

Anti-Gaza war demo in Manchester, UK

Tony Robson
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On August 3, hundreds participated in a demonstration in central Manchester, northwest England against the Israeli military siege of Gaza. The demonstration was organised by Stop the War Coalition.

Protestors chanted “We are all Palestinians” and “1-2-3-4 Occupation no more / 5-6-7-8 Israel is a Terror State”, as they made their way from All Saints Park to a rally in Piccadilly Gardens.

However, the rally at the end of the protest in no way expressed the outrage of those assembled at the bloody slaughter underway in Gaza. The preoccupation of Stop the War Coalition, which organised the demonstration, is to corral opposition to the war behind the Labour Party. To this end, the platform was given over to a number of speakers from the Labour Party to posture as opponents of Israel’s murderous actions.

In the last days, Labour leader Ed Miliband has mouthed criticisms of Israel, but only after he had insisted that Israel had the right to “self-defence.”

On the platform Julie Ward, Labour member of the European Parliament for North West England, promoted the European Union (EU) as a defender of the Palestinians. She praised EU sanctions against “settlement” products while remaining silent on the fact that the EU issued a statement on July 22 endorsing the Israeli military assault.

Penny Hicks, Manchester Stop the War convenor chairing the rally, read approvingly from a letter by the right-wing Labour MP for Manchester, Gorton, Gerald Kaufman, who has called for economic sanctions against Israel.

Hicks went on to explain that the strategy of Stop the War Coalition was to put (UK Prime Minister) David “Cameron in a bad place, like with Syria”, adding that public opinion will not stand for it.

In order to promote the illusion that the war criminals in Jerusalem, Washington and London will yield to

public opinion, events in Gaza were presented as a single issue of humanitarian concern unrelated to the eruption of militarism and war globally.

No reference was made to the advanced preparations that have been made by the US, Britain and the EU in the past few weeks to place NATO on a war footing against Russia, which carries the threat of a nuclear war. Equally nothing was said of the rising death toll of civilians in eastern Ukraine, as the Western-backed Ukrainian armed forces pound the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk into submission in what amount to no lesser war crimes.

A Socialist Equality Party campaign team distributed the International Committee of the Fourth International and *World Socialist Web Site* statements *The Gaza war crimes and the bankruptcy of nationalism* and *Socialism and the Fight Against Imperialist War* and spoke to those protesting who related the developments in Gaza to the wider issues of militarism and war.

Sarah came from Cumbria to take part in the demonstration, a round trip of some 200 miles. She said, “Nothing will happen unless people stand up. The media coverage has been a sham, totally biased. The fact that [Channel 4 news presenter] Jon Snow went out of his boundaries to report the truth made me realise how bad it is.

“I am aware of the financial connections between the US, Britain and Israel. I think that determines their relationship, especially in a capitalist society.”

Torik Holmes, a part-time student, said, “The media keep on saying the situation in the Middle East is complex but Gaza is one of the biggest open-air prisons in the world. It is just wrong, over 1,600 killed. Ed Miliband has said nothing. When was the last time a Labour leader said anything? Tony Blair is put forward as an expert on the Middle East. What are his credentials?”

His friend Chris Bryan-Smith added in relation to

Israel and its treatment of the Palestinians, “It is genocide described as self defence.”

Alistair Crump, a student from Flixton, Greater Manchester, attended the march with his brother Adrian who works at the McDonald’s fast-food chain. Alistair said, “It is a war crime and no one is doing anything. This is my first demonstration. Over a thousand Palestinians have been killed in Gaza and 56 Israelis—all but two of the Israeli casualties are soldiers.”

Alistair said he read WikiLeaks and opposed the frame-up of the organisation’s founder, Julian Assange. “It is sad he [Assange] has been forced to take shelter in the Ecuadorian Embassy. He exposed war crimes, soldiers killing civilians in Iraq. But he is being persecuted for informing us of issues we have a right to know about. Money wasted on war could be better invested. I read that \$40 billion could stop starvation in the world but trillions are spent on so-called defence.”

Adrian commented, “It is like a sick experiment—who gets liberated, who gets oppressed. I read a piece in the *Guardian* about Afghanistan. It said that 50 percent of children were so starved that they will have brain damage in later life. I think the military intervention in Afghanistan is about control of resources and money.”

Hassan, a former student in journalism, attended the protest with his father. He explained, “You have to go down to the root of the issue, it is all about money. With the destabilisation of the Middle East all the imperialist countries are interested in is natural resources.

“People in power do not want us to understand politics. I think Labour, Liberals and all the mainstream parties are cut from the same cloth. They want to keep the rich rich and the poor poor. MP’s do not represent the people; they have no empathy.

“Fox News is an example of how the media try and play on people’s stupidity. There was a report from 2010 about the discovery of lithium in Afghanistan. Is it supposed to be just a coincidence that this resource was just found—after they invaded the country on the pretext of a war of terror.

“I read somewhere that history is written by the victors. We have been taught a version according to Britain and British colonialism. This is not the full story.

“I do not know if protest is enough, but you cannot

cancel our voices. That is how revolutions happen. You should question everything, do your own research and think for yourself.”



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