on-palestine-solidarity-in-the-united-states>

⁸⁸ <https://antieverthing.noblogs.org/post/2025/05/01/bring-the-war-home-recovering-anti-imperialism/>

⁸⁹ <https://www.deathpanel.net/transcripts/vicky-forget>

in West Germany teaches us that if you continue action for a prolonged period of time, what was once seen as completely wrong, becomes acceptable.⁹⁰

One barrier to uprooting liberalism is that the state has developed a higher capacity for repression than the 1960s and 70s. Cops here readily deploy chemical weapons and ‘less lethal’ (still lethal) weapons they have acquired in recent decades. ‘Research and Destroy’ reflects that the student intifada on Turtle Island faced extraordinary repression beyond the levels of decades earlier despite the scale of militancy being smaller.⁹¹

One example of radical solidarity against liberalism, is the spread of the Al Thawabet principles of resistance, re-iterated over decades of struggle. These principles foreground the lines that cannot be compromised, pushing back against liberal co-optation, including support for armed resistance. They have helped sustain critiques and boycotts of cultural festivals to institutions that are funded by / allies with Zionism.

A healthy resistance movement requires a range of actions: from public rallies that do not limit potential, snap mid-range actions with deliberate militant tactics to clandestine action. Importantly, the above ground needs to stand in solidarity with the below ground.

As the Black People’s Union underline, we have seen a “saturation of symbolic protest”.⁹² This is emblematic of a contradictory movement that has at times been moved more by liberalism than towards intifada revolution. This is not to argue against large protest but to suggest struggle is strongest when symbolism doesn’t “*tactically saturate all activity*”. There are also internal limits to overcome to prolong a wave of activity, which we will return to later.

The weekend rallies after October 7th 2023 teemed with potential, involving tens of thousands of people. Buoyed on by organic boycott momentum here and overseas, McDonalds and Starbucks outlets on the CBD route had to shut down in November because of the threat posed by the rally including minor vandalism.⁹³

Cops responded by pre-emptively protecting these fast-food outlets. They also responded by cracking down on participatory stickering that had proliferated along the route, particularly covering these corporate outlets. This also represented policing of the middle, which the wider movement did not do enough to resist.

Instead, counter-insurgent practices such as marshalling, which are contested by many, contained the desire of people to up the energy at rallies.⁹⁴ Additionally, the orientation to ‘strategic patience’ by rally organisers—rather than an appetite to experiment with some risk—meant some Palestinian organisers left the Sunday rally groups towards direct action networks.

A report on the rally on New Year’s Eve shows how a group broke from marshalling direction and caused more minor disruption, including in stores.⁹⁵ Some on the autonomist end may dismiss public rallies entirely. We suggest this is throwing away a key, often sometimes overused, tactic, to publicly draw people into the streets and encourage militancy, which breaks from smaller groupings / subcultures.

⁹⁰ <https://revolutionaryleftradio.libsyn.com/red-army-faction-marxist-guerrilla-warfare-in-west-germany>

⁹¹ <https://abolitionmedia.noblogs.org/21569/>

⁹² <https://www.blackpeoplesunion.org/statements/iransolidarity>

⁹³ <https://backlashblogs.wordpress.com/2023/11/20/mcdonalds-and-starbucks-shut-down-in-naarm-melbourne/>

⁹⁴ See blog for a discussion on the same style of marshalling used for Palestine that was used for the BLM rally here in 2020: <https://darknessoutside.home.blog/2021/05/29/marshal-law-undoing-the-impulse-to-police-each-other-at-street-protests/>

⁹⁵ <https://backlashblogs.wordpress.com/2025/01/03/while-youre-watching-bombs-are-dropping/>

Disruptive action represents the possibility of threats from below that state agents have to keep in check. The fact the World hockey championships were cancelled because of expected opposition to an Israeli team shows the threat looms.⁹⁶ We now pivot to the anti-militarist protest against Land Forces, which pushed the boundaries for this city.

