

Protests across Europe against Israeli war on Gaza

Our reporters
16 May 2021

Workers and young people joined protests across Europe Saturday, including in London, Paris, Berlin and Madrid, to oppose Israel's bombardment of the Palestinian population in Gaza.

The demonstrations coincided with Palestinian Nakba (Catastrophe Day)—marking the founding of the state of Israel, through the forced expulsion of 760,000 Palestinians from their villages and homes in 1948.

The largest protest took place in London where tens of thousands gathered at Hyde Park and marched to the Israeli embassy in Kensington. Protesters chanted slogans including “Stop Bombing Gaza”, “Israel is a terror state” and “Free, Free, Palestine”. Many brought many homemade placards. Police arrested 13 people during the day including several outside Israel's embassy. One arrested woman was set on by at least six police officers in full riot gear.

Protests were held in at least 30 towns and cities in the UK over the weekend.

In Germany, more than 3,000 people protested in Berlin, with marches in the Neukoelln southern district of the city, which includes a large Turkish and Arabic community. There were also protests in Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Leipzig, Hamburg and elsewhere.

In France, the interior ministry, which regularly undercounts protests numbers, claimed that 22,000 people protested across the country, including more than 3,000 in Paris. The Macron government banned demonstrations in the lead-up to Saturday and ordered a violent police crackdown on the Paris protest. Parisian police chief Didier Lallemand ordered more than 4,200 police onto the streets. Paris's northern 18th arrondissement, home to a large working-class and Arabic community, saw riot officers stationed at most street corners, and the main avenue where the march was planned was closed.

Tear gas and water cannons were used throughout the afternoon. At La Chapelle metro station, riot police charged and a 22-year-old protester was hospitalised after she was hit in the back by a sting-ball grenade.

Thousands joined a protest at Puerta del Sol square in Madrid, Spain. Hundreds protested in cities in the Netherlands, including outside the parliament building in The Hague.

WSWS reporters spoke with protesters in Britain.

In Manchester, several thousand gathered in Platt Fields park in the Rusholme district which has a large Arabic and Indian sub-continent population and marched through the main thoroughfares

of Wilmslow Road and Oxford Road.

Karim, who brought a placard reading “Israel is a terrorist State-Free Palestine”, said, “There is a siege going on in Gaza and it's been going on for years. The whole world is watching and not doing anything about it. It's our humanitarian duty to come out and demonstrate that there is no justice. People like [US President] Joe Biden and [Israel Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu are the cause of all this.

“It is a kind of ethnic cleansing and it started in 1947. Gradually they want to kill, murder or physically remove people from the territory. They have carried out a deliberate provocation at the al-Aqsa mosque, a deliberate provocation of a land grab.

“Everyone could have lived together in peace. Israel's fascist stance today, supported by America is very unfortunate.”

Karim said he did not agree with slanders that opposing Israel's war crimes was anti-Semitism. “They [Israel] want it be like that because they don't want criticism of all the nasty things they are doing. They said the same about [not criticising apartheid] South Africa.”

Khalid, who works in the aircraft industry, held a placard reading “Lift the siege of Palestine-Stop bombing Palestine”. He said, “Israel should know better. They know how it feels to be exterminated. They had no homeland and came to Palestine as guests and now they have taken the Palestinians homes and are trying to throw them out. The Palestinians have no water, they have no food. You have got people like [UK Prime Minister] Boris Johnson and presidents colluding with Israel and giving them money to destroy human life.”

Mizak, from Iran, said, “There are no human rights when it comes to Palestinians. People should have their freedom to be able to just live their lives in their houses. But whenever you talk about freedom, they make it like, are you going against the Jews? That's not right, because if it was happening to the Jews, I would be with them as well, even if it was against my own people. We literally just see the videos of Israel bombing Gaza and just cry. They can't protect themselves or defend themselves.

“I was telling my friend yesterday if Jewish people carried on supporting the rights of Palestinians, they would kill them as well because they don't care if it's Jews or Muslims.”

Student **Faryal** and **Annabella** attended together with a friend.

Faryal said, “I have always supported Palestine. It's been oppressed for so many years and the West doesn't even look at it. They know they can't condemn this because they've done things

just like it. They give Israel military support, aid, money.”

Annabella said, “People dying anywhere is not OK. This isn’t the only place it is happening, but if it’s happening over years, like in Gaza, then it’s easier to let it slide. It doesn’t matter what your ethnic background or religion is, we are humans and killing is never OK. And any kind of militaristic government will never be OK.”

