

# Sydney marchers denounce US-Israeli violence

**Our reporters**  
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About 6,000 people marched through Sydney on Saturday to protest against the US-Israeli violence in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. Lebanese women, teenagers and children were prominent in the crowd, which also included families that had fled the bombardment of towns and villages across Lebanon.

Placards denounced the slaughter taking place: “Stop the bloodbath of innocents”, “Stop the war crimes now” and “US and Israel, thank you for your precision bombs”. Many hand-painted slogans sheeted home the responsibility to Washington and drew connections to the “war on terror” and the US invasion of Iraq: “George Bush, Number 1 Terrorist”, “Most wanted terrorists: Olmert, Rice and Bush” and “Lebanon’s 9/11”.

The demonstration was smaller than the one held in Sydney two weeks earlier, and the reason became apparent once the pre-march rally commenced. The central theme of the organisers was to support the adoption of a US and French-drafted ceasefire resolution, promoting illusions that the major powers would rein in Israel and impose peace.

Chairperson Keyser Trad, a spokesman for Lebanese Muslims in Australia, began by proclaiming the “hope of peace” provided by that morning’s UN Security Council vote for the resolution. He declared that the “international community” was now calling for peace, even if Israel had not yet agreed.

In reality, the UN resolution seeks to legitimise Israel’s seizure of a so-called buffer zone in Lebanon, give the Israeli military more time to pound Lebanon and then impose a US-backed UN occupation force to permanently oust the Hezbollah movement.

Another rally chairperson, the Stop the War Coalition’s Pip Hinman, welcomed Greens Senator Kerry Nettle onto the platform to hail the “good news” that the UN resolution had been passed. “It’s important that all the parties have agreed,” she claimed, even if there was no immediate ceasefire. She urged people to “keep up the pressure” on the governments to end Israel’s occupations of Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank.

Three Labor Party figures were featured on the platform, despite the fact that Labor, led by Kim Beazley, has aligned itself with the Howard government in unconditionally supporting Israel’s aggression. Trad read a message from shadow cabinet minister Anthony Albanese, who declined to attend, while another frontbencher Laurie Ferguson spoke, as did his brother Andrew, the NSW state secretary of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union. All three failed to disassociate themselves from Labor’s position of condemning Hezbollah’s resistance to Israeli violence, while standing “all the way” with Israel’s so-called “self-defence”.

Not one speaker, including Nettle, the Labor trio and Islamic leaders, denounced the Howard government’s active support for the Israeli onslaught. Nor did they oppose the Australian government’s continuing participation in Washington’s military crimes throughout the Middle East by sending new contingents of troops to join the US-led occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. The entire perspective of the rally organisers was to appeal to Howard and Bush to restrain Israel.

Chairing the event, Hinman and another representative of the Socialist Alliance facilitated the sowing of illusions in the UN, the Howard government and the major powers by enthusiastically thanking each of the speakers for their contribution. At no stage did she outline any alternative perspective for Jewish and Arabic workers, or make any mention of a socialist program.

Socialist Equality Party supporters distributed copies of WSWs statements on the US-backed war and sold tickets for the SEP public meeting in Sydney on August 22, “Oppose US-Israeli war against Lebanon”. Marchers who spoke to the WSWs were looking for answers as to why the “international community” was acquiescing to Israel’s war crimes and how the mass of ordinary people could answer them.

Sam, a chef, originally from Egypt, said: “I came here to demand that Israel withdraw from Lebanon. This is a war about oil and money. The Israelis and the Bush

administration don't care how many people they kill, as long as they get control of the Middle East.

"This is mainly coming from Washington. Israel is its proxy in the Middle East. Without American arms and equipment and political support, Israel could never do this.

"How can we stop them? That's a good question. We have to change the governments, including the Arab governments in the Middle East. In Egypt, we have to get rid of the corrupt government of Hosni Mubarak

We have to protest and put pressure on them, but we have to change the whole structure of society. The United Nations cannot do anything, because the United States controls the UN.

"As long as there are huge corporations and money involved, there will be more killing and war. Civilians and poor people pay the price. After one month in Lebanon, and three years in Iraq, the US regards the people as less than animals. How can civilisation allow this in the 21st century?"

Samar and her daughter had been trapped in Beirut in the early days of the war, before being evacuated. "We woke up on July 13 to go to work. I work at the Beirut international airport and we had no idea of what was happening until I got a telephone call from my mother-in-law saying, 'Please don't leave the house because they're bombing the airport'. I said, 'You're kidding! Where is Hezbollah? At the airport? Hezbollah has nothing to do with the airport!'

"We had 70 international flights due that day, and all of a sudden we were in a war that we had absolutely nothing to do with. Israel has not hit Hezbollah, except maybe for a couple of places; it has targeted innocent civilians, women and children. They are trying to force all the Lebanese out of the country, just like they did in Palestine, so they can take over the whole Middle East.

"This is Bush, the butcher. This is not about Israeli self-defence. How can we hit Israel? We have no weapons, we have nothing. The Lebanese army is just sitting, being killed. The Israelis are using all sorts of weapons that we have never even heard of. They are testing US weapons against us.

"Bush said we wanted a democracy in Iraq, but look what he is doing to Iraq. He is butchering the people, hitting mosques, churches, children. The US accused Saddam Hussein of killing people, but they are killing everyone. And America made Saddam Hussein, just like they made Osama bin Laden."

A Lebanese woman from Bankstown said: "I think there is an international hidden agenda, which the average person cannot comprehend. Everyone thinks: how can people be killing civilians and destroying one country after another, particularly in the Middle East? The hidden agenda is power,

control, money and oil. Israel is a military terrorist state and it has been created in the Middle East to cause this unrest. It is dragging the whole world into a big mess.

"What is upsetting is to see countries that can do something or make a difference, such as the US and its allies like Britain and Australia, supporting the wrongdoers, supporting a terrorist state and killing innocent people in Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon.

"The war isn't about those two captured Israeli soldiers, because Israel wouldn't have destroyed the Lebanese infrastructure if that was the case. It doesn't suit Israel to have a country in the region that is well established. The Americans are financing the war and American taxpayers are paying for those weapons to kill civilians.

"Everyone is seeing the truth about what is happening in Lebanon and is disgusted. America has been opposing a ceasefire. Our biggest task is to educate people on the real political agenda behind what is happening, which has nothing to do with religion or race. In history you can see that imperialist nations are always hungry for power, so we need to educate people and redirect them in a struggle against this internationally."

Neil, who was born in Lebanon, said his family had been displaced from their homes in south Lebanon, and were now living in schools and shelters, with no income or aid relief.

"America is trying to dominate the Middle East and has puppet regimes, like Egypt and the Saudis and now Iraq. The US will put in democratic regimes when it suits them. When the Palestinian people elected Hamas the US would not accept it and said it was undemocratic. Of course, the US's democratic way is like Hosni Mubarak's leadership, where no one opposes him in the elections. That is the type of democracy the US wants in the Middle East."



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