Thousands at Toronto demonstration condemn Israeli genocide in Gaza

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More than 4,000 mainly young people demonstrated in front of the US Consulate on Toronto's University Avenue Saturday against the genocidal onslaught of the Israeli state, backed by the full force of Canadian and world imperialism, against the Palestinian people.

The demonstration, organized by local Palestinian groups and supporters, was held as part of a global day of protest, which saw millions of people take to the streets in hundreds of cities across Canada, the United States, Europe, and the Middle East.

A worker from the Middle East made a particularly eloquent defense of the right of the Palestinian people to resist occupation and genocide.

"I believe Hamas is not a terrorist group, it's a Palestinian resistance, because Palestine has been under the Israeli Occupation since 1948," he said. "So, Hamas is not a terrorist group. It is a resistance, fighting for the native people of Palestine, to get their land back and I believe that the same people who are killing the Palestinians now, these are the same people who killed the Native Americans, over one million Native Americans, to build the United States of America, the same people who brought more than 50 million Africans to the United States as slaves, and they killed half of them. And they are the same people who bombed Japan, with two nuclear bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And these people are the same people who are killing the people in Palestine. And they say they are terrorists! The real terrorists are the Zionists who are occupying the government of Israel, the army of Israel. Biden and his army—these are the biggest terrorists we have ever seen."

The protest site in front of the US consulate is well worn with the feet of demonstrators. From the war against Yugoslavia in 1999 to the imperialist wars of conquest against Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003, the US Consulate site has become the traditional location for anti-war demonstrations. This reflects the understanding that US imperialism is the principal instigator of a whole series of wars which have claimed tens of millions of lives around the world.

This point was made by Ali Malah, a veteran of the anti-war campaigns of a quarter century ago, who remarked to the *World Socialist Web Site*, "The streets recognize our names now, from the war on Iraq, the war on Afghanistan and the war on Palestine. So here we are, doing it again. There is huge anger in the community regarding what's going on inside Gaza and Palestine, and also huge disappointment with the federal political leaders and provincial as well. They haven't developed a spine to call for a ceasefire, and they are just kissing up to the Zionist lobby and the illegal State of Israel."

In fact, the entire Canadian ruling establishment, including all of the parties in the House of Commons—the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Government of Justin Trudeau which it backs, the Official Opposition Conservatives, the Quebec nationalist Bloc Québécois and the Green Party, are officially united in their support for Israel's "right to defend itself." In reality, this means unconditional support for the far-right Israeli government's "right" to crush all Palestinian resistance, and illegally seize all remaining Palestinian land.

This point was made by one of the organizers of the demonstration. He described the Israeli state's goal in the current campaign against Gaza, for which the mass uprising of October 7 provided a convenient pretext. "They just want to repeat the 1948 Nakba (the original expulsion of the Palestinians). They want to take all the people away from Gaza, to the Sinai or anywhere else, and they want to keep them there, and take them away from their homes. So, it's the second 1948. But the difference between 1948 and now is that the people are educated, they know what the plan is. They will never be broken, and they will stay in Gaza," he said.

The Canadian ruling class has reacted hysterically to any expression whatsoever of solidarity with the Palestinian people under bombardment in Gaza. Workers at Moxies restaurant on University Ave. came out and spontaneously cheered on the demonstrators as they passed by. The far-right immediately began a witch hunt campaign against

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them, calling on Moxies to “make this right”– i.e., fire the workers.

Toronto Sun Columnist Brian Lilley, along with the entire media establishment, has waged a similar smear campaign against Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) President Fred Hahn, who tweeted his support for “Palestinian resistance” as the mass uprising began. He has been pilloried ever since as supporting “terrorism” based on a smear campaign trading in atrocity propaganda, including lurid stories of decapitated babies, which turned out later to be a complete fabrication.

The same Canadian media has refused to show images of the horrific human toll on Palestinians in Gaza from the genocidal Israeli bombing campaign, which has now mercilessly slaughtered as many people as attended the Toronto demonstration. The chant “Mainstream media – say the truth!” was heard over and over again Saturday.

Malah referred to the smear campaign of the capitalist press, when he said, “Yes, we have some union leaders taking a principled stand, but they are being slaughtered by the media. Look at Fred Hahn, with the Zionist lobby and the right-wing media against him.” Earlier Saturday, Hahn capitulated to the witch-hunt, issuing a pathetic, groveling apology in which he renounced his earlier statement.

Malah also noted the glaring absence of any contingents from the trade unions at the demonstration. “To be honest with you I don’t know what needs to happen for the leaders of major labour organizations around the globe to really hit the street, like when you have the French government banning rallies, banning carrying the Palestinian flag, where are the unions on that?” he asked. “Where is the trade (union) movement on that? The same in Germany. Even here in Canada.”

When asked if the trade unions even represented the working class any longer, Malah, himself a longtime union activist and retired public servant, had to admit that, “That’s the million-dollar question. Unfortunately, some of them are just business people climbing the ladder and taking care of themselves. And you know when they are done with their post, they either end up as Senators or on Boards here and there...”

Canadian government support for the Israeli genocide in Gaza was unequivocally condemned by everyone at the demonstration. Demonstrators carried signs such as “History condemns Canadian state support for Israel’s genocide against the Palestinians,” and chants such as “Justin Trudeau’s hands are red!” were enthusiastically repeated.

The demonstration also refuted the ruling elite’s attempt to smear all protesters supporting Palestine as “anti-Semites.” The most enthusiastic cheers were reserved for a veteran speaker from Jewish Voices for Peace. Her comments about the history of her group’s support for Palestine caused hundreds of participants to raise their cell phones in order to capture video of her speech.

Malah also referred to the solution to the current crisis, calling to “end the occupation, dismantle the settlements, return of refugees, and have one democratic state for all of its residents and citizens.”

Workers, families and young people enthusiastically took copies of several perspective statements from the *World Socialist Web Site* that explained how US imperialism saw the war in the Middle East as a front in a global war to secure its hegemony. The statements also called for opposition to Zionism and Arab nationalism through the unification of Jewish and Arab workers on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program. The statement “Down with the Netanyahu government! Stop the imperialist-backed Zionist onslaught against Gaza!”, which was distributed widely by a WSWS reporting team, declares, “The Israeli working class cannot defend its own democratic rights without fighting for the democratic rights of the Palestinian people against Zionist oppression. And the Palestinians cannot achieve their aspirations for democratic rights and social equality without forging a fighting alliance with the Israeli working class. The only viable perspective is not a mythical ‘two-state solution,’ but a unified socialist state of Jewish and Arab workers.

“No matter how heroic the struggle of the Palestinians, the intolerable conditions they confront will not be resolved without the development of an international movement of the working class for socialism. This is no less true for the Jewish workers and youth in Israel. The danger posed by a renewed growth of anti-Semitism is very real. But it emanates not from the democratic strivings of the masses of Gaza and the occupied West Bank, but from the reactionary national chauvinism incited by capitalism and imperialism.”

The demonstration lasted for many hours, marching down to the Gardiner Expressway, which young people attempted to occupy. They were prevented from doing so by riot police. After sunset, the demonstrators marched back up University Ave. which meant the demonstration lasted more than 5 hours.

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