Australia: Demonstrators denounce Israeli invasion of Gaza

Our reporters
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Demonstrations against the Israeli bombardment of Gaza were held in Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane and Canberra over the weekend—the second round of such protests in Australia's major cities in the past week.

Attended by workers and students, including many immigrant and Middle Eastern families, the largest rallies were held in Melbourne, where more than 5,000 participated, and in Sydney, where over 3,000 attended. Sydney protesters marched down George Street chanting: "In our thousands, in our millions, we are all Palestinian."

In Melbourne, demonstrators gathered outside the State Library and marched through the city centre. The rally was held under the banner of "Stop Israel's war on Palestine—Free Gaza." Participants carried banners and placards denouncing Israeli war crimes and condemning the US and Australian governments for their complicity. *World Socialist Web Site* reporters spoke with some those attending the Melbourne protest.

Yousef, from Palestine and currently studying mechanics in Melbourne, drew a connection between Washington's support for the invasion of Gaza and its intrigues throughout the region, including in Iraq, where the US-backed government is currently fighting Al Qaeda-linked forces from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) that have played a major role in the US-supported operation to oust the Assad regime in Syria.

"The US is sponsoring Israel big time." Yousef said. "I believe the US is sponsoring ISIS. They are killing everyone there in Iraq. The US is playing the same game again. Osama Bin Laden was with the CIA 100 percent. They then used him [as the pretext] to attack Afghanistan in 2001. They are doing the same thing now in Syria as well."

Hana, an office administration worker, expressed her anger over the Israeli attacks on Gaza: "I'm against this war. If these people don't have a voice, we have to give them a voice. I'm very passionate about it, because at the end of the day, innocent children are being killed every day. I've been coming to these protests since I was 16, and I've just turned 29. It makes me angry. The UN is doing nothing about it. All the Muslim world leaders are doing nothing about it. Egypt doesn't care because they have shut their border. They've told them, you need to go back and die in that little strip."

Morteza, a former building industry worker originally from Iran, denounced the crimes being committed by the Israeli military. "In 1982 they invaded southern Lebanon," he said.

"Everyone hated it, this was disgusting. But how many more incursions have there been since? They treat the 20 percent Arab-Israeli population so poorly. But these people in the Gaza, these people have nothing; they don't even have drinking water. So what is going to happen? Is it going to be every two or three months they start bombarding them? The policy seems to be to decimate the population."

Morteza said religious sectarianism was used to divide workers in the Middle East.

"This is a fabricated war between the Shi'ite and the Sunnis," he explained. "I am Shi'ite by birth but I don't see the Sunnis as enemies. Why should we pull a gun on each other? … The US set off ISIS. Where did they come from? ISIS didn't seem to exist until a couple of months ago.

"How many other groups are being armed by the US to do their dirty work? As long as so-called enemies of the US such as the Taliban are doing the work for them, they don't care. That is what they have set them up for … They go in there and absolutely wreck the fabric of

society in Iraq. OK, Saddam Hussein was a dictator, he invaded Iran and a million people were killed. I am not pro-Saddam at all. But the US goes in there and they break up everything.”

Morteza said US military aggression was being used to divert American workers' attention from growing domestic social tensions. “We know, the American working class and middle class are really struggling, with their healthcare and their incomes. I'm pretty sure the vast majority of people in the US are struggling. This is pretty much going on in all the developed countries. Australia is not as bad as the US yet, but it is going that way. Here there is pressure put on job seekers, on medical benefits, all those things.”

Aldina, a high school student, and **Jeton**, who is studying at university, came to the protest together. Jeton said: “A lot of innocent children are being killed, that's what affects me the most.”

Commenting on the role of US imperialism in the Middle East, Aldina said: “They are just trying to profit. The war in Iraq has been going on for so long. When I look at the US in all these wars, it is inhumane. America seems to be driven by money, oil and profits. People pay their taxes and it goes to wars. It should go to something else. They go from one conflict to the next. It's like a domino effect.”

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