Bring the war home / The war is already here / Disrupt Land Forces

S: The opening Disrupt Land Forces meeting at Black Spark felt the liveliest in months, albeit tense at the same time. That maybe isn't saying much, as action went into the doldrums in winter. It was way more cross demographic than our networks that had become insular. And people in small groups were keen on actual actions that could be disruptive and shut shit down. But the tension there was also in parts of the old involved who'd bring their own ways... 'Disrupt Wars' / 'Wage peace' were out of their depth having their experience in protests without large pro-Palestine momentum. But it wasn't like many other people were willing to step into the vacuum.

*

"If we dig deep into our shared past, if we pay attention to how easily we can turn our backs on our own experiences, if we ask those who came before us, we may discover that the source of our forgetting is wrapped up with the battles we fight, just as the spark of memory is entangled with the collective learning that comes with resistance. Already we are forgetting how powerful we were when we began rising up against the oppressiveness of the police in cities across the world.—Peter Gelderloos.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ <https://michaelwest.com.au/israel-blamed-as-australia-cancels-ice-hockey-world-championships/>

⁹⁷ Peter Gelderloos (2024), They Will Beat the Memory Out of Us: forcing nonviolence on forgetful movements.



The burning dumpster at Disrupt Land Forces, September 11th 2024.

Disrupt Land Forces (DLF), a protest aiming to shut down the military expo at the convention centre, came to represent the possibilities and failures of actions in this city.

There were organisational calls early that stymied solidarity across struggles. Socialist Alternative announced at the first meeting they were calling a picket on the first day and then went off and promoted their own thing with little collaboration.⁹⁸ That said, Socialist Alternative brought student numbers to the picket at September 11th from universities where many other political networks, including grassroots left politics has declined.

DLF Organising consisting of a hub and spoke: a core group of initiators, and more open spoke like working groups. This allowed many people into working groups. On the other hand, it did not do enough to undo centralised power dynamics amongst the core of 'Wage Peace'. During the DLF week, the cops targeted a leading publicly facing person, which ended up predictably thwarting multiple actions.

The previous experiences of military expo protests were in Magandjin / brisbane, in a very different political context. At such events, people could walk onto tanks that were not actively secured. In contrast at DLF, tanks were moved in the middle of the night, with a heavy police escort.

Cops decided on a 'strategic incapacitation' plan early and talked to the corporate media months out warning DLF was "threatening anarchy". Police mobilised a significant, including interstate police response of 2,120 police.⁹⁹ Despite genuine attempts, protest initiators did not come to share power in a way that brought a range of radical people and politics in, to try generalise action while the state generalised their response. The responsibility on this point of learning, also rests just as much with networks outside of the initiators.

Autonomous networks called and mobilised for a black bloc.¹⁰⁰ Some did an early largely symbolic tyre fire down at the docks.¹⁰¹ The call to action for DLF came late though. It was a fiery uptick from winter but it was put out too quickly.

Some bad-faith rumours also undermined involvement in DLF, which can be summed up as settlers believing worst of other settlers, without checking the facts. Once again, we need to exercise radical discernment rather than a liberal deference politics.

Tactically, the police's publicising of terrorism powers worked to some extent oversell designated area powers on the ground. That said, given asymmetric warfare, the impulse to go elsewhere was met with some clandestine night action, but more limited than over 23/24 summer.

One post summarises the possibilities and pitfalls of DLF: a diversity of tactics that was not the usual protest repertoire, amidst the same leftist traps of dividing people into good 'non-violent' / bad 'violent' protestors, and erasing the norm of white supremacist state violence in the capitalist colony.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ <https://disruptlandforces.org/dlf24part3/>

⁹⁹ <https://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/disrupt-land-forces-group-set-to-protest-outside-of-land-forces-expo-in-melbourne/news-story/995d9dad681736a68c1cdf7834c1f51> & <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/victoria/land-forces-chaos-inside-the-last-minute-rush-to-find-15m-or-cancel-weapons-expo-that-turned-ugly-20250924-p5mxom.html>

¹⁰⁰ https://www.instagram.com/p/C_kpcLhvsz0/

¹⁰¹ https://www.instagram.com/p/C_kpcLhvsz0/

¹⁰² https://www.instagram.com/p/DAFycQ_PT86/

A shopping centre was shut down, some trucks sabotaged, a big intersection blocked, some fences torn down—dumpster fire images went around the world—but the expo went on. The cops arrested over 100 of us, including months of raids that dampened all sorts of activity.

