

Workers and youth speak out at Australian marches against Israeli assault on Gaza

Our reporters

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Tens of thousands of workers and youth took to the streets in Australia over the weekend, marching to protest the Israeli regime's genocidal war against Gaza. Rallies were held in the main cities across the country, including Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide.

The WSWS spoke to participants in the largest demonstrations, which were held in Sydney, with around 20,000 marching on Saturday, over 5,000 in Brisbane on the same day and some 30,000 in Melbourne on Sunday. Those taking part included a broad layer of working class and young people.

As has been seen globally, there was widespread shock and outrage at the appalling barbarity openly taking place in Gaza. Many attendees carried hand-made placards. Some had images of the bodies of children, denouncing the bombing of the Al-Ahli Arab Baptist Hospital in Gaza City on Thursday, killing up to 500 people.

Other placards condemned the US-backed Zionist regime in Israel, drawing the parallel between the actions of the Netanyahu government and those of the Nazi regime in Germany. Many denounced the Albanese Labor government, which is fully backing the Israeli atrocities, along with all the other imperialist powers. There were many furious chants such as "shame, shame Albanese."

All the rallies had a heavy police presence, which included riot and mounted police, and extended to deployment at train stations. No arrests were reported, however. There was no sign of anti-semitism in the speeches, chants or banners, contrary to the police claims of the danger of "hate speech," which could have been used to shut down the right to protest.

In Sydney, the WSWS spoke to **Jo**, a doctor who, along with her colleagues, organised a vigil at the city's Liverpool Hospital on October 18, in which more than 100 health workers participated.

"I think a lot of the rage that you see from people that support the Palestinians is because the narrative has been completely monopolised for the last 75 years," she said. "In

all the coverage that we're seeing on the news, when you turn on your TV, when you listen to the radio from the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation], which is supposed to be somewhat impartial, you will never hear the context of this attack, which is 75 years of apartheid."

Jo said the horror occurring was "not opinion, it is fact. Every human rights organisation, including the United Nations, including the WHO, including Amnesty International, call it an apartheid, but most Australians don't even know because that's not what's being presented to them. All they're hearing is terrorist Arabs have attacked Israel and claims that Israel has a right to self-defence. It's their right to bomb a hospital."

Speaking on the impact of the Al-Ahli hospital bombing in shifting sentiment at her workplace she said: "It has been across the aisle, whether they were political or not, whether they had any understanding of this conflict or not. I think that struck a chord with everyone... at least people can agree at baseline that hospitals shouldn't be bombed, that children shouldn't be bombed. But I will say that it's so hard to speak up... It's not like we're allowed to openly speak about this in our hospitals.

Asked if doctors were being silenced, Jo said: "Absolutely! Our own organisation, the AMA [Australian Medical Association], has not made a statement about this. Nor has any other organisations that I pay money to ... There's so much censorship and propaganda that's going around, that we can't speak freely.

"The Australian Medical Students Association did put out a post on Facebook that was immediately deleted. They then put up a statement retracting the post and saying, 'there's lots of nuance to this situation.'"

Jo explained that "There was a peaceful organisation of doctors, midwives, nurses, anyone who works in the healthcare system in Liverpool Park two nights ago." It was organised independently by junior doctors and it spread among broader layers of healthcare workers.

"It was peaceful and every speaker there spoke about Jewish, Muslim, Christian, atheist and agnostic solidarity.

There were no hate messages. What we said was that we cannot support an occupation where hospitals are being bombed. The way it was portrayed on the media and the comments when you read their coverage was people saying, 'these are unemployed people on our welfare dollar protesting.' We are doctors. We are not unemployed, and we work very hard."

In Melbourne, **Chana** said: "It is very important that everybody around the world shows up to rallies like this, because this is the voice now. I'm also here as a Jewish woman because this is being done in our name. We can shout 'Not in our name!' but it doesn't wash the blood off our hands."

Asked about the powerful global rallies in defence of the Palestinian people, Chana replied: "That's humanity, that is who we are. There are more of us than there are people willing to commit genocide. The reason they can do it is because they have weapons, they have money and they have power. But we also have power, because there are a hundred thousand times more people that are willing to stand up and say 'No!'"

"This is an economic war, more than even it's a religious war. People need to know their history. Speaking as a Jewish woman, who was raised by a Yiddisher and a Holocaust survivor, I was taught that it was the working-class Jewish people that were fighting Zionism from day one. We never stood by it, we understood that it was going to harm Palestinian people and ourselves, and we were fighting against it from the beginning as working-class people."

Zane, a 15-year-old high school student, explained: "I'm very passionate about the Palestinian issue. I feel that our media is not covering this at all, it's very biased and takes the Israeli side."

"I tried writing an article for my school paper on Israel-Palestine. I was told it is a very sensitive issue, so I had to change it a couple of times. The day of the publication was supposed to be the Monday, the day after the launching of the Gaza siege, but then my teachers said I am not allowed to publish it at all, until the issue becomes 'less sensitive.'"

"I'll keep trying, and all those who support Palestine will do their work to get the message across. Nothing less than the freedom of Palestine, securing the human rights of the Palestinian people, that's the goal."

Shabry, a 49-year-old accountant, said: "I've come to speak up for the voiceless. People have just about had enough of governments and media trying to brainwash everyone to believe in one view. I think the US is driven by the arms and weapons industry, while Israel is just a pawn in the bigger game of the US."

Responding to a discussion on class unity in the Middle East and internationally, Shabry said: "The call for unity of

Israel workers with Palestinians is a great thing. I believe in that. There are a lot of people within Israel itself now speaking up. In the past people have kept silent but now the Israelis and the Jewish community are voicing their opinions about what the Netanyahu government is pushing for. That's a great positive."

Originally from Gaza, **Aladin**, said: "I'm here to support my people. My family were farmers and they had to move after 1948. They were expelled. When the farm was taken, they went to Gaza."

"For the Western governments, where their interests lie, they don't want peace in the Middle East. It's all business, all the weapons are being sold to Israel in the Middle Eastern countries. The US is losing its grip on the world. They have been the most powerful country for a long time. I think they have moved their carriers against Iran. There is a double standard here. In Ukraine they say they want to stop the killing of children and women. They are hypocrites. They don't care about humanitarian rights at all."

In Brisbane, **Hannah and Laura** carried home-made signs. Hannah, a scientist, explained the messages. She said: "I think Australia has an obligation to stand against genocide, as a member of the UN, as every country. The very least you can do is support those facing eradication for no reason other than their race."

Asked why she thought the Albanese government was lining up behind the genocide, Hannah commented: "It's the same reason that the rest of the West is. It is beneficial for 'us' to allow Israel to continue an illegal occupation. So, we are putting human needs below the value of oil and commodities that we can do without."

"By 'we,' I mean Australia as a country—the politicians, obviously not the people. We definitely get no benefit from the wealth of the capitalists."

"I wish to show my support for Palestine and stand against what's happening over there. I'd like to see a ceasefire and a stop to thousands of innocent people being displaced in the name of greed."



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