

# Protests in London and Sheffield over Israeli war on Gaza

Our reporters  
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*World Socialist Web Site* reporters attended rallies in solidarity with Gaza in London and Sheffield on Wednesday and spoke with demonstrators about their reasons for taking part.

Thousands attended a vigil held in heavy rain outside the prime minister's official residence in Downing Street in London, blocking Whitehall for two hours.

One protester, who wished not to be named, told our reporter, "The war needs to stop. We're here to try and show the UK government that we don't agree with the stance they're taking, giving unconditional support to Israel to kill thousands of people, children, block water, food and fuel. It's unbelievable that our politicians continue to say we give this our full support.

"Genocide is what people are calling it and that's what it is. It's a genocide. And the Western media and Western governments are behind it, they're encouraging it, they fully support it.

"Now they are trying to deny the bombing of the [al-Ahli] hospital. There is so much evidence that Israel have done this. And they've done plenty of the same before.

"Any criticism is immediately branded as anti-Semitic and that's not fair because it's not actually anti-Semitic. Like the *Guardian* cartoonist [Steve Bell] who was fired, essentially because he depicted Netanyahu in a negative light—that's not anti-Semitism. This is censorship of freedom of speech.

"It's encouraging to see that so many people share our views in defence of the Palestinians. We were worried coming to demonstrations that if we carried a Palestinian flag we could be arrested or harassed or attacked. But we've been given strength by the numbers turning out to protest these terrible, terrible crimes."

**Ahammed** said, "I am a Muslim, but I empathize

with people of all faiths and no faith who are suffering in this situation. What we are witnessing is one of the biggest injustices in the world.

"As someone who's been involved in the Palestine cause for well over a decade now, there's no point just being upset by what's happening. We just need to look at the Palestinians themselves: 75 years of aggression and occupation. They have not surrendered, even after these past weeks of hell on earth—I've seen the photos, I've seen the videos, it's hell on earth—they still have not surrendered. How can any of us, who support Palestine, when we're not losing our loved ones, our lives, our limbs, how can we surrender?"

In Sheffield, outside the town hall, student **James** said, "There are big protests around the world right now because it's a pretty shit situation in Gaza. [US President] Joe Biden's gone across to Israel and made insensitive remarks, it's not fair or right. I think we should unite and fight against what's happening.

"The weapons that blew up that hospital are probably American-made. The media gives a false impression of events.

"Look at Labour and [party leader Sir Keir] Starmer, it's supposed to be a party that supports social justice, but it's not nowadays. It's clearly genocide being carried out by the Israeli government. It's hard to see where the answer lies. All these leaders will be seen as standing on the wrong side of history in a few decades.

"Today we're focusing on Palestine, but it's a hard time to be an everyday person in the UK at the moment. Uniting people is a good thing to do. We need to get to a point where the people of Palestine are safe for the long-term.

"The violence won't stop when the leaders of big countries are pushing this and stand behind the war crimes. There's a bigger picture. The military in Israel

is largely funded by the USA.

“It’s important to educate people about the history of Palestine. A lot of people don’t understand the facts. The narrative in the media is against them, and people from different backgrounds and immigrants. In reality, there’s people living with billions of pounds and others with nothing. There’s obviously something wrong with the world.

“I agree that we should unite. There’s a better alternative by joining as a collective rather than being divided up and separated.”

**Aleh & Siraj**, also students, said, “It’s atrocious that the US and European countries have stood behind the war crimes of the Israeli state. It’s a crime just like Hitler did. They’re doing the same genocide as they did in the Holocaust. They’ve dropped thousands of bombs in a few days. Bombing hospitals is a war crime.

“The character of that is being covered-up in the media coverage in the West, such as the attacks on convoys of civilians and the hospital that was bombed. Because of social media, what’s really going on is coming out for people to see... It’s different from previous generations. They can’t hide the reality anymore.

“Rishi Sunak is the biggest devil of them all for promising millions of pounds of military aid to Israel. He knows that they’re the oppressor. They’re openly committing war crimes and nothing’s happening to him.

“If you speak in defence of the Palestinians you’re called an ‘anti-Semite’, even though there’s a big difference between Jews and Zionists. They [government] want to suppress anti-Zionism.

“Massive footballers, like Youcef Atal in France, posted on Instagram opposing the war and he’s been suspended from his club. There were immediate repercussions from his club, Nice. He spoke what he believed in, but there’s no freedom of speech.

“The government talks about opposing this and that, but they’re not against bombing hospitals and killing kids. The Palestinian people are being oppressed. They’ve been under siege for years. It has to stop.

“The Tories have a problem with us protesting like this. We have a right to protest, but they’re taking away the rights of people in different countries who know what’s really happening in Palestine. We’re trying to raise awareness.

“The American government and Biden are puppets, behind them are arms dealers who are at the root of what’s going on. The Palestinians only have a few resistance fighters. Israel receives hundreds of millions of dollars-worth of high-tech weaponry, drones and missiles.”



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