Significantly, the police violence united much of the left, and there were fewer critiques of counter-violence. By mid 2025, about half the charges were dropped, the rest went to plea deals, mostly minor—but some more significant, some community correction orders, and only one conviction.

Leaked state documents vindicate the confrontational approach of DLF.¹⁰³ The state actively considered cancelling the expo because of the costly threat of a large protest with a diversity of tactics. They cancelled plans to hold land forces again in Melbourne.

One further ongoing learning from DLF is how to be more prepared for state repression rather than be surprised. These include proliferating security practices / guides on what to do, and not do when arrested. Another part is collectively caring for each other in repression / trauma of state violence because many networks experienced heavy burnout after DLF.

A court solidarity group was formed out of arrestees that helped maintain collective solidarity for the initial period. However, over time, as people's charges were dropped and things fell into a summer lull, this solidarity faded.

We do lack the same tradition of radical guides to navigating the legal system as in other places: see *A Tilted Guide to Being a Defendant*.¹⁰⁴ There were attempts to pass down political memories navigating repression against bold tactics, including the G20 in 2006.

Stepping back a bit: what was most lacking post DLF was 'counter-repression': which is taking the initiative to strike back at the state, instead of being scared / surprised into inaction.¹⁰⁵ By autumn, a protest at Avalon Air Show organised by the same military outfit AMDA foundation, that hosted DLF, barely drew dozens of people.

A shift in political culture for people to "just do shit" is not just going to fall from the sky. A people of colour led zine on DLF underlines there is a 'service mentality' to action: where particularly white people feel they are entitled to be given everything they need.¹⁰⁶ They reflect that "self-organising and autonomous action is a skill" that has to be built.

We also see some political limits of DLF. While the initial launch at Camp Sovereignty, the atmosphere felt very cross struggle, liberation here to Palestine, Kanaky, and West Papua—from there things drifted more to a dilution of politics. Curiously absent from 'Disrupt Land Forces' propaganda is a serious reckoning with imperialism, which is not named.¹⁰⁷ This goes to the lack of reckoning in shifting politics of Palestine beyond a single issue or liberal anti-militarism to anti-colonial solidarity, which means standing with resistance factions and armed resistance.

¹⁰³ <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/land-forces-chaos-inside-the-last-minute-rush-to-find-15m-or-cancel-weapons-expo-that-turned-ugly-20250924-p5mxom.html>

¹⁰⁴ <https://files.libcom.org/files/atiltedguide-web-1.pdf>

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.instagram.com/p/C3N5AkOuZhJ/> and see the zine 'Don't Be Careful, Be Quick: Reflections on Counter-Repression' <https://zinesquatteshoppe.noblogs.org/post/2025/08/03/dont-be-careful-be-quick-reflections-on-counter-repression/>

¹⁰⁶ <https://backlashblogs.wordpress.com/2025/02/07/reflections-on-the-campaign-to-disrupt-land-forces-new-zine/>

¹⁰⁷ <https://disruptlandforces.org/>

Stuck in the dockdrums: internal contradictions and tensions

“Movements often fail by attempting to replicate prior success”—Last Resorts, Research and Destroy.¹⁰⁸

“We were wrong in failing to realize the possibility and strategic necessity of involving masses of people in anti-imperialist action and organization. We fixed our vision only on white people’s complicity with empire, with the silence in the face of escalating terror and blatant murder of Black revolutionaries. We let go of our identification with the people—the promise, the yearnings, the defeats.”—Prairie Fire.¹⁰⁹

In early 2025, a 42-day asymmetric armistice was held between the Zionist entity and Palestinian resistance factions. As it unravelled, the Zionist genocide accelerated. Unlike over 23/24 the sense of urgency amongst autonomous networks was not present. Compared to other political networks, it seemed radical autonomous networks had atrophied further in terms of action and initiative.

