

Thousands in New York protest genocidal onslaught on the Palestinians by Israel

Our reporters

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Thousands of young people and workers of all backgrounds, including entire families, joined a demonstration in Times Square, New York City on Friday afternoon to oppose the genocidal war waged by the Israeli government, with the full support of the US and the European imperialist powers, on the Palestinian people.

New York City is home to a Muslim population of nearly one million people, and it also has the largest Jewish population in the United States at 2.1 million. The protest was advertised widely at the predominantly working class City University of New York (CUNY) system and supported by students at Columbia University and New York University (NYU).

The demonstrators in Manhattan were met with a large presence of the New York Police Department (NYPD). Hundreds of cops assembled near the rally, helicopters circled the demonstrators and the NYPD installed mobile command centers.

Media outlets whipped up a frenzy in advance, identifying the protests and others like it planned around the world with a supposed Hamas-inspired “Day of Jihad,” implying that the rallies would be associated with terrorist acts. Eric Adams, the city’s Democratic Mayor, told a news briefing on Thursday that he had supplied cops to patrol schools, religious institutions and some neighborhoods in anticipation of Friday’s protest.

The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) congressperson from New York City Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez suggested last week that it should not be so hard to “shut down” pro-Palestinian demonstrations in New York City. Her DSA-supported colleague, Jamaal Bowman, also from New York, said he was disgusted with last week’s protest in defense of Palestinians.

On Thursday, far-right Republican Councilwoman Inna Vernikov appeared at a pro-Palestinian rally at Brooklyn College displaying a pistol in her waistband.

But the overwhelming sentiment among protesters was one of defiance and determination to fight in defense of the Palestinian people. While there was a small presence of pro-Hamas elements, the vast majority of protesters were workers and young people who expressed opposition to the genocidal war by Israel and a striving for unity of the working class across the Middle East and internationally.

A young teacher in New York City attended the demonstration but, like many interviewees, asked to remain anonymous. He told the *World Socialist Web Site*:

As a Jewish person I’ve been taught my whole life that oppression cannot be tolerated, and the Israeli government for decades has oppressed the Palestinian people and currently

operates the largest open-air prison in Gaza. I’ve never been more moved than now to demonstrate against that injustice. I see what is happening now as, if not a full-on declaration of genocide, then short of it. We have Israeli ministers calling Palestinians “animals” and “beasts,” As a Jew, hearing an entire group of people being called that way is just simply unacceptable. Right now, they are bombing indiscriminately in Gaza and that is not being publicized in the same way as violence against Israelis is.

Obviously, I’m 100 percent against civilian deaths, no matter who it is, and that’s exactly why I’m here now. Palestinians have been dying at an outrageous rate, and even if they’re not dying, their living conditions are beyond horrible and unacceptable. I’m sure there are many, many Jews here and around the world who are passionately [opposed to what is happening]. The Israeli government in my view is working for those who support Israel as a military state, such as the United States, countries in the European Union and Britain.

Meanwhile, if you read opinion editorials in Israel, there are many who call on the Netanyahu government to end the occupation. In America, I see this attitude – if you’re pro-Palestine you’re anti-Semitic. I don’t think that’s how all Israelis see it. I think that the mainstream media and the political powers in the United States pick and choose what they amplify.

A young woman told the WSWs, “The US media is throwing out a lot of misinformation. The accusation of forty babies being killed was proved a lie. The US is a hegemon, and I see this as connected to the war on Russia in Ukraine, as an effect after the Cold War. The US has sent a huge load of armaments to Israel while it is forcing evacuation of a million people.”

Aziz told the WSWs:

Israel has been a racist state, and we are living in an age of modern-day apartheid. The US government has been funding the state of Israel – the problem is that this is dehumanization of the [Palestinian] people. The Biden administration is making it so that genocide is OK in 2023.

I’m very emotional about this. Let’s say you’re a kid on the playground and you’re getting hit every day for the last 75 years. It’s been 75 years that you’ve been hit by the state of Nakba. I urge everyone to research Nakba, inform yourself.

People look at one incident, they don't look at the whole story. Please read the history. said:

Lindsey, a 21-year-old art student at City College of New York, came to the protest to demonstrate against "the genocide they [the Israeli government] are committing." She said that she was opposed to the media coverage which was "calling Palestinians animals and terrorists when the Israeli government has committed atrocities."

Discussing the need to unify the Palestinian and Israeli masses with workers in the US and Europe, Lindsey said, "I 100 percent agree that there had to be a distinction [made between the Israeli government and the people.] The Israeli government is not the Israeli people. There's a huge difference. There are definitely people there who are for Palestine, and I think we need to fight [together] against the [Israeli] government."

Justin, who works for a non-profit, said:

I'm here because I'm horrified at what's happening. It's a genocide. War crimes are being committed. Nobody in the West seems to be doing anything to stop it. I'm Arab-American, my family came here 100 years ago. Everybody I know who is related to it is really going through a lot right now.

I work at a progressive non-profit but I don't feel comfortable how this is being talked about. People feel about the children but once you're a Palestinian who is 20, it's different. But these are people who have been living for 16 years in an illegal blockade. We have sympathies for these children but these children grow up and what do they know? All they know is an open-air prison.

I think the only solution at this point is a one-state solution where Arabs have a full right to return and equal rights, ideally some sort of reparations. There are generations now of Israelis who live there and they have no home to go to either, I acknowledge that. The two-state solution doesn't seem feasible, based on what's been happening over the past 20 years. It's been an ethnic cleansing.

Sabrina, who attended the demonstration together with her sister and was planning to go to another demonstration in Chicago this weekend, said that she had come "for the Palestinian people and for the people that are dying and suffering right now." She continued: "The Israeli military is murdering civilians, it's a genocide. It's about Palestinians getting their freedom back which should have never been taken away from them."

Lina, who used to work for the United Nations, said:

I came to support the human rights of those who are being persecuted in Gaza and Palestine. They are among the most persecuted people of our time. It's a shame that Israel and the US cannot see that there's huge opposition in the international community. This is a genocide.

Marta, who works for a financial company and comes from Poland,

I came because it is the right thing to do. To be honest, I wouldn't have had the strength to come here but my roommate is Palestinian. Her uncle, his wife and their two children were killed yesterday in Gaza and I can see how this is affecting her. This is a horrible atrocity and we shouldn't mince words about it. It has actually been going on for decades and we've turned our blind eye on this. I'm just joining this fight now but I probably should have joined earlier.

In addition to Friday's demonstration in Times Square, over a thousand people of Jewish descent joined a protest in Brooklyn against the war and the criminal policies of the Netanyahu government toward the Palestinians.

Charles, an educator in Brooklyn, submitted a statement to the WSWs, stating:

As an educator and an American Jew, I'm distraught at the position the government, the media, the mayor, and even my peers have put me in. It's an impossible position, akin only to Hamlet's cry of "taking up arms against a sea of troubles." How I wish I could comfortably show my support for Palestinian resistance without fear of imprisonment or social excommunication. How I wish I could educate my students and my peers to the objective facts of the Israeli apartheid and occupation without fear of parent action or administrative investigation.

Perhaps most disturbing to me is the invocation of the Holocaust by Western media and individuals on social media. To refer to the Holocaust in any way as analogous to this situation is to forget your own face in the mirror. How any educated population can look at the Israeli government and ignore the utter fascism, or view the conditions in Gaza and not see a death camp in action, it's truly bewildering to me.



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