

Over 100,000 protest in defence of Gaza in South Africa

Our reporter
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Saturday saw a massive protest in Cape Town, South Africa, opposing Israel's bloody offensive against Gaza.

Most media reports cited police claims that there were 50,000 demonstrators. But the *Mail & Guardian* described the demonstration as “one of the biggest Cape Town has seen”.

Its reporter spoke of a “huge crowd, which stretched across most of the inner city”, who “chanted, sang and held aloft banners and posters calling for an end to the violence in the Gaza Strip ... While an accurate number of participants was not readily available, a *Mail & Guardian* photographer in attendance estimated there were ‘well over 100,000, possible [sic] even close to 200,000 people’. The march is believed to have been one of the biggest, if not the biggest, the city has seen”.

The protest was organised by the National Coalition for Palestine (NC4P), made up of religious and civil society organisations, trade unions and political parties, including the Muslim Judicial Council and the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the African National Congress Youth League. The ANC and COSATU are two parts of the ruling Triple Alliance government, along with the South African Communist Party (SACP).

This has not stopped the group as a whole demanding “decisive action from the South African government against the Israeli attacks, killings, displacement and destruction of the Gaza Strip”—although the ANC/COSATU contingent at least does so to provide the ANC and its partners with a de facto amnesty for their complicity with Israel and the United States.

One of the featured celebrity figures on the protest was Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who has urged Israel and Hamas to be “more courageous” and to try to “bridge their differences with forgiveness as a salve”.

Tutu has backed demands that major corporations, including Hewlett Packard, G4S, Caterpillar, ABP and Veolia, disinvest from Israel, as happened in some instances with apartheid South Africa. He counterposes exerting pressure on the bourgeoisie to the class struggle that must be waged by Palestinian, Arab and Jewish workers—in alliance with workers the world over—against imperialism and its regional puppets. This is the same perspective that enabled the bourgeois nationalist ANC to come to power with a remit for preserving capitalism in South Africa and to preside over what remains one of the most unequal societies on the face of the planet.

The marchers themselves drew specific comparisons between the Israeli regime's treatment of the Palestinians and that meted out to the black population under the racist apartheid regime. Protesters chanted “Shame on Israel”, “Israel is an apartheid state”, “Stop Israeli murder”, with some wearing T-shirts reading “Africa understands colonialism”.

The protest ended at the gates of parliament, where one banner was held aloft demanding, “South African government must stop selling arms to Israel” and another accused ANC President Jacob Zuma of suffering from “historical amnesia”.



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