Here we go through some actions at the docks over winter-summer 24/25. We grapple with why energy was zapped from autonomous networks. We argue there are internal limits to autonomous direct action networks around capacity to sustain action. We explore tensions, including around repression, recovery and security culture.

2024–2025 summer / autumn dock actions

After the demise of Action for Rafah (A4R) in autumn 2024, there were a few more dock actions in winter to summer (apart from the fire hit and run on DLF September 11th). There was an early morning attempt to picket with the use of a small number of barricades on the 5th of July.¹¹⁰ This proved to be somewhat dangerous as people drove around and through the picket and cops facilitated a break in the picket.

On the November 22nd, actionists returned for the afternoon shift.¹¹¹ There was an attempt to broaden the politics of Webb dock targets away from just the container terminal (VICT) to also corporations like Toll Holdings that supply the logistics for imperialism, through contracts with Thales and Australian military.¹¹²

This time the action came with barricade materials unloaded from a Budget truck. Further, tyre spikes were manoeuvred to block a truck in the middle of the key Webb dock intersection and airlines cut, with traffic lights also sabotaged.¹¹³ According to VicTraffic, it would take until overnight into the morning for the truck to be moved.

This block held long enough that cops had to call for riot cop backup. Police were tentative at first, parking away from the action, seemingly wary of the memory of heightened activity at the docks. The cops’ formation also suggested they were wary of a potential ambush from actionists.

¹⁰⁸ <https://illwill.com/last-resorts>

¹⁰⁹ pp. 10–11. The Weather Underground. *Prairie Fire: A Political Manifesto* (1974). <https://archive.org/details/prairie-fire-1974>

¹¹⁰ <https://www.instagram.com/p/C70VDxuh0ct/>

¹¹¹ <https://www.instagram.com/p/DCqfJt0sNlR/>

¹¹² https://www.instagram.com/p/DDne15_tEVP/

¹¹³ <https://www.instagram.com/p/DCqhQZZSNTX/>

As there were only 30–40 actionists, most made the decision to leave rather than confront the riot police.

The barricades were lit on fire. While there was some disruption around the shift change, it was not sustained enough to affect the shift crane operations. No arrests were made but a fine was issued relating to the vehicle.

Following the end of the ceasefire, there was an attempt to initiate a ‘middle range’ surprise but participatory action at the end of March 2025. The move from July to November 2024 represented vertical escalation (doing more tactically with similar numbers), and not horizontal escalation (doing more through having more numbers).

Sadly, the late March Webb dock attempt was met with more cops than people willing to participate. At least one large signal group had some cop infiltration, who had sussed broadly what was in the works, and like with the last Action For Rafah, cops were waiting to pre-emptively police disruptive action.

DEATH *TOLL*

TOLL Holdings Drives Genocide



so-called "australia", 2024

Barricade on fire at the November 22nd, 2024, Webb dock blockade.

On 17th of April 2025, two Webb dock intersections were briefly disrupted by an afternoon clandestine action. An anonymous submission makes the radical point to target “all colonial logistics companies” that facilitate the genocide here and abroad.¹¹⁴ Traffic lights were disabled and tyres lit on fire at the intersection before people left to evade arrest (some did not evade arrest). Unlike the November action, no trucks were disabled, limiting the disruption to a flash in the pan. We suggest attempting to do more with limited numbers of people had overstretched the limits of the dock networks.

Unlike the summer of 23/24, there were few ‘middle range’ public actions that could feed more people into radical activity at the docks, nor at weapons facilities, thanks on one large hand to police repression that had debilitated many of us. But there are some other internal contradictions / tensions that these networks have struggled with.

Repression, security culture and care

As repression increased into 2024, more and more people upped their ‘security culture’, which is a good thing to minimise possible arrests / free information for the state. Basic things like: masking, not posting incriminating public social media to not giving your passcode to the cops if arrested—are good to normalise. However, a security culture can be mis-applied if you apply the threat model of other countries with higher levels of repression, or for inflating the level of activity you are undertaking.

