

# Continuing protests against Gaza massacre in Australia

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Up to 2,500 people in Sydney and 600 in Melbourne marched on Saturday in opposition to the continued bombardment of the Gaza by the Israel Defence Forces after a three-day ceasefire ended. Almost 2,000 Palestinians have been killed and at least 60,000 have had their homes destroyed by Israeli missiles.

Protesters chanted “1-2-3-4 we don’t want your bloody war, 5-6-7-8 Israel is a terror state,” and “Israel, USA, how many kids did you kill today?” and carried home-made banners denouncing atrocities committed in Gaza.

In Sydney the rally marched to the US consulate before returning to Town Hall to view a street play depicting the bombing of Gaza. The organisers had been denied permission by NSW police to protest outside Fairfax Media for its role in covering up Israeli crimes. In Melbourne protesters marched through the city after listening to speakers at the State Library.

The rallies were called as part of an international “day of rage” by the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. The BDS’s program dovetails with the “two state solution” that would serve to entrench the divisions between Arabs and Jews while creating a prison for Palestinians. BDS involves various Palestinian nationalist organisations, trade unions and protest groups seeking an accommodation with Israel and the US.

The rally organisers in Melbourne and Sydney attempted to divert the legitimate and deeply felt opposition to the war crimes being committed by Israeli into bankrupt protests and support for the BDS campaign.

The Sydney rally was chaired by Ophelia Haragli, who described herself as a human rights activist, and Damian Ridgwell, a member of pseudo-left Socialist Alternative and the Palestine Action Group.

Ridgwell denounced Israel and the US but avoided any reference to the Australian Labor Party or the Arab regimes’ support for the Zionist state. Israel’s atrocities would not be possible without the support of Arab

regimes, particularly Egypt, which maintains a total blockade of Gaza.

Ridgwell declared that the blood of the Palestinian people was on the hands of US President Barack Obama and Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott as well as “every member of this Liberal government.” But the Abbott government has the bipartisan support of the opposition Labor Party. Moreover, the former Rudd Labor government fully endorsed the 2009 massacre by Israel that left over 1,400 Palestinians dead, stating, like the present Coalition government, that Israel had the right to defend themselves from Hamas.

Introducing the last speaker, Ridgwell said the rally should demand removal of the Israeli ambassador in Australia. Paula Sanchez, a member of the Latin American Social Forum Australia, listed various South American countries that have expelled their Israeli ambassadors and called on the Australian government to do the same. This token gesture will do nothing to stop the onslaught and is aimed at promoting the illusion that national governments can take the place of a unified struggle against Zionism by Jews, Arabs and the entire international working class.

The bankruptcy of this campaign was revealed in Melbourne where federal Greens MP Adam Bandt told the rally: “It’s time that [Australian PM] Tony Abbott says to President Obama that so long as you are helping the Israeli government put your rockets into Palestine, we will not be helping put your rockets on our warships, we will not be helping you put your troops in our bases in Darwin.”

What a fraud! In 2011 Bandt and the Greens propped up the minority Gillard Labor government, which agreed to establish a US marine base in Darwin as part of the Obama administration’s aggressive “pivot to Asia” against China. Bandt does not criticise the decision, but in a rhetorical flourish declares that the basing arrangement

should be used in a futile attempt to put pressure on Washington.

Socialist Equality Party supporters distributed copies of the *World Socialist Web Site* statement “The slaughter in Gaza: A warning to the international working class” at the Sydney and Melbourne rallies.

In Sydney, WSWS reporters spoke with **Hatim** and **Mahmoud**, who left Gaza one year ago. Their cousin **Sam**, who has been in Australia for seven years, said: “They’re trying to take everything from the Palestinians, especially those that live in Gaza—they are taking away all of their rights as normal persons ...

“The people in Gaza should have the right to live, to eat, to travel in and out freely, but for the last eight years all of the Palestinians have been the victim of a big campaign, it’s like a detention centre for them. The borders are closed at Israel’s side, and they are closed at the Egyptian side, and they don’t have any of the services or things that are needed to live.”

Sam and his cousins said they had been unable to contact their families in Gaza for the past two weeks. “There is no power, no phone lines, no Internet, no water—they are separating them from life, from all communications and the economy is very hard.”

The major powers, the Arab governments and the United Nations, “all support Israel,” Sam said. “They’re letting poor people die, they’re killing women and kids and old men, that’s the worst part. They’ve got the green light from the USA and almost half of the Arab countries as well.

“[Egyptian President Abdel Fattah] el-Sisi is 100 percent supporting Israel. Kuwait, they work for them. Saudi Arabia the same. I’m not surprised that Ban Ki Moon is supporting those with the power—that’s normal. We are used to this.”

**Nisa** said: “We had to protest just because it’s so horrible what is happening but the world doesn’t seem to care. Tony Abbott actually called Netanyahu and publicly commiserated with the three young Israeli men that died yet all these people are dying in Palestine and not a peep from anyone. It’s like there’s a separate law for them and another for everyone else and it’s outrageous.

“America ‘cares’ when it’s in their economic and political interest. As far as the US is concerned, other countries are like pawns in a chess game. It’s no different from the colonial powers of 100 to 120 years ago, the only difference is that they claimed ‘white man’s burden,’ America doesn’t even pretend.”

**Robert** said: “My understanding is that women and

children and men from Palestine are being killed and they don’t have the adequate means to protect themselves against the sophisticated weapons that the IDF have and it’s a war crime. It’s now war weapons being used against civilians.

“I’m aware that the US has been active in arms sales to many, many countries very aggressively for many years and this is what happens.”

**Mac**, a student from Malaysia, said: “The world media is dominated by the US and they can distort the truth. One of my friends was killed in the MH 17 flight. There is no concrete evidence that this was done by Russia. George Bush used the pretext of 9/11 to say that the Iraqis had weapons and he used that to invade Iraq. I think they will say that Russia has WMD [weapons of mass destruction] or something like that and they will use that to invade a part of Russia. They claimed that they went into Iraq and Afghanistan to stop terrorism. For me, it is about oil and money.”

**Ameera**, a Melbourne University community health student, said: “It’s not fair to say that it’s all Israeli’s. Probably the majority of Israelis are disgusted by what their government is doing. Israel would have huge issues of inequality if they’re pumping so much money into war. The entire world will enter war unless something major happens.”

**Abu**, a trained chef from Bangladesh, said: “What the British did in India the US is now doing all around the world. The US must take care of their own problems back home—their poverty and economic problems. These problems are still there. They may be a superpower but their people aren’t happy with their policies. They pretend that they’re taking care of the other countries. The politicians understand what’s going on. It’s not just a product of Obama, but also of Bush, it’s a product of US policy.”



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