

Australian Labor government, opposition join hands in support of Israeli war crimes

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In a display of bloodthirsty militarism, the Australian Labor government and the Liberal-National Coalition opposition came together yesterday to pass a parliamentary motion giving full support to Israel's genocidal bombardment of defenceless Palestinians in Gaza.

The motion, introduced by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, proclaimed that the parliament "stands with Israel and recognises its inherent right to defend itself."

In their statements backing the resolution, government and opposition leaders repeated that phrase like a mantra. At the same time, they hysterically denounced the Hamas operation that began on October 6 and had concluded within a couple of days. It was a "heinous act of terror," the motion insisted.

From the motion and the comments, one would have no idea of the events of the past week. The leaders of Labor and the Coalition largely pretended that the massive Israeli bombing campaign against Gaza was not taking place, though they were clearly referring to it with their declarations of Israel's "right to defend itself."

Both sides cited the official Israeli death toll of roughly 1,300. But neither made mention of the Palestinian death toll, already estimated at more than 2,800.

The entire history of the 75-year Israeli occupation and oppression of the Palestinians was whitewashed. Speaking of the Hamas attack, Defence Minister Richard Marles proclaimed: "Against the backdrop of the anticipated normal, the reality was so shocking that it robbed everyone, no matter what they are doing, of the ability to feel safe."

The "anticipated normal" is the continuous and routine murder of Palestinians by the Israeli state. A United Nations report released at the beginning of June

warned that 2023 was shaping up to be the deadliest year for Palestinians in recent times, with at least 112 murdered by Israel in the first months of the year.

Needless to say, that report went unmentioned in the Australian parliament, and there were no motions condemning Israel. More broadly, the Palestinian civilian death toll has consistently been at least 24 times higher than Israel's over recent years.

The complete cover-up of the context of recent events was aimed at presenting Hamas' attack as a random act of "barbarism" that had seemingly come out of the clear blue sky. The fact that peaceful protests of Palestinians in 2018 and 2019, marching to the barbed wire fence which encloses Gaza, had been met with hails of Israeli bullets was not raised, of course.

As the WSWs has explained, the civilian casualties in Israel were tragic. But the responsibility lies with the Israeli regime, its brutal oppression and the foreclosing of any peaceful means of resistance. Historically, uprisings against violent and sustained state oppression have invariably assumed an explosive character.

In a parliamentary sitting dominated by hypocrisy and lies, among the worst obscenities were the attempts to associate the resistance of the Palestinians with the Nazis. Labor MPs and their Coalition counterparts repeatedly described the Israeli death toll from the Hamas attack as the "greatest loss of Jewish life since the Holocaust," and declared that the Palestinian operation had been motivated exclusively by anti-Semitism.

This is a slander on the Palestinians and a gross historical distortion. The conditions in Gaza, described by international rights' organisations as an open-air prison, resemble nothing so much as those inflicted by the Nazis on the Warsaw Ghetto. The defenders of the Third Reich similarly branded the courageous Ghetto

uprising as an illegitimate act of terror.

The false and politically-motivated assertion that any resistance to Israel is anti-Semitic itself promotes anti-Semitism. It trivialises the crimes of the Holocaust, and conflates the Jewish people with an oppressive state that is committing war crimes.

To the extent that the catastrophe underway in Gaza was referenced, it was in the most veiled terms. Hamas was denounced as being responsible for the rising death toll, essentially a form of victim-blaming. The politicians warned that the fallout from Israel's rampage could negatively impact upon... Israel.

In a revealing statement, Marles noted that Labor had supported Israel not only from its formation in 1948, but from when the United States and the other imperialist powers began preparations to create a Zionist beachhead in the Middle East. Labor's backing of Israel has always been a signal of its unconditional support for American imperialist operations, not only in the Middle East but globally.

The current Labor government's stance is, if anything, more bellicose and aggressive in its support of Israeli war crimes than any previous administration. That is bound up with the scale of the current onslaught against Gaza, as well as Australia's ever-more central role as an attack dog for American imperialism, especially in its preparations for a catastrophic war against China.

The only peep of opposition to the bipartisan line came from the Greens and a handful of independents. The Greens moved an amendment, which identified the Israeli bombing campaign as a "war crime" and demanded that it end. It was voted down by 107 MPs, against just 7.

While the Greens have made statements opposing the Israeli attacks, they will continue to collaborate with the Labor administration. Their generally token condemnations do not commit the Greens to anything.

In parliament, the Labor and Coalition MPs who spoke after the Greens motion was defeated, simply ignored it. But today Marles branded the motion, i.e., any opposition to the bombardment of Gaza, as "despicable." The major newspapers featured statements of Zionist leaders, branding the Greens as little better than Nazis.

That is a continuation of the attempts in Australia and internationally to suppress all opposition to the Israeli

war. This campaign included state Labor government threats to ban a Sydney protest last Sunday through a massive police mobilisation and the deployment of extraordinary powers to stop and search any prospective participants.

The official campaign is coming up against the reality that masses of people are hostile to the Israeli onslaught. Tens of thousands demonstrated over the weekend in Australia, defying intimidation from the government, media and police. The Australian rallies were part of a developing global mobilisation involving millions all over the world.

The coming together of Labor and the Coalition underscores the bipartisan unity behind militarism and war. It also demonstrates the fraud of the Labor government's referendum on establishing an indigenous Voice to parliament.

The referendum suffered a massive defeat on Saturday, with more than 60 percent of the population voting against the initiative. That did not express mass hostility to indigenous people but widespread and deepening opposition to the political establishment, above all from the working class.

Many were sceptical that a right-wing, pro-business and pro-war government intended to do anything to address the plight of oppressed indigenous people. Labor's complete embrace of Israel's war of extermination against the oppressed Palestinians shows the correctness of that sentiment.



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