

WSWS speaks to protesters against Israeli genocide in Gaza in Salford, Leeds and Sheffield, UK

Our reporters
22 October 2023

Protests mobilising thousands took place in Salford, Leeds and Sheffield on Saturday, just some of the mass demonstrations in cities throughout the UK. The Salford and Leeds protests both targeted BBC broadcasting facilities, due to the outrage generated by its biased coverage of Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza. WSWs reporters spoke with many protesters, who were overwhelmingly young people.

Socialist Equality Party members and supporters distributed thousands of copies of the WSWs editorial board statement, "Global outrage erupts over Israeli bombing of Gaza hospital", and sold dozens of copies of the new *World Socialist Web Site* pamphlet, *Stop Israeli Genocide!* The pamphlet can be purchased here.

Salford

Ibrahim, 25, came to the UK with his family from Yemen when he was four. "We want people to know the truth," he said. "Israel has a say in what goes on in the media in the UK." The poster he was carrying showed himself as an eight-year-old on a pro-Palestinian demonstration, "It's been going on the whole time I've been alive", alongside a picture of himself with an anti-Zionist rabbi. "He supports the Palestinians. So many Jews don't support the state of Israel. Jews, Christians and Muslims used to live together in harmony. It's happened before and it can happen again."

"[Israeli Prime Minister [Netanyahu] says the whole world is watching, but everyone is watching him massacring kids in hospitals. What they did to the Jews in the Holocaust, they're doing to the Palestinians. Gaza is an open prison. They're being pushed into a small piece of land and there's nowhere to go. It's ethnic cleansing. They want to kill all the Palestinians. The Israeli Defence Minister said kill them all, starve everyone, like Hitler."

Ibrahim said of the governments of the Middle East, "The whole world revolves around money. They're not coming out in support of the Palestinians because of money and their relationship with the US. They don't want to upset the UK and Israel. It's money before life. The workers in the world are brothers and sister. I've been to America, the people are amazing, let the workers run the country not the leaders."

Sighegel said, "Children are dying, people are losing their families, there's no food, no water. I went to my first protest in support of the Palestinians when I was 12. We want peace, we don't want to drive anyone out of the land. We all used to live together, we want Palestinians and Israelis together. But what's Israel doing now? It's taking all the land. Israel is funded by the US, they're the biggest perpetrator."

Leeds

Will, a student, said, "Palestinians have faced oppression for years now. The Israeli government needs to stop the genocide, the ethnic cleansing and the bombing of all Palestinians because they have just the exact same right to be there as the Israelis."

Abbie said, "It's a genocide happening there and the media are just lying about it. The Israeli government has killed way more Palestinians than Israelis that have died. All these people are dying and we don't even know their names or their stories. It's just horrific to see. The government is trying to keep us quiet."

Vijahat said, "I don't agree with what is happening to civilians in Gaza and how the media is portraying Israel as the victim. This has been happening for years and the only reason it's in the news is because there has been a retaliation. The people have had enough in Gaza. And now it's blown up."

"No one should have to live like that. To have permission to be fed. To get permission to access water. Rishi Sunak and Joe Biden have visited Israel to show how sorry they are for them. Why have they not visited Gaza when they know this occupation has been going on for many years?"

"It's all to do with money. War crimes create money. The US military invested billions in the equipment the US used in Iraq and just left it behind. They don't care what happens afterwards because they've used that country, and they just move onto the next one."

Saba, a student, said, "It's not about Palestine anymore. It's about genocide. It's about mass killing. And that's unacceptable whoever it is, ever."

"Everyone should know about everything in the history books on Palestine. In the media they're only showing one side of the story. Its propaganda. This is not going to stop opposition because there is a lot of people against Israel. Even Jews themselves. You can't stop this many people."

Javaad said, "The Gazans have gone through murder and torture for decades. For the last 15 years, the Israeli army have been killing children there just for fun, torturing the children. I think 56 percent of the Palestinians in Gaza are under 21."

"In the past few days, Channel 4 News uncovered a web of lies by the Israeli army about the bombing of the hospital. I think we can use social media for building awareness. The fact that Biden, Sunak and others are backing Israel is horrendous. Sunak and [Labour Party leader Sir Keir] Starmer as well, they just repeat that Israel has the right to defend itself. But what's the comparison? What have the Palestinians got to fight with? Israel is the most advanced army base in the Middle East, compared to the Palestinians who have nothing."

“Our own people are suffering but they are sending money and arms to Israel and Ukraine. Why aren't they using that money to help people here? They have pumped billions of pounds into Ukraine and for what? They also use the wars as a distraction from what's really going on. It's good that on the demonstration today, there are working class people from all different backgrounds, white people and black people, all coming together. That's what it's all about, we want more of this.”

Rubylyn said, “They are closing the borders of Gaza and bombing the area and not allowing citizens to leave. In that case this is now genocide. I get most of my information from social media. On the news, they talk about Israel as if it is a war, it is not a war. The Palestinians don't have an army, it is just genocide. They keep on bombing Gaza, bombing civilians. Those people shouldn't have to suffer. It is nothing to do with the civilians.

