

IYSSE (Australia) statement: Join the fight against imperialist war and for world socialism

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Australia)
5 February 2023

This statement will be distributed by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) club members to students and young people around Australia as universities resume for the 2023 academic year.

Under capitalism, young people are being confronted with crises which threaten their very futures—environmental destruction, financial meltdown and nuclear Armageddon.

The war in Ukraine is a war between US-NATO forces and Russia, with Ukraine as the battlefield. The first shots of World War III have already been fired.

Not a week goes by without a major expansion of NATO involvement in the conflict.

Already in 2023, twelve NATO countries have pledged to send a combined 120 to 140 modern main battle tanks to Ukraine, and there are calls in the media and political establishment for the US to send F-16 supersonic, nuclear-capable fighter jets.

The hope that “reason will prevail” and the NATO powers will pull back from the brink is a dangerous and politically disarming delusion.

Mutually Assured Destruction—the conclusion that nuclear weapons would never be used because no one could possibly “win” such a conflict—has been replaced by the US and its allies with the criminally insane doctrine “so what!”

Students and youth must join the fight against the US-NATO imperialist war in Ukraine and the reckless escalation toward nuclear catastrophe.

The IYSSE’s exposure of US imperialism and its NATO allies as the instigators and aggressors in the conflict in no way equates to support for the reactionary, national chauvinist capitalist regime in Russia headed by President Vladimir Putin which we oppose and condemn.

The conflict in Ukraine, however, cannot be understood from the standpoint of which country “fired the first shot.” It can only be understood by grasping the socioeconomic and geopolitical interests that have led to this point.

US and European imperialism aim to defeat Russia for the purpose of dismembering the country and gaining control over its immense supply of natural resources, removing it as an obstacle for imperialist domination of the Eurasian landmass, and in preparation for a far deadlier war against China which the US sees as the main rival to its global hegemony.

The Australian population has been placed on the frontlines of US-led war plans against China in the Asia-Pacific by successive Labor and Liberal-National Coalition governments. Such a war would

inevitably become a nuclear conflict. When was anyone in Australia asked to vote on nuclear war against Russia or China? They weren’t!

Australian imperialism functions as the most aggressive attack dog in the confrontation with China, motivated in part by Australia’s own predatory interests in the South Pacific.

Since coming to office, Anthony Albanese’s Labor government has deepened and accelerated Australian involvement in the preparations for war. The militarist build up has enjoyed the full support of the entire political establishment, including the Greens and various “independents.”

Also lining up behind imperialist war against Russia and preparations for military conflict with China are the pseudo-left parties such as Socialist Alternative, Socialist Alliance and Solidarity.

These organisations use the false and reactionary slogan of defending “Ukrainian sovereignty” to justify a war prepared, stoked and waged by the most powerful imperialist powers in the world, the US and its NATO allies. They use the false claim that China and Russia are “imperialist” to justify and endorse the war aims of US and Australian imperialism.

The IYSSE rejects all justifications for war put forward by the fake left, based on the obsolete concept of “national defence.” We are for the unity of Russian and Ukrainian workers against war.

As the great Russian Marxist Leon Trotsky wrote in *War and the Fourth International* in 1934:

A “socialist” who preaches national defence is a petty-bourgeois reactionary at the service of decaying capitalism. Not to bind itself to the national state in time of war, to follow not the war map but the map of the class struggle, is possible only for that party that has already declared irreconcilable war on the national state in time of peace.

The pro-war positions of the pseudo-left serve to legitimise and blunt opposition to a much broader military build-up, which finds particularly stark expression at the universities.

Every major university in Australia has established ties with the military and arms manufacturers to help prepare war. Many host pro-war think tanks to promote imperialist propaganda.

Under these conditions, the anti-democratic disaffiliation of the IYSSE at Macquarie University (MQ) in Sydney and the University of Melbourne (UofM) in 2022 is a warning that university

administrations, working hand-in-glove with the student unions, will attempt to silence any anti-war opposition. Administrative errors were cynically seized upon by the student unions on both campuses to close down the clubs.

The IYSSE is the only club on the campuses fighting for a socialist opposition to war. We demand the reaffiliation of our clubs at MQ and UofM, which are both lively student organisations with active memberships that conduct frequent activities that include regular club meetings, public events and campaigns.

To build an anti-war movement, youth and students must understand the roots of war.

War emerges not from the psyche of individual capitalist politicians, but from the objective economic processes of capitalism itself.

War is the product of the inherent contradictions of capitalism between the world economy and its division into competing nation states, and between the private ownership of the means of production and their socialised nature, operated by a billions-strong international working class.

These contradictions are causing an intractable breakdown of global capitalism.

The US ruling elite is seeking to arrest its economic crisis and prevent its decline as the global superpower. Its strategists regard China as the main threat to its ability to hold on to its global hegemonic rule. Meanwhile, the other imperialist powers, including Germany, Japan and Australia, are remilitarising or accelerating military spending as they strive to defend their own imperialist interests.

War abroad also means war against the working class at home. As more than \$575 billion over a decade is to be spent to expand the military, Australia's ruling elite is slashing spending on education, healthcare and social infrastructure. The political establishment is turning ever more directly to authoritarian forms of rule to enact its pro-war and anti-working-class agenda.

These ruling elites sit atop a social powder keg and are attempting to use war to divert outward growing working-class hostility to mass illness, death and destitution.

Anyone who thinks that nuclear war is impossible because of the mass death and destruction it would incur need only look at the willingness of the ruling elite to sacrifice human lives for profit amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Using the murderous and unscientific, profit-driven policies of "herd immunity" and "let the virus rip," the capitalist classes have declared an end to the pandemic as thousands continue to die every week. Over 21 million worldwide have died from COVID, with many millions more enduring the disabling effects of Long COVID.

Meanwhile, workers are being made to bear the burden of an economic crisis through the assault on their wages and living conditions.

But the international working class is entering into struggle against capitalism. The past 12 months have seen renewed struggles of health workers, autoworkers, railway workers, food production workers, dockers and many more in Australia, the US and throughout the world.

It is to this emergent movement of the working class that youth and students must turn in the struggle against war and as part of the fight against the capitalist system, which is its cause.

In a statement by the IYSSE published November 4 on the *World Socialist Web Site* titled, "A call to youth throughout the world: Build a mass movement to stop the Ukraine war!", we say:

While the development of the war raises great dangers for young people and for all of mankind, the IYSSE bases its program not on despair, but on confidence that we can fight and win the future.

The fatalism of the pessimists expresses an outlook that remains trapped within the confines of what is possible within the capitalist world order. Optimism arises out of an understanding that the same capitalist crisis that produces war, dictatorship, climate change and social reaction also produces the growth of international working-class struggle.

Whether it is war, the COVID-19 pandemic or climate change, none of the major issues confronting the population can be resolved on a national basis. Neither bombs, viruses nor global warming adhere to national borders. These threats can only be addressed internationally and through the mobilisation of the working class.

History shows that revolution is possible and capitalism can be overthrown. The Russian Revolution in October 1917 overthrew the profit system in a socialist revolution and established the world's first workers' state.

It was the most progressive event in human history and the world's greatest ever anti-war movement, setting in motion the end of the First World War. What it also showed is that the crucial task is the building of a revolutionary leadership in the working class.

Only with the political guidance of this leadership can the working class begin the socialist reorganisation of the world to end war, poverty, disease, dictatorship and environmental destruction due to climate change.

The IYSSE is the only youth and student organisation in the world fighting to build an anti-war movement. Join the IYSSE in the struggle for a revolutionary, anti-war leadership in the working class today.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact