

Thousands march in New York and New Jersey against Israeli aggression

Alan Whyte
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Thousands of workers, students and youth in New York and New Jersey marched over the weekend against Israeli aggression in the occupied territories. On Friday night there were four demonstrations—in Jersey City and Paterson, New Jersey and in Times Square and at Brooklyn Borough Hall in New York City.

By the time the demonstrators in Times Square reached the Israeli consulate there were at least 3,000 protestors, catching police off guard who had anticipated a march of only a few hundred. The police were more prepared on Saturday, coming out in full force to restrict the 3,000 marchers to designated areas. Despite the fact that the marchers were peaceful and orderly, a police commander with a bullhorn announced that the demonstration was illegal and had no permit, and that people who blocked vehicle traffic or pedestrians would be arrested.

The Saturday march was called by the Palestine Activist Forum, but the crowd included thousands of non-Arab as well as Arab workers, students and youth. Another march was held in Union Square on the same day. These marches express a growing opposition to the patriotic fervor that the government and media have been promoting since the September 11 terrorist attack. For this reason, the *New York Times* reported the main march on Saturday only numbered 500, while in reality it was at least six times as large.

The protesters began picketing at Brooklyn Borough Hall and marched across the Brooklyn Bridge to City Hall. They carried banners and signs reading: “Free Palestine, US funded genocide,” “Media lies, kids die; I am not a terrorist” and “Freedom for Palestine, Stop the genocide, Sharon is the terrorist.” Another banner was carried by a group calling itself “Jews against Occupation.”

Some of the slogans chanted by the marchers

included: “Not a nickel, not a dime, no more money for Israeli crimes,” “Sharon, Sharon, you can’t hide, we charge you with genocide,” “Free, free Palestine, end the occupation now” and “Arabs and Jews against the abuse.”

The WSWWS spoke with a number of the protesters on Saturday.

Mousa, 18, is a business student and works nights at a grocery store. He was born in Brooklyn of Palestinian parents. He said, “The Israelis shouldn’t have tanks surrounding people’s houses keeping them locked up inside. They pop all the water hoses so nobody can have water. They are blowing up people’s homes.

“My cousin lives in Ramallah. He lost his job and his home when the Israeli army destroyed the small hotel which he ran. This was in 1998 and 1999. Even then there was a lot of fighting, with the army using tear gas all the time against us. We couldn’t drive around, especially at night, because the soldiers would beat you up and take you in. They say that we are terrorists, but they have weapons that we don’t have. They want Arafat to leave, but how can we leave our land? We’re willing to share it, but we can’t leave.”

Kevin McMingies, a defense attorney, commented, “I don’t agree with Israeli occupation of Palestine. I don’t agree with the suicide bombings either, but I think we have to understand the root causes of these desperate acts. I think that Sharon is the real war criminal and terrorist and the media is blocking all of that out.”

Graham Richards is an architect. “I’m disgusted with Israel and American media lies,” he said. “All the news we receive is extremely one-sided and pro-Israeli aggression. It is so obvious that the American government supports Israel. Most of the people on my job believe that Israel is going too far.”

Tariq is half-Palestinian, half-Lebanese, born in the

US. He is student majoring in political science and economics. “I am for justice for the Palestinian people,” Tariq said. “This means the end of the occupation of Palestine and for a free and independent Palestine. The Zionists have driven most of my family out of their homeland. The US government has always been biased towards Israel.

“They are the ones who occupy us and terrorize us and Bush keeps denouncing Arafat. The US is now very concerned with what is happening in the Middle East because their plans to get Arab support to eliminate Saddam Hussein have been disrupted. If the US attacks Iraq, more innocent lives will be lost.”



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