

Ukraine: MH17 tragedy shows need for peace, not warmongering

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There needs to be a ceasefire and negotiated solution to the conflict.

July 19, 2014 — The apparent shooting down of Malaysia Airlines passenger flight MH17 is an unspeakable tragedy and a criminal act that has sent shock waves around the world. GREEN LEFT WEEKLY offers our condolences to the families of all its victims.

Nobody yet knows who was responsible for this crime, despite Western media and governments pointing the finger at either the rebel forces in Ukraine's east, which the West accuses Russia of arming, or the Russian military itself.

Amid claims and counter claims by all sides, each force denies responsibility and there is no obvious motive for any force to deliberately carry out such an atrocity.

The United Nations Security Council has called for "a full, thorough and independent international investigation". But, whether this has any hope of leading to clarity on the incident remains to be seen.

Yet many Western governments, with Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott joining in, are exploiting this tragedy and using it to escalate rhetoric and tensions with Russia, raising the prospect of the war expanding.

The West's hypocrisy stinks. On the same day Abbott used the MH17 deaths as an excuse to raise tensions with Russia, he justified Israel's bloody carnage in Gaza as legitimate "self-defence". As of July 19, the Palestinian death toll was more than 290, including dozens of children. The life of a Gazan is not worth less than the life of any passenger on flight MH17.

Those who offer support for Israel's murderous rampage, and in doing so become complicit in it, have no moral grounds on which to threaten or condemn anyone.

The hypocrisy of the United States government is especially galling. Not only is Israel carrying out its bloodshed with US complicity and with US military aid, but the US military has resumed drone strikes in Pakistan with deadly consequences.

The US also has its own history of shooting down passenger planes. The US air force infamously shot down Iran Air Flight 655 in Iranian airspace in 1988. All 290 civilians on board were killed, including 66 children.

Despite reaching an agreement to pay compensation to families of the victims, the US has never officially accepted responsibility or apologised.

There needs to be a de-escalation of the Ukrainian conflict, not a ratcheting up. For this to happen, it

is crucial for outside powers to stop interfering and using the conflict for their own geo-political interests.

There needs to be a negotiated solution to the conflict that can allow a truce and for the issues driving the conflict, including the rights of Russian speakers in Ukraine's east and their expressed desire for greater autonomy or separation from the Ukraine, to be negotiated and resolved.

This is a matter for those directly involved. For others to use the conflict to whip up Cold War-era tensions and rhetoric is unacceptable and can only lead to far greater bloodshed than has already been seen.

At its June 7-9 national conference in Sydney, the Socialist Alliance, a party that is an important supporter of Green Left Weekly, adopted a resolution on international political perspectives. On Ukraine, it said: "We oppose — and seek to expose — any imperialist intervention and manipulation of [conflicts such as Ukraine's] ... We also condemn the persistent, heavily-funded intervention by the US and EU in the political life of Ukraine.

"This intervention aims to expand NATO into Ukraine, multiplying tensions with Russia, and to turn Ukraine into an economic dependency of the EU. The planned association agreement between Ukraine and the EU, together with the accompanying IMF-dictated austerity program, can be expected to destroy large sections of Ukrainian industry and further impoverish the country's working population.

"We stand in solidarity with the popular struggle against austerity and ethno-linguistic oppression that is now unfolding in Ukraine, especially in the country's south-eastern provinces."

These points remain relevant, but in light of the MH17 tragedy and the tensions being whipped up around it, we must emphasise: there must be no escalation or exploitation of this tragedy to push conflict and there needs to be solutions for the grievances driving the conflict.

Green Left Weekly editorial

P.S.

* <http://links.org.au/node/3967>