There are downsides to security culture being misapplied to the level of threat. No phones (including burner phones), and you cannot co-ordinate across a distance / find someone that is lost for an action that is not particularly anymore risky than minor shoplifting. There are also commonly greater time and resources investments. Sometimes it has made us more inward rather than connecting with networks outside a subculture.

Misapplied security culture has contributed to actions that could have happened not happening at all. In the context of uprisings and making security skills more accessible, the anti-repression no trace project reflects it’s best to prioritise countering the most common ways people get caught by the state.¹¹⁵ We need to actively think through what is a ‘good enough’ security culture that balances threat model and downsides of increased security for our strategy and tactics.

Working across uneven power dynamics has also been challenging. Early on at the docks, some of the most public figures were white and / or men, when things could have been done more collectively. Leadership dynamics exist in autonomous spaces, and with uneven power can lead to lack of accountability and misaligned dynamics. Even though actions were multiracial, sometimes white people would make their own decisions in early 23/24 dock actions, bypassing a decision that needed to be collective.

Our networks also lack enough solid lines of ‘circles of trust’, meaning the ability to initiate actions rest on too few people who have those connections, which can lead to imbalanced group

¹¹⁴ <https://www.instagram.com/p/DInHqJbCXJv/>

¹¹⁵ <https://www.notrace.how/anti-repression-talks/preparing-for-physical-surveillance.html#header-teaching-security>

dynamics: both demise if those people burn out and feelings of abandonment if other people fade away for various reasons.¹¹⁶

We also sometimes have a tendency to confuse a particular tactical militancy or righteousness of our politics, as strategy.¹¹⁷ On the positive side, the emphasis of doing radical stuff is far better than doing nothing in the abstract. But on the negative side, radical militancy is not necessarily about choosing the out-there tactic in and of itself. Instead, it's about political analysis and strategy that has its own integrity.

It's about being honest about when a particular tactic failed and why. It is about being clear-headed in asymmetrical warfare, when the risk / reward calculus is in our favour, and when it's not. It's about avoiding what Klee Benally writes about, becoming 'reactive' because tactics are driving strategy.¹¹⁸

A wave of struggle can be a big shift to people's previous lives. Being involved in a heightened period of action takes up a lot of time: endless meetings and wrangling together actions, recovering from police violence and losing people to the debility of police violence, dealing with interpersonal conflicts, court dates and solidarity. All this amongst keeping up with daily life in racial capitalism.

For some, they could change how they lived their lives a bit over a few months of summer 23/24, but it was not sustainable beyond then. For some, their limit of police repression was that they experienced at the docks early on, some later. From that point, they did not feel it was worth the risk, especially as momentum was not on our side. For some, action means adapting to a life with more downward mobility. This begs questions; how do we adapt to increasing risk / enable things to continue / recuperate / proliferate? Versus burn out / only be ephemeral over time?

There was a lot of rhetoric about mutual aid in the networks, with a solid emphasis on direct aid to Palestinians and First Nations peoples. But there was not a radical shift in the social reproduction of our lives necessary to sustain each other in the ebb after a flow. The cops are skilled at using 'strategic incapacitation' to smash middle range actions that we need to recover from.

While we can downplay what many have experienced here as nothing much versus elsewhere, police violence still requires ongoing community care: a sense that if I'm fucked up by police I'm not going to individually struggle alone. Trauma is real and speaking of it requires an honest political culture, if we are to overcome burnout.¹¹⁹

It requires a broadening of politics / mutual aid to people outside of insular networks. And grappling with how power differences in race / class / gender / ability / sexuality / age affect what our lives look like in political repression and daily capitalist colonial life.

In general, we did not ground and radicalise our networks in the reality we need to build a revolutionary struggle ecosystem and sense of belonging to sustain anti-imperialist action over years, decades, lives. Autonomous networks, often sustained on momentum from action, have struggled with what to do in a 'lull' / 'defeat' period.

People often split from each other and feel betrayed in these times, and may withdraw from activity entirely. These are important times for skills on dealing with our trauma, to working

¹¹⁶ <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/anonymous-confidence-courage-connection-trust>

¹¹⁷ Last chapter. Dan Berger (2006). *Outlaws of America: The weather underground and the politics of solidarity*.

