Protests spread across Europe against Israeli war on Gaza

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On Friday and Saturday, thousands of people marched across Europe to protest the Israeli military onslaught in Gaza strip that has killed over 1,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, and wounded over 6,000. Anti-Gaza war protests took place in several European countries including Britain, Germany, France and Ireland.

Over 60,000 people took to the streets in London, marching from the Israeli Embassy to Parliament.

Protesters carried banners and placards reading "Freedom for Palestine" and "Stop Israeli state terror," calling for an arms embargo to be imposed on Israel and for Prime Minister David Cameron to "stop supporting Israeli war crimes." Last week, the Cameron government reiterated its stance that it supported the right of Israel to "defend itself."

Protests were also held in more than 20 cities across the country besides London, including Birmingham, Bradford, Liverpool, and Sheffield.

In Ireland, thousands of people took to the streets in Dublin, Derry, Limerick, Cork, and Waterford calling for an end to Israeli violence in Gaza. In Dublin, around 3,000 marched from the Spire in O'Connell Street, to the Israeli embassy.

Around 2,000 people joined anti-Gaza war protests in Germany's capital, Berlin, and other protests were also held in cities including Frankfurt, Stuttgart and Mannheim. In Berlin, thousands of police were deployed, ostensibly to halt the violence, after the media and the political establishment branded the pro-Gaza protest as anti-Semitic and violent.

Protestors held banners reading, "Child killer Israel," "USA supports, Germany finances, Israel kills," "Stop the child and woman massacre in Palestine," "We [Germans] are ashamed of our government's attitude," and "We will not give up shouting out for Gaza."

As many as 2,000 people, including Jews, gathered in the German city of Frankfurt's Romer Square, chanting "No to war, yes to peace," and "Freedom for Palestine."

On Friday, West Berlin's main boulevard of Kurfuerstendamm witnessed a demonstration by 1,200 pro-Palestinian protesters, mainly from Germany's Muslim community on Al-Quds Day, the final Friday of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Members of the German Jewish community joined the protest against Israeli policy. One protester carried a placard in English reading, "Criticizing Israel for its human right abuses does not equate to Anti-Semitism."

Several protests also took place in Switzerland, Belgium and Italy.

Around 5,000 people gathered on Republic Square in Paris, defying a government ban on the protest, as protests also took place in French cities including Marseille, Lyon, and Lille. Protesters expressed both their anger at the Israeli military offensive in Gaza and the complicity of the Socialist Party (PS) government of French President François Hollande, with its anti-democratic ban on anti-war protests.

Vanessa, 38, attended the rally with her nine-month-old daughter and said: "My daughter is alive and safe, but children in Gaza are dead."

Another demonstrator said that Gaza faced a disproportionate and one-sided massacre carried out by Israel: "I hit you with my hand, you hit me with a boulder."

A contingent of 2,000 police brutally attacked the Paris protest, firing tear gas and seeking to break it up. Seventy protesters were arrested and thirty detained. Police claimed they had been targeted with stones and other projectiles.

The bourgeoisies of Europe, which are all implicated by their support for the Israeli state's offensive against

Gaza, view the surge of mass anti-war sentiment against the Israeli state's mass murder in Gaza with fear and contempt. The European Union's July 22 statement denounced Hamas' firing of rockets as "criminal and unjustifiable," but did not issue a single word against the mass murder of defenseless Palestinian civilians. Instead, it recognised "Israel's legitimate right to defend itself" and "Israel's legitimate security needs."

Although the Paris rally was peaceful, Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve claimed there were "very serious risks of violence" at the protest, and that police had confiscated "nightsticks, mortars, and brass knuckles" from protesters. He said, "Violence, especially anti-Semitic violence, exists and we must look it in the face."

The charge of anti-Semitism against the protests is a repulsive political falsification, rejected by the protesters, many of whom have carried signs stressing that their opposition to the crimes of the Israeli state did not signify hatred of the Jewish people. The construction of a political amalgam between opposition to the mass murder in Gaza and anti-Semitism is an attempt to discredit protests against bloody acts of repression of the Palestinian people that have shocked the world.

This is particularly hypocritical and false, as the European powers are relying in their intervention in Ukraine on fascist organisations like the Svoboda Party or Right Sector, who glorify Ukrainian nationalists who worked with the Nazis during World War II and the Holocaust.

Omar Alsoum, a member of Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM) who helped organise the protests in Paris, accused the French government of "explicit sabotage," insisting that the organisers had ensured that "this demonstration would take place in a dignified fashion." According to Alsoum, two people who arrived with megaphones were arrested even before the rally began, and that "people who were calling for calm during baton charges by riot police were arrested."

Protesters denounced the French government's attempt to ban the protests and its allegations that the protesters were violent.

"It's a scandal that they're banning protests. It's our right. We were attacked with tear gas even though we didn't do anything," said 24-year old temp worker Sabrina.