

Invasion Day and Decolonisation

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I am truly free only when all human beings, men and women, are equally free. The freedom of other men, far from negating or limiting my freedom, is, on the contrary, its necessary premise and confirmation. – Mikhail Bakunin

In the face of overwhelming violence and the power of empires, indigenous people and cultures across the world have survived. Through it all, they stand as a reminder of the heritage of this Earth and of the indomitable spirit of humanity passed down through thousands of generations. On this day (January 26th, 2024) we remember the struggle and the suffering of our First Nations comrades since the invasion and colonisation of this land 236 years ago. Despite a purposeful and overt program of genocide lasting until this very day, by empire and the state, underpinned by capital, we celebrate 236 years of resistance and the survival of a people that carry with them the lineage of the oldest continuous culture in existence.

It's true that colonisation created the world we live in today, and it's vital that we remember this. Every day non-indigenous people living in this country benefit from the institutions, infrastructure, wealth, and social relations that are the legacy of colonisation. The supposed 'wealth' of this country (mainly hoarded by the capitalist class) is, for the most part, derived from mineral extraction and destructive agricultural practices at the expense of intricate systems of cultivation, culture, and connection which indigenous people across this continent fostered for over 50,000 years. Cultural sites that have been maintained by uncountable generations have been destroyed through capitalist expansion; ecosystems have been decimated, and hundreds, if not thousands, of entirely unique species have been erased from existence. Since the first colonisers set foot on this continent indigenous peoples have been the subject of organised campaigns to erase their culture and their very existence through violence of every kind.

Colonisation is not a phenomenon that ended with the collapse of the European empires after World War II. It continues today through the colonial societies that remain intact (such as Australia) and the new economic empires that have emerged since the Cold War began. The most obvious overseas example is Palestine, whose people at this very moment are facing genocide at every turn. The Zionist Israeli state, backed by the hegemony of the US and NATO, has murdered over 26,070 people in Gaza and at least 370 within the occupied West Bank. Over 10,000 children and 7,000 women are included in that number. That is an average of 232 civilians killed by the

Israeli Defence Force a day for the last 111 days (AJLabs 2024). That is a disgusting, abominable figure.

The state of Israel is allowed to perpetrate this genocide because it acts as a buffer for US and NATO interests in the Middle East, and specifically as a counterweight to the influence of Iran in the region (which has its own expansionist aspirations that seek to combat the power of the US). If Israel did not have strong economic and political ties with major Western powers looking to secure their own interests, it would be yet another candidate for the kind of corrupt, indiscriminate armed intervention that we have previously seen in Iraq and Afghanistan. The true irony is that Israel, unlike Iraq, actually *does* have weapons of mass destruction. This is the new face of old patterns of colonisation and empire; genocide by proxy, driven by the ravenous needs of capitalist accumulation and expansionist state powers. It isn't just the US; however, the Australian state and businesses benefit from the violence of Israel. Australia manufactures and sells arms, vehicles and technology that facilitates not only the ongoing genocide, but which forms part of the overall machinery used to colonise Palestinian lands and subjugate the Palestinian people (Tommy L 2023). The Australian state is just as complicit as any other colonial power, and it forms a part of the overall colonisation effort by the US and its allies throughout the region.

Closer to home, the Australian state implicitly supports the murder, subjugation and dispossession of the West Papuan people by the Indonesian government and its armed forces, which serves Australian interests by countering Chinese diplomatic and economic influence in the region and provides access for Australian private enterprise. Tens of thousands have been displaced, tortured, or killed in a land geographically closer to us than New Zealand (Kingsbury, 2023). Australian colonial violence has never been confined purely within the borders of the state, and we have participated in our fair share of interventionist wars to protect our perceived interests, such as in Korea, Vietnam, Southeast Asia, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

But all of this begs the question: what can we, as Anarchists, do?

We must pursue a program of decolonisation through mass movements and organisations, as well as foster within our specific Anarchist organisations a program of education and activism that adequately prepares us to fight colonial forces in economic, social, and political spheres. Within the mass unions which we are members of we must pursue a radical campaign of both informing our fellow workers, as well as pushing for a rank-and-file anti-colonial and anti-capitalist direction, targeting businesses that profit from colonisation and genocide. We must participate in mass movements supporting the cause of First Nations people here at home, as well as internationalist campaigns such as Free Palestine, supporting radical voices within them that call for true change in society rather than concessions and collaboration with the state and capital. Here, too, we can prove our worth by advocating for and building horizontal organisation, and fostering Anarchist, anti-capitalist thought among those receptive to it.

To accomplish these tasks we must pursue an organised educational program within our specific Anarchist organisations that adequately prepares us. This cannot be simply outward-looking, but must also investigate how we can refine and decolonise our own politics, as it would be a fatal mistake to avoid self-critique and assume that our politics and organisations are inherently anti-colonial simply because they are anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian. Anarchism is a social process just as much as it is a system of beliefs and organisation, and we as Anarchists must always pursue the betterment of humanity and ourselves through the constant development of our ideology, strategy, and tactics internally and then take those developments and put them to use in the real world, wherever the sphere of conflict exists.

It is our responsibility, as partisans of solidarity and internationalism, living on colonised land, to fight for justice for all those oppressed peoples struggling for self-determination and survival. What was once the tool of so-called 'royal' bloodlines is now the tool of capital and state power, and this shared enemy is one which can be defeated through organisation and collective effort. Decolonisation should be as much a part of the Anarchist revolutionary programme as any other cause, as through it and many other intersectional avenues we can strike at the heart of capitalist hegemony. There can be no Anarchist society without the freedom of all within it.

Resources:

- AJLabs (24 January 2024) 'Israel-Gaza war in maps and charts: Live tracker', *Aljazeera*, accessed 26 January 2024. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/10/9/israel-amas-war-in-maps-and-charts-live-tracker>
- Kingsbury D (28 September 2023) 'Why you will never hear an Australian leader call out Indonesia on West Papua', *The Guardian Australia*, accessed 26 January 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/sep/28/australia-west-papua-human-rights-abuse-allegations-indonesia>
- Tommy L (20 December 2023) 'Geelong and Genocide – Part 1: Marand Engineering', *Geelong Anarchist Communists*, accessed 26 January 2024. <https://geelonganarchists.org/2023/12/20/geelong-and-genocide-part-1-marand-engineering/>

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