

Thousands protest Israel's bombings in Gaza throughout Australia

Our correspondents
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An estimated 10,000 people joined rallies and marches in Sydney and Melbourne last Saturday to protest against the barbaric bombing of Gaza by the Israeli Defence Force and the repression of Palestinians on the occupied West Bank.

About 2,000 demonstrators also gathered and marched in Brisbane on Friday night, and protests or vigils were held across Australia, including in Hobart, Adelaide and Canberra.

As well as denouncing the latest atrocities committed by the Zionist regime in Israel, they commemorated the 73rd anniversary of the Nakba, also known as the Palestinian Catastrophe, when more than 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homes following the creation of Israel in 1948.

Protesters outside Sydney's Town Hall carried Palestinian flags and placards demanding "Free Palestine" and "block weapons to Israel." A young girl attended the rally with her parents holding a sign that said: "Israel is killing children like me."

The protests were held in the face of a bipartisan front in the political establishment backing Israel.

On Friday, Prime Minister Scott Morrison effectively legitimised the devastating bombardment of the Gaza Strip and the killing of hundreds of civilians, including children. He again declared that Israel had the right to defend itself from attacks by Palestinians, closely echoing similar comments earlier from US President Joe Biden.

The opposition Labor Party underscored the unanimity. Labor's shadow foreign minister Penny Wong backed her Liberal-National counterpart, Foreign Minister Marise Payne, in condemning the limited retaliatory Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel while refusing to denounce the Zionist crimes.

Speakers from the Greens were featured at the rallies

despite effectively lining up with the government. At the Melbourne rally, Greens Senator Janet Rice "commended Marise Payne's comments" in calling "on all leaders to take immediate steps to halt violence, to maintain restraint, and to restore calm."

Rice urged people to try to pressure the government to take action accordingly to end the conflict. Such calls equate the Israeli offensive with the Palestinian resistance, and mask the decades of backing by US imperialism and its allies for the Zionist state.

The WSWWS interviewed people attending the rallies in Sydney and Melbourne.

In Sydney, **Firas**, a 43-year-old accountant, said: "This has been happening since 1948. My grandfather was killed in 1948. My grandmother was shot in her arm trying to retrieve her toddler. Unfortunately, I cannot see the international community doing anything. A truce was reached in previous wars but has been broken in every aspect."

Firas said the Biden White House was following the same policy as previous US administrations, which was not a surprise. He denounced the Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, saying its only policy was war. "Netanyahu is trying to gain votes at the expense of the Palestinian people and their misery. It is a dirty trick they are playing."

Ayoub, 19, a civil engineering student, said Israel was "provoking Palestinians to attack to justify continuing the war against Palestinians. Their war is so unjustified that they are not even united... Israelis are protesting against this in Israel. A large part of the population in Israel doesn't want it."

Ayoub continued: "We can live side by side with the Jewish people. You can't kick 20 million people out of their homes. That would be hypocrisy because that's what they did to us. All we want is our homes to be

given back.”

Adna, 22, whose family is from Bosnia, said she came “to support Palestinian people and make sure people are aware basic human rights are being violated by the Israeli state, that Israel is supported by Western countries like Australia, and that this is unacceptable.”

Commenting on the media coverage, Adna said that when she sees “a child being pulled out of rubble, limp and dead, then I see it reported as an attack on Hamas, it’s revolting, it’s disturbing.” She added: “Obviously the United Nations is not effective at all. You would expect the UN would stop them.”

Asked about the role the danger of a wider war triggered by Israel and the US in the Middle East, she said: “I think they [the US] are doing this to ensure they are the biggest power, and to hold that power.”

Hanna, 21, whose family also came from Bosnia, commented: “I think the West has become desensitised to war in the Middle East. We’ve all grown up with the understanding that it’s an unpeaceful place. Some people think it’s normal for that to happen over there, but it shouldn’t be normal anywhere.”

When asked who would stop the violence, Hanna said she was “not very optimistic that it will be stopped, because this has been happening for such a long time. Even if they [the governments] cannot be stopped, we still have to put our foot down and say this is wrong.”

At the Melbourne rally, **Damoon**, an archaeology student, said he supported the Palestinians “against apartheid and ethnic cleansing.” He explained: “It is typical of the US imperialist state. They have supplied money and their budget goes toward Israel’s military and its criminals. At the end, there is a power struggle for resources and we are the pawns in their power struggle.”

Damoon warned of the danger that Israel could launch “an intervention against Iran, which they have wanted for some time, as has the United States.”

Erika, an artist, said: “History is repeating itself. I’m here to show my solidarity with the Palestinian people. I remember hearing about the war in the Gaza in 2014. We are back there again. It’s in the news online. You feel you have to do something about it.”

Erika drew a connection with rising popular discontent globally. “In Chile there were protests two years ago as things are very hard. There is such a divide between rich and poor. Someone can be on \$20 a week

and then there are those who live in mansions.”

Nina, an unemployed receptionist, explained: “I’m here because no one should have their homes taken away so violently. It’s just a basic human right. I know the land was originally with the Palestinians and it has been taken away by the Israeli government, which has been so violent.”

Nina commented: “Obviously Biden has a bias towards Israel. I think I heard the US gives \$4 billion every year to Israel. I’m here to support the Palestinians. Their homeland is being colonised. I think we should spread this information to a lot of people, as they don’t know what is happening.”



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