

UK: Leeds protest against Gaza war condemns BBC blackout

Our reporters
22 July 2014

Demonstrators gathered in Leeds, West Yorkshire on Sunday to protest the Israeli bloodbath underway in the Gaza Strip.

More than 1,000 turned out for the demonstration, which was organised by the Leeds Palestine Solidarity Campaign. They marched to the regional headquarters of the BBC to protest against the lack of coverage of the brutal attack on the population of Gaza by the Israeli armed forces.

The march was comprised mainly of young people, many carrying homemade placards expressing their outrage, such as “BBC=British Brainwashing Channel.” Protesters shouted “We are all Palestinians now.”

The Leeds demonstration came just one day after an estimated 100,000 people took to the streets of London. The mass protest was not reported on the main BBC news.

A list of the names of the people—many young children—known to have been killed in the last days was read at the rally.

Barbara Slaughter, veteran Trotskyist and a member of the Socialist Equality Party (UK) was one of those able to address the protest.

Slaughter began by saying that she spoke on behalf of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and that her remarks were drawn from its statement, published on the *World Socialist Web Site*, which had been widely distributed at the protest.

Reiterating the ICFI’s denunciation of the ground invasion of Israel, Slaughter stressed that what was underway in Gaza is a calculated war crime against a defenceless population. Comparing conditions in Gaza to those in the Warsaw Ghetto, she said that 1.8 million Palestinians are trapped in a tiny strip of land due to the inhumane blockades imposed by the Zionist state and Egypt’s military regime.

Listing the disproportionate strength of the Israel

Defense Forces and the carnage already caused, Slaughter explained how Gaza is being hit from land, sea and air by tank and artillery fire, airstrikes and Israeli warships. Electricity and water supplies have been cut off, and food is running out.

Citing the ICFI statement, Slaughter continued, “The actions of Netanyahu’s regime testify to the complete moral disintegration of the defenders of Zionism and the utter dead-end of its reactionary perspective of carving out a sectarian Jewish capitalist state in the Middle East. The Zionist attempt to channel the immense class and social tensions within Israel into crushing the decades-long resistance of the Palestinian population has assumed genocidal dimensions.”

Israel’s crimes, however, depend on a number of accomplices, Slaughter explained. Not only the United States and the European powers, but Hamas itself, have no answer to the crisis other than bankrupt appeals to the very Arab bourgeois forces and the imperialist-controlled United Nations that have betrayed the Palestinian people.

Slaughter received a huge cheer for her insistence that the atrocities in Gaza would intensify opposition around the world to the ruling elites. This was the only way forward, she stressed: forging the unity of the working class internationally—including the Arab and Jewish working class—in a struggle against imperialism and war.

Her remarks were greeted enthusiastically and afterwards many people came up to thank her for her speech and to register their support.

Mumtaz Khan, whose son was one of the organisers of the demonstration, spoke to the WSWWS.

“Israel claims to speak for Jews of the whole world. The reality is that they only speak for the Zionists. The majority of Jews are either non-Zionist or anti-Zionist. There is a book, I think it is called *Zionism in the age of dictatorship* [Lenni Brenner], which pointed out that the Zionists colluded with Mussolini and other fascists to

secure the safety of the leaders of the Zionist movement, but cared nothing for the Jewish masses who were allowed to perish—the trade unionists, the socialists, the communists, the anti-Zionists along with millions more.

“Gaza is under siege. The comparison with the Warsaw Ghetto is very true. They are not allowed to travel; they cannot get the commodities they need. They cannot build because they cannot obtain building materials plus the Israelis are destroying all the buildings that do exist, forcing people to run away. One reason for all of this is because they have discovered that there is oil off-shore.

“All my kids are here at the demonstration, including my nephews and nieces. Day after day they are seeing the bombings and dead bodies being pulled out of the rubble. These events are politicising them, but in a good way. And today they are seeing so many different people on the demo—young and old, Asians, whites, Jews, are all here. It is very important.”

Maruf was at the demo with her daughters “We can’t just sit back and watch this genocide happening. We want peace in Palestine and I am sure that the majority of Jewish people want peace too, and support the right of Palestinians to have a state.

The Zionists have a strong lobby in the United States. I don’t know what they want to achieve. Why are they imprisoning 11-year-old children? Why are they terrorising thousands of children? This will not lead to peace. ‘Peace’ has an opposite meaning in Israeli rhetoric. It means ‘War’.”

Jan and Carlo spoke to the WSW

Jan said, “I am not a political person. We don’t usually come out on things like this. But this is way over the top, isn’t it?”

“The aggression and heavy-handed tactics Israel is using against the Palestinian people is terrible. In this day and age, innocent civilians getting killed like this is no good for any part of the world.

“And the BBC is not reporting the demos. There were 100,000 marching in London yesterday but it was not on the BBC news. Why? Everything is being focused on the plane crash in Ukraine, which is a tragedy, but why are they not talking about the killing of the Palestinian people as well? Not telling us the truth fuels people’s anger, including mine.”

Alba and Lena also took part. Alba carried a bloodstained representation of a dead baby in her arms. She explained, “We have come here to stand in solidarity with the Palestinians and also to protest against the indifference of the BBC to the massacre that is taking

place in Gaza. People come up to me and say that what I am doing is really scary. But what about the reality of what is happening in Gaza? That reality is being ignored by the BBC. Besides the dead, hundreds of children are being traumatised and their lives destroyed.”

Paulet said, “I came here to make my voice heard. I think there should be a movement of people all over the world. The UN Declaration of Human Rights claims to give rights to every human being on the planet. But it is not so. They are hypocrites. We need a complete change of the whole world governing system.”

Yvonne Sibbald told the WSW, “I am a resident of the UK. I am retired and have been a trade unionist all my life. I believe in the right to freedom and justice for everyone who lives on this planet. I view the situation in Palestine with increasing horror. It’s beyond the laws of reason that the rest of the world can look on and watch the Israeli government breaking international law by the continual building of settlements in the West Bank and oppressing the Palestinian people in every aspect of their daily lives.

“It’s a minority who are driving this policy through in Israel. In Israel there is a big difference between rich and poor. If there are worldwide sanctions it will be the working class that will be disproportionately affected. I think this should be borne in mind.

“I think the comparison between Gaza and the Warsaw Ghetto is a fair one. They are segregated. They are confined. They cannot live where they have always lived traditionally. They can’t get medicines and the necessities of life. The Israeli government is attempting to destroy a people.

“And now they are using the excuse of the killing of the three lads—which was a tragedy for their families—to take over even more land in Gaza and to completely take apart any resistance to what they want to do.”



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