

Protests in Israel against war in Iraq

David Cohen
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Thousands of Israelis have demonstrated during March and April against the imperialist war on Iraq. Protest rallies and marches were held in front of the United States Embassy in Tel Aviv, the Arab cities in northern Israel, the cities of Haifa and Nazareth and at the universities of Tel Aviv and Haifa.

Three major demonstrations involving hundreds of people were held in front of the US Embassy in Tel Aviv. The first demonstration was organised by the Communist Party of Israel and its Democratic Front for Peace and Equality.

Adrian, 23, studies at the University of Tel Aviv. He told the *World Socialist Web Site*: “I was not a political activist and even when Israel committed atrocities in the West Bank, I was satisfied with my periodic vote for Hadash (the DFPE). But now I can’t just continue with my silent protest. Palestine will be Bush and Blair’s next target. Today the Iraqis are the victims; tomorrow the victims will be the Palestinians—and the Israelis as well. How can anyone ignore the fact that ‘regime change’ in Palestine and bloody war against the Palestinians’ aspirations to have their own state alongside Israel will create here nothing but hell?”

Gays and lesbians mounted another protest on March 29. Ruth, 36, works as social worker. She said, “I am a lesbian and I am shocked that my friends within the gay and lesbian community do not see that the war on Iraq is dangerous to anyone who seeks to have equal rights in our society. Is there anyone who actually thinks that in militarised, capitalist and nationalist society gays and lesbians will get the right to live peacefully and freely without discrimination?”

“Anyone who has eyes in his head can see that after the US has finished smashing the regime in Iraq and killing thousands of innocents they will take on the Palestinians. How many victims will there be before the US and Sharon complete carrying out their political genocide here? The threat to our lives comes from the

US and its allies.”

On April 2 the Arab Students Association joined with liberal and radical groups for human and civil rights to protest in front of the embassy. Karim, 22, lives in the city of Haifa and studies political science:

“I don’t have any sympathy for Iraq’s president. He murdered thousands of innocents and I wish that his regime will be replaced by a democratic regime. But the world cannot dictate to the Iraqis how and who will rule in their country. Any serious person knows that Ahmed Chalabi won’t be elected by the citizens of Iraq unless the Pentagon imposes him. I doubt if his regime, or any other pro-American regime, will win the trust of Iraq’s people or if he will be better for Iraq. We should not forget who helped Saddam to come to power... the US did it! So how can they promise that their new dictator won’t turn against them like Saddam did? Obviously they can’t. But for oil they’ll do anything. The Iraqis are the victims in this sad story.”

Two thousand people marched in Nazareth against the war on Iraq, waving red flags and shouting slogans against George Bush and Ariel Sharon. Ali, 19, thinks that the future of the humanity will be saved by socialism. “I was educated since I was 14 in the Communist Youth League. There were mistakes in the USSR but the Soviets helped the Palestinians. Today America is against us and for the Israeli state. Socialism can save us for another Naqba (Holocaust in Arabic) like we faced in the 1948 war. That’s why I am waving the red flag. Only this flag can save the peoples of Palestine and Iraq from their enemies.”

Students also gathered in the universities of Haifa and Tel Aviv to protest against the American/British aggression in Iraq. The demonstrators held placards against the war and shouted antiwar slogans. Sheli, 24, a student of Mathematics and Physics at the University of Tel Aviv, has been reading the *World Socialist Web Site* for half a year:

“I think your opposition against the war is important. The media is totally recruited to defend the interests of the US in the war. Fox News defines this war as a ‘liberation war’! The development of alternative media sources is essential in struggling to provide the truth regarding the war to the world’s peoples.

“The WSWS is doing an excellent job and I enjoy very much reading your daily reports on the war. The articles provided by your web site present the potential for developing a new movement which will fight for a democratic, socialist and liberated society—liberated from discrimination, wars, racism, nationalism and inequality.”

Shahar, 53, teaches philosophy:

“I am terribly worried that this war will bring more atrocities to our region. It will destabilise the entire political system in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia and Iran will be next, possibly Syria and Libya. It will end in a Third World War. And for what? For oil! Capitalism in the United States is in crisis and it must expand its market to the east. It is well known that if the US will take control over Iraq’s oil wealth, it will determine the oil prices and lead Europe to crises.

“The period we are going to face was never seen since the 1930s. It will be ended with fascism. I hope that young people will understand that if they won’t win back their world from the imperialists they will be plagued by wars. We must find a way out of this crisis.”



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