“They should let the people who want to leave the area, leave. I am really shocked about the people who are supporting Israel, a lot of celebrities, big companies like McDonald's, Starbucks. I think may be if the people decide they are not going to take it, things will change. We are stronger in numbers. With all the strikes taking place, I think in time we can do something about this.”

Sheffield

Abdul, a student, said, “When Russia invaded Ukraine many opposed that regime and Putin, but when Israel commits proven war crimes against civilians there is no support. The United States has vetoed a ceasefire resolution.

“My best friend is half Palestinian and I see what's happening to them and that country. It's a disgrace for the world. I am from Egypt. Our borders are important for the situation in Palestine. Israel carpet-bombed the Gaza strip and the border. We are trying to support them, but we are unable to.

“To topple a government, you need to have the workers united for a cause. For now, we're united to oppose the Israeli apartheid regime. Many major companies and fast-food restaurants like McDonald's support Israel and other oppressive regimes. We should boycott them. You can't support a company that props up ethnic cleansing and apartheid.

“You can't turn a blind eye and just work nine-to-five. There should be a strike movement to blockade and prevent the shipment of weapons to Israel. Increased military spending means cuts to social spending here. Our taxes will support Israel indirectly, which I oppose.”

Javid, a retired fire-fighter, said, “I condemn all violence. I can't condemn the resistance of the Palestinians. I oppose the violent Israeli response to it. They blame all the violence on Hamas, but who's responsible for the uprising in the West Bank then?

“The media has promoted the claim that Hamas is beheading babies. It's all a lie. Then Israel bombed a hospital. Are we going to believe them after their previous lies? They've been found out. It's a propaganda war.

“Sunak didn't represent me when he visited Israel and declared UK backing for Israel's war crimes. He's a multi-millionaire and part of the ruling class. Working people always look to the Labour Party, but where's Keir Starmer? He's stopped any Labour politician coming to these protests.

“A lot of Muslims had turned to the Labour Party. Jeremy Corbyn was the person that I'd have voted for, but they kicked him out over claims of 'anti-Semitism'. To claim that anyone who supports the Palestinians is anti-Semitic is disgusting. Labour is a capitalist party. Workers need to rely on their own strength.”

Zain, a high school student, said, “The protests show there is worldwide support and that every religion and nation is showing support, including Jews. Rishi Sunak went to Israel and talked about his support for Israel and their war, but no support at all for the Palestinians.

“Starmer talks about crimes against the Jews, but innocent Palestinian children are being killed every day. You saw in the bombing of the hospital where hundreds died including many children, who were seeking refuge when their parents had been killed. The governments and media tried to blame Palestine, although there is proof that it was Israel who bombed the hospital.

“The call by the Palestinian trade unions for support is a good thing. Anyone working in places where Israel is being sent weapons should tell their bosses they won't do it. All the funding that goes to Israel, to go to war should be stopped.”

Malisa, a student from Singapore said, “Palestine is an issue of human rights. It is not any more complicated than that. If you take a neutral position, you are standing with the oppressor.

“It is disappointing but not surprising that the US and Britain are backing Israel. It's all about who has the power and control. They are all complicit.

“Anyone who does business in Israel is backing the oppressor. I think the call by the Palestinian trade unions for support against the Israeli war machine is correct. We should be supporting them. It is important to have an opposition rising up towards the government.”

Hamza, a student, said, “Palestine has the right to defend itself. It is good there are world-wide protests that have started and awareness is being raised. It is totally hypocritical the attitude towards Ukraine compared to Palestine. The Palestinians are 'terrorists' they say. With Ukraine as soon as that war began they are presented as freedom fighters in the media.”

Ahmed said, “Not one government is supporting the victims of this violence. My hope is someone will stop this killing. The ordinary people of the whole world are protesting what is happening to the Palestinians.”

Fabian, a consultant, originally from Spain, explained, “The media is not telling us the truth about the conflict. They have obviously sided with the Israelis.

“We are trying to demonstrate the injustice of the situation and to side with the most vulnerable. We want this war to end. For these attacks to end. From both sides. But one of the parties is clearly stronger than the other and backed by the most powerful nation in the world. These people are facing catastrophe and death every single day.

“Israel has become the oppressor also of the Jewish people. Clearly there is now ethnic cleansing taking place in Gaza. It is all part of geo-political strategy. The US wants to have a strong foot in the Middle East so Israel has received, if I am not wrong, \$270 billion in 75 years only for military purposes. That demonstrates clearly what the issue is about. You can see the pattern all over the world, where the powerful are imposing their rule.”

Jane, a council worker, said, “It's appalling that our government is supporting the Israeli government, which is openly racist and carrying on a genocide against the Palestinian people.

“These large protests around the world show that people still have sense, understand the situation, and know who's at fault in this war. I don't have anything against the Israeli people but clearly their government is racist and conducts war and genocide.

“It's a very good idea to unite workers in Palestine and Israel. For the first time in many years there is an opposition within Israel to their government's reaction to the terrorist attacks. We should build bridges with people within that country and those outside who support the recognition of a Palestine state. There should be negotiation, not war.”



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