¹¹⁸ See pp 164–5. Klee Benally (2023). *No spiritual surrender: Indigenous anarchy in defense of the sacred*

¹¹⁹ See Nicole Rose's work on state violence, including 'Overcoming burnout'. <https://solidarityapothecary.org/overcomingburnout/>

through internal conflicts that are not about incompatible politics. Our political outlook in these periods often becomes more insular too.

Revolutionary anti-imperialist organising in the 1970s learnt the importance of having connections between both below and above ground action.¹²⁰ Likewise, Calla Walsh reflects that the combination of above ground and clandestine direct action was key to getting some limited wins against Elbit on Turtle Island.¹²¹ We need to remember that while doing niche radical actions can shift the political terrain and do damage, it also has its limits. We need to be orientated towards wider revolt with bigger insurgent class fractions in the region, to not isolate ourselves, and fight the growth of far-right.

The end and the beginning: what is to be done?

*“A false dichotomy is set up between the role of the “disciplined”, politically mature protestor and the inarticulate other. The other is positioned as a person or a group too worn out by oppression to resist tactically. This other is protested for, or on behalf of, but we must never indulge in their tactics. Both property damage and any spontaneous, emotional embodiment of resistance are seen as apolitical, as reactions to be left (pun intended) behind as we attain proper political maturity. “Oppressed others” (in Redfern, Macquarie Fields, Palm Island, Lakemba) who are perhaps never expected by those who call for disciplined protest to reach the requisite levels of political maturity have been rhetorically defended for their “justified” anger. But those who set Macquarie Fields on fire are never presumed to be part of a mass resistance to capitalism; and those who are presumed to be a part of “the movement” are therefore seen as outside of the system that produces such anger.”—G20: A first communiqué from two uncitizens of Arterial Bloc.*¹²²

¹²⁰ pp. 10–11 ‘self-criticism’. The Weather Underground. *Prairie Fire: A Political Manifesto* (1974).

¹²¹ <https://millennialsarekillingcapitalism.libsyn.com/opening-as-many-fronts-as-possible-reflections-from-palestine-action-us-the-merrimack-4-with-calla-walsh>

¹²² <https://web.archive.org/web/20130119075429/https://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2006/11/356765.html>



A cop truck smashed by Arterial Bloc, G20 protests, 'melbourne' November 2006.

One inspiration for writing this piece is the lack of cross-generational radical political memory. Generations too young for G20 in 2006 probably have no clue a cop car was smashed up there. Likewise, long before Disrupt Land Forces in 2025, in 1991 in Canberra, thousands of protestors with a diversity of tactics, including counter-violence, shut down the AIDEX arms expo that did not return until 2009.¹²³ Conversely, our enemies are passing down their strategy and tactics. Those arrested at DLF recount cops saying this was the biggest operation since the times of the 2000s anti-capitalist summit movements.

Let's sum up what we have explored.

From the struggle for land back on Djab wurrung country against a highway to anti-imperialist Palestine liberation struggle we've seen some commonalities. Boldly undertaking direct action lays the ground for more action. In taking action, a sense of 'permissiveness' is important that transcends liberal identity politics. This means 'leadership' is shared and accountable in the undertaking of action while taking a lead from the most oppressed, but without a deference politics that means merely 'following the pedestalled leader'.

Not all direct action is the same. Radical direct action tends towards multi-struggle revolutionary confrontation with the state. By contrast, liberal direct action tends toward single issues, inflated claims and is less confrontational with the state. Both tendencies can interplay in actions, including in the same action.

Radical direct action has encouraged the growth of clandestine damage actions, where people often evade arrest entirely. One of the key strengths on our side in asymmetrical warfare is surprise and ability to adapt to changes that stymie our surprise factor.

From Disrupt Land Forces to the four day picket—some of the most disruptive actions have drawn people acting in tenuous coalition together despite major political differences. Despite how frustrating 'working together' can be, we need to find ways to keep at it in spaces not controlled by liberalism, rather than become too insular.