In Sheffield, hundreds participated in a protest at the city’s City Hall.

Shekha, a journalism student at Sheffield University, said, “I’ve been following what’s happening in Palestine for a while. It really angers me what Israel is doing to them. It’s ethnic cleansing.

“If you criticise Israel, you’re called anti-Semitic. It’s so clearly not anti-Semitism to criticise what they are doing to the Palestinians. It’s not anything to do with their religion, it’s the actions they are committing. There are millions of Jews around the world who oppose what the Israeli state is doing.

“Coverage in the media is awful, it’s so biased. It’s basically a mouthpiece for Israel. Calling people terrorists who are defending their homes, it’s ridiculous.”

Shekha added, “I think socialism is definitely the way forward. Capitalism is so ingrained. It is going to take a lot to change it. People need to become aware of what capitalism is really about. I think revolution is really the only way to get out of capitalism, I don’t see any other way.”

Dekhra’s family is originally from Yemen. She said, “We are here to show support for our brothers and sisters in Palestine and show they are not alone. What is happening to them should not go on any longer; 73 years is enough.

“It’s Palestinian kids today, but one day it could be my kids and that is something I’m totally against. Any decent human being should stand up and say ‘No’ to what is happening in Palestine.

“People are divided because of nationalism but we are here to say we are against war, in opposition to the crimes being committed against innocent people. The people should be allowed to live peacefully together.”

Harris, originally from Greece, said, “The key to this is the occupation. The freedom of the Palestinians is not respected. The BBC is just propaganda, it presents a distorted picture. It talks about terrorism, but the opposing sides are not equal. The Palestinians are not free, they are under occupation.

“We all know who rules the world, America. The Palestinians have been abandoned by the Arab countries who claimed to speak up for them, they are all doing deals with Israel.”

In Leeds, protests were held outside the BBC’s offices and at the Briggate shopping precinct.

Outside the BBC, **Lewis**, a city centre worker, said, “I think the Israeli government’s actions against the people of Palestine is disgusting. The US and UK governments’ support of it is despicable. I don’t think we as a western free country should be encouraging this kind of colonialism and land grabs and killing innocent civilians. I just can’t stand by my government’s support of this militarized nationalism in Palestine.

“We have to be careful that we’re not condemning the people of Israel. We are condemning the Israeli government. At the end of the day this isn’t a war to do with religion. It’s a war to do with

settlers and the victims of the settlements.”

Civil servant **Imran** said, “These evictions are thefts, that they [Israel’s government] say are legal. They are calling them settlers, but they are not. If people from abroad came to your house and kicked you out of your house, what would you call that?

“We came to demonstrate outside the BBC because we want our media to report the news equally not to be biased. To use the correct terminology, this is genocide. They need to use the words persecution, theft and genocide because that’s what’s happening.

“The BBC is something we pay for. Report the news as it is, not the constant bias towards Israel. They say how many rockets fell on Tel Aviv, etc., but do not report the other side. They say so many people have been killed but do not say they are Palestinian people... We have come to stand up for people around the world who can’t speak up for themselves.”

In Glasgow, hundreds protested in the city’s main George Square. IT worker **Daniel** said, “Every day innocent children are being bombed.” Of the sentiment in the population, he said “On Thursday we saw some kind heartedness with people stopping a deportation [of an asylum seeker] in Glasgow. There was a protest in Edinburgh yesterday, Glasgow today, we just need to keep at it.”

Danielle, studying for her masters, said, ‘I am from Lebanon. Yesterday was the anniversary of the Nakba and for 73 years the Palestinian people have been oppressed, have been silenced, have been murdered, no matter if they are children, women, men, it doesn’t matter.

“When things like this happen, there are protests like this, but then, after a while, things die down. But I feel the problem now is much more serious and Israel is not stopping, obviously, and is becoming more and more violent, so maybe this time it will be different.’

Teacher **Cathal** said, ‘It seems pretty much to me as if Israel are the aggressors in this situation. The US came out and backed Israel, they are quite close allies. The UK has sold weapons to Israel. There is distinct possibility that these weapons are being used right now on the Palestinian people.’

Shaz said, ‘The mainstream media is not showing a balanced view of what is happening. You get a better idea of this from people that are on the ground, posting on Instagram and Facebook, you can see what is happening in real time. It is quite heartbreaking... This is the reason we are here... to voice our concerns and anger at what is happening right now, the world needs to come together.”



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