

East Timor solution throws justice overboard

by *Bill F.*

The Gillard Labor government is attempting to bribe the impoverished nation of East Timor into accepting an Australian detention centre for refugees coming mainly from war-torn Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. So far the East Timorese parliament has resisted Australian pressure, but government leaders are open to further negotiations.

However much the Gillard plan is dressed up as a 'processing centre', it will in fact be an off-shore prison, out of sight and out of access to ordinary Australians.

The Gillard government, like the Howard government before it, hopes 'off-shore processing' will make it harder for refugees to get access to legal assistance, political support and media

publicity, and lessen their chances of legally entering Australia. Never mind Australia signing the United Nation Convention on Refugees, that's just an inconvenient detail!

The whole focus is on 'boat arrivals' – an insignificant number of poor people who have handed over everything they possess to risk a dangerous trip across the Indian Ocean.

They are demonised and subject to class discrimination. They are used as a 'political football' by both Liberal and Labor to pander to the prejudice and fear-mongering spread by the monopoly media, designed to divide the Australian people lest they threaten the profit-taking of the multinational corporations that really rule the country.

In contrast, many more thousands of (usually richer) people arriving in planes or overstaying their visa are treated

quite differently. They are 'processed' on the mainland of Australia, with better access to legal assistance and support, including communication with families and friends.

All undocumented arrivals in Australia should be treated in the same way – on the mainland, and with compassion.

We refer readers to some extracts from the CPA (M-L) Statement on Refugees (see www.vanguard.net.au)

"Asylum seekers and refugees hoping to settle in Australia are mainly escaping wars, poverty and oppression created by the brutality of imperialism. They should be treated humanely and decently. No asylum seeker should be locked up in prison camp conditions, but instead be provided with proper housing and support while their position is being considered."

"The material wealth and rich cultural traditions of this country were created by migrants and refugees from every corner of the globe settling in Australia. Migrants and refugees have always been an important part of Australia's working class. To this day they toil in factories, mines, on building sites, abattoirs and in the agricultural industry.

"Migrants and refugees have always stood at the centre of Australia's working class struggles and union activism, leading many struggles in the mines, sugarcane fields, on the waterfront, on building sites, in many factories of the

multinationals and others.

"Struggles against fascism and imperialist wars have been led by migrant workers and refugees who fled political repression in their own countries.

"Twenty one nationalities took part in the Eureka Stockade rebellion of 1854, Australia's popular uprising against British colonial oppression."

"Australia's ruling capitalist class has always sought to foment and incite racism, sow divisions amongst the people and spread the backward ideology of capitalism, when it suited its economic and political purpose. The ruling class scapegoats refugees to divert attention from capitalism and imperialism as the root cause of many problems. Every new wave of refugees and immigrants is subjected to unfair treatment as capitalism tries to undermine hard won workers' wages and conditions."

"There is no real solution to the global plight of refugees whilst the world and its people continue to be plundered and exploited by capitalism and imperialism. The only solution is to work towards getting rid of this barbaric system. For us in Australia today, it means working to unite the great majority of Australian people from all cultural and racial backgrounds in the struggle against multinational corporations' domination of Australia and for anti-imperialist independence and socialism."

Is East Timor The Largest 'Foreign Aid Donor' To Australia?

by *Ned K.*

The desperate 'East Timor Solution' of the Gillard Government to rid Australia of asylum seekers is revealing some disturbing aspects of Australia's relationship with East Timor. A Letter to the Editor in a daily newspaper recently is worth reading.

"PM Julia Gillard wants East Timor to help secure our borders. In 2006 our government 'persuaded' the Timorese to sign an agreement leaving them without a border with Australia for 50 years; long enough to extract all the gas from Greater Sunrise. We each get 50% of the revenues.

"Under accepted laws of the sea, Timor is entitled to 100%, Australia to nothing, but Australia refuses to submit this dispute to the international umpire.

"The financial effect of denying them a secure border for 50 years is that East Timor, the poorest nation in Asia, is effectively the largest foreign aid donor to Australia, the richest, most powerful

nation in South East Asia.

"The deal is worth billions; but that amount won't begin to fill the financial black hole caused by John Howard's Pacific Solution, Gillard's Timor Solution and no doubt Abbott's Somewhere-else Solution.

"These black hole solutions result from Ms Gillard's and Mr Abbott's apparent belief they can't get elected unless they deny asylum seekers their legal rights by sending them offshore.

"Here come Julia and Tony, the playground bullies, impressing us by beating up more helpless people. They're paying billions of your dollars for your votes."

This is a shameful situation and will be seen as a disgrace by millions of people in South East Asia and beyond.

The colonial and imperialist culture of Australia as a white European outpost in the Asia Pacific region is alive and well among the executive committee (parliamentary leaders) for managing the affairs of the big bourgeoisie in Australia.

Vanguard

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