Moments of coalition have also been moments for 'protest camps'. These places rupture the everyday life in capitalism where we have to socially reproduce a radical picket or blockade. In bigger moments, these could prefigure communes.

Material conditions are pushing struggle to the form of riot, with struggle increasing at points of capital circulation after deindustrialisation in the core. The spoils of imperialism, settler colonialism and whiteness do push class politics towards class collaboration rather than class war. And so anti-capitalist consciousness must be anti-colonial.

As police have upped repression they have quite successfully targeted in 'strategic incapacitation' middle range actions and split coalitions. Middle range actions are those that pop up which combine bold tactics, clandestinity and some ability to draw more networks in. As they have policed the middle, autonomous networks have struggled further to sustain themselves. We saw this after the warmer dock action months of 23/24, weapons supply chains pickets and after Disrupt Land Forces.

Autonomous networks have faced significant repression. In that, we have struggled in the ebb. And in how to build anti-imperialist ecosystems that can sustain hits on direct action targets over time. We need to work on sustaining ourselves in the ebb. We also must grapple with developing an honest radical political culture.

¹²³ See Always Look on the Bright Side of Life: The AIDEX '91 Story. <https://commonslibrary.org/always-look-on-the-bright-side-of-life-the-aidex-91-story/>

Radical solidarity with the Palestinian liberation struggle represents a contested shift in protest culture towards more diverse tactics, militancy, including embracing counter-violence and solidarity with armed resistance.

Autonomist networks play an important role in pushing back against counter-insurgency in struggle: as ASIO calls it a ‘pressure release valve’ that channels protest into set train lines of dissent.¹²⁴ We attempt to foreground internationalist class solidarity that means focusing on race / imperialism that means pushing the range of discourse to destroying ‘australia’ as a capitalist colony.

Echoes of radical memory and prison solidarity

In 2006, at the anti-capitalist G20 protests in Melbourne, the arterial bloc smashed up a police truck and faced deeply hostile critique from much of the left, as well as repression for years after, where one member did jail time. Race and class played a big part in who got time, and who broke off into privileged individualism rather than collective solidarity. 2006 did not come out of nowhere, but was part of a radical ecosystem, including the ‘autonomous web of liberation’ (AWOL).

We see parallels here with how the arterial bloc describes the “exhilaration” of taking an escalated action.¹²⁵ There is a magnetic feeling of alignment to direct action politics where words and actions come together. This can come not only with action that materially costs the system, but also the everyday ways we resist and care for each other together in mutual aid.

One of the ways we continue radical struggle is solidarity with people criminalised by the state. In the words of political prisoner Casey Goonan, criminalised for 20 years on Turtle Island in 2025:

*“The state uses the imprisonment of political leaders and rank-and-file activists as a bludgeon against movement victories. Their incarceration is a reminder of the strength, potential, and, just as crucially, the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of radical mass movements. As a result, political prisoners serve collective prison time for all those who participated in the movements from which they emerged.”*¹²⁶

The more minor repression we have faced here is a sign of both our potential strengths as well as weaknesses—that we have when we push the boundaries—rather than only the fatalism that it was not worth doing. And in the doing of actions, we have connected with so many to fight alongside in comradeship.

In all since October 7th 2023, we have failed to land much of a material impact in solidarity with Palestine. But our experiments have felt affective: both ecstatic and exhausting, hopeful and hopeless, meaningful and insignificant.

For internationalist revolt from the imperial core, we can’t afford to squander this opportunity to talk through our learnings. Let’s keep on throwing rocks at the machine that cause ripples towards the tsunami of revolutionary change we need.

¹²⁴ <https://www.listennotes.com/de/podcasts/erin/erin-6-december-RDgks3OIbBm/>

¹²⁵ <https://web.archive.org/web/20130119075429/https://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2006/11/356765.html>

¹²⁶ <https://bloomingtonabc.noblogs.org/files/2025/09/taskforce-read.pdf> & See Free Casey Now campaign: <https://www.instagram.com/freecaseynow/>

Postscript



Death to Australia communique, released after an underground action at imperial weapons supplier Lovitt in greensborough on July 5th, 2025.¹²⁷

Since the writing of much of this piece, we've seen a rising wave of activity in solidarity in Palestine as the Zionist entity's genocide continues in the face of Palestinian resistance denying them any victory. We then saw another fragile 'ceasefire' agreed to.

An "attack on Australia" screamed the corporate press in July.¹²⁸ An anti-cop rally was initially left to blow off steam by the state. Later, the rally targeted a genocidal GHF aligned Israeli owned restaurant Miznon, where there was some minor damage.¹²⁹ We see here again the state going hard at 'mid-range' tactics, with imprisonment, heavy raids and arrests and threats against clandestine action. On the same night, autonomist actionists torched cars at imperialist weapons parts manufacturer Lovitt, releasing a militant communique.¹³⁰

We have also seen a fledgling example of a co-ordinated clandestine autonomous direct action campaign. Actionists have hit Toll Group, who transport weapons for Thales and NIOA, the 'Australian' military and police.¹³¹ Death to 'Israel', death to 'Australia', death to 'America' has proliferated across the web in the Vlog communiques. In an interview, an actionist outlines an agenda to grow tactics that hit imperialism and colonial violence. They draw inspiration from Palestine Action targeting transport companies for Elbit Systems.¹³²

Large Sunday rallies have experienced upticks in numbers and energy. A contradictory "march for humanity" made headlines taking the harbour bridge in so-called Sydney. It highlights a politics of liberal humanitarianism and negotiated management in the lead up with police. In Naarm, the Sunday rally has shown some more tentative interest in disruption, but remains contained in particular parameters.

One leading speaker spoke out in support of the Lovitt torching and Miznon action one week.¹³³ Another week, the rally targeted the Zionist Gandel donors at the national gallery of 'Victoria'. On another Sunday, the march was blocked by phalanx of police to taking King Street bridge. A small bloc later burned the Australian flag, with videos going viral, including support from the rally organisers.

Partly in response to the wave of Palestine rallies and anti-Australian nationalism, co-ordinated fascist and reactionary white supremacist marches took off across the continent on August 31st, co-organised by the Nazi National Socialist network. Anti-fascists have faced off in the streets in violent protests, where the non-state fascists outnumbered the anti-fascists.

Two weeks later a co-ordinated Sovereignty was Never Ceded National Day of Action took off in response to the Nazi's attack on Camp Sovereignty. We are seeing here big limitations in 161 organising. Those who will work with (and celebrate) police against Nazis, versus those who want to build community self-defence towards revolution.

We've also seen 'whose future' pop up, with actions that block the docks, to outside coles in solidarity with Kumanjayi White, who was murdered by cops in their store in Mparntwe.¹³⁴ We

¹²⁸ <https://antieverthing.noblogs.org/post/2025/07/12/a-tale-of-peculiar-policing-a-restaurant-and-reactionary-backlash/>

¹²⁹ Gaza Humanitarian Fund

¹³⁰ <https://antieverthing.noblogs.org/post/2025/07/28/communique-and-footage-released-from-torching-of-three-vehicles-at-lovitt-technologies-0-8-07-25/>

¹³¹ <https://tolldeath.noblogs.org/>

¹³² <https://www.sydneycriminallawyers.com.au/blog/everything-is-on-the-table-says-direct-action-group-targeting-toll-holdings-for-driving-genocide/>

¹³³ <https://archive.is/Ol9cz>

¹³⁴ <https://www.instagram.com/whosefuture/>

also saw Unionists for Palestine call an action at the docks in the time ‘block everything’ went viral around the world.¹³⁵

Colonial genocide here to Palestine continues despite anti-colonial resistance, while the far-right rises. It reminds us of George Jackson who wrote: “The major obstacle to a united left in this country is white racism”.¹³⁶ Let’s keep the coals burning, which may spark revolt.

E-mail: whatsthepointofda@proton.me for comments, questions and feedback!

A special thanks to all the comrades that contributed to the creation of this zine, which was also not possible without struggling alongside everyone.

¹³⁵ <https://www.instagram.com/p/DPSpyIxkL/>

¹³⁶ George Jackson (1972). Blood in my eye.

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