

Workers and young people protesting Israeli assault on Gaza speak from demonstrations across the UK

Our reporters
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As well as at the national demonstration of hundreds of thousands in London, reporting teams from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with people protesting Israel's war on Gaza at demonstrations mobilising tens of thousands across the country on Saturday, including in Leeds, Sheffield, Bradford, Manchester (see video report), Glasgow and Inverness.

Kyle, a rail worker, said, "The Western powers have been complicit in war crimes in the Middle East for years. They fully back the Israeli colonial project. They don't care about the lives of Palestinians. They talk of a ceasefire but they don't really want one. They want the Palestinians to be eradicated from the Gaza Strip, and eventually from the West Bank. They want Israel to have full control of the Palestinian Occupied Territories.

"The US has a wider agenda in the region. Iran is the overbearing issue in all this. The US has sent two aircraft carriers into the Mediterranean. The current events are not part of a secret plan by the Americans, but they're seeking to benefit from this if it escalates into a wider war.

"I don't think the Americans can succeed. It's a doomed project, it'll end in disaster like the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. They're not going to successfully invade Iran or bring about regime change there.

"There's a lot of heat on the opposition Labour politicians. I don't think they'll change their positions, though. [Labour Party leader] Keir Starmer continues to support Zionism. We have to expand this movement and keep up the pressure on them."

Damon, a shop worker, told us, "The political parties in the UK support Zionism and have views based on nationalism and ethno-states. In Palestine, they're excluding a group of people based on their race and religion. This is not what so-called democratic countries are supposed to be about. It should be about inclusion, not exclusion. Israel's actions go against our purported values.

"There's the prospect of a united movement to oppose the war. We share the same conflicts and problems. Nations and ideologies can get in the way of standing in solidarity with people who face similar conditions or authoritarian governments and corporate interests around the world. We need to unite from the bottom up, which includes people getting out on the street in solidarity."

Dhalsim said, "Netanyahu, the prime minister of Israel, should be paying for his war crimes. Nobody should be occupying anyone's land.

"I'm very disappointed with the Labour Party. I haven't voted for them for a very long time. They always make false promises and use power to benefit their own pockets, not to help the public. In Leeds, a lot of the Labour MPs and councillors have had a frustrating response to the massacres in Gaza from the beginning. They've backed Israel and refused to express solidarity with the Palestinians.

"The media such as the BBC and Sky News are brainwashing the people

and sharing false information. The reality in Palestine is very different. I've been to demonstrations before, but the genocide in Gaza is the worst event I've seen internationally.

"Thousands of people are protesting now all over the UK and other countries to oppose these crimes. The demonstrations have brought together people from all backgrounds and cultures. The only way to take this movement forward is for everyone to come together and make the right demands. I hope we can take a step forward."

Suesanne attended with her children and friend **Amel**. She said, "We are here today because we're completely paralysed with grief, and we can't do anything else. We can't eat, we can't sleep, we can't think. I'm Palestinian, so the people being affected in Gaza are my family. But also, on a human level, I would like to think that I would stand for this, even if it was anyone else who's undergoing this kind of genocidal deprivation of any form of human rights.

She continued, "I always wonder what I would have done at the time when the Jews were severely persecuted. And I would hope that I would be doing this [protesting] and I would hope so would my children."

Amel added, "If it was the Israelis in the shoes of the Palestinians, I would shout for the Israelis. And also, there are so many courageous Israeli Jews who are standing for the truth, and they are being oppressed, shut up, threatened, and all sorts of things.

"Many Israeli soldiers disobeyed orders in the past. They say that they felt like they were terrorists. And they stopped and they said, 'No, we're not doing that anymore.' And this takes a lot of courage."

Sheffield

Bill, who lost his son during the Iraq war, explained, "I can't believe what is going on. I struggle with words to express my anger. All our so-called leaders have jumped on the bandwagon and are defending war crimes.

"We are not accurately represented. If you stopped 100 people today, 99 would be against what is happening, and the government and the press are stopping their views from being expressed.

"I ask myself when Israel is finished in Palestine, who is next? The US and Biden have for a long time been feeding a monster. Israel doesn't respect the international laws of war. It is a state established by pinching land.

"I was thrown out from the Labour Party in 2019 for criticising Israel and called an anti-Semite. Everything I said about Israel and its aims and crimes have been seen by the world now."

Speaking on his son's death, Bill said, "I pigeon-holed that event as his sacrifice for a better world but here we are. Where is the better world? The US wants a foothold in the Middle East and is using Netanyahu for this. I don't respect that at all."

Abdullah and his friend **Nasser** are from Yemen. Abdullah explained his English wasn't strong enough to say everything he wanted but wished to make it clear that: "I have come today to support the women and children in Gaza. Israel is killing them, cutting water, food, electricity and murdering innocent people."

"The attack on Gaza has nothing to do with Hamas, because they are killing innocent people. People are dying in hundreds."

Abdullah said that the war in Gaza is connected to what is happening with the war in Yemen. "There has been a war for nine years. Governments have ignored the genocide taking place there."

Nasser added that "people continue to die of starvation. The situation is bad there: no electricity, food, water. But despite this, hundreds of thousands in Yemen are coming out to support the Palestinians. They know what they are going through."

Bradford

Amber, a college student, said, "People in the UK have family in Palestine who are suffering. I think young people are taking this on board and supporting the Palestinians, and it's young people that are organising the protests."

"Last year when I was at my old high school, as soon as the Ukraine war started, straightaway my school said 'non-uniform day, bring £1 pound in and wear blue and yellow to support Ukraine.'

"Although students didn't agree with the Ukraine war, we said that we have been begging and begging for some sort of fundraiser for Palestine, anything to support people in Palestine, and we got told 'That's not fair because we have students from Israel', and we said, 'we have Russian students in our school so what's the difference?' and the school couldn't say anything."

"On that non-uniform day everyone did bring a pound in but wore the colours of Palestine which opened the eyes of many at the school. We had to break the rules for them to get the point."

Zafura said, "We are against the genocide. We are against the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians that is happening at the moment."

"I found out about this demonstration and told my sister we have to go; we have to do something. I can't just sit at home anymore. It really affected me. Especially as I've got my own children."

"Those women in Palestine don't even get to say goodbye to their children. They had to bury them with their own hands."

"All the world's governments can see what's happening. Israel has broken 62 international laws in war crimes. Iraq broke two and all hell broke loose on them."

Glasgow

A Palestinian engineer living in Glasgow told our reporters, "I'm not that old but I grew up with successive bombing campaigns on Gaza."

"My dad and I are from Palestine and he was under the illusion that due to Biden's Irish heritage he would understand the struggle of the Palestinian people. I don't think I have ever seen an American president give such full-throated support to Israel."

"Any country in the Middle East that has normalised relations recently with the US and Israel has witnessed massive protests from their population against the assault on Gaza."

"The population you need to appeal to in this situation is the working people in places that handle and deliver weapons; that's the only kind of leverage you can pull at to make any sort of difference. I completely think that workers should mount a struggle for socialism, that's what needs to happen."

"There are politicians that spoke here today and that's fine and dandy, but the opposition party in Labour support the government's policy in Israel and have no interest in the protests."

"You can see globally the broad consensus in the working masses is for a ceasefire but that is not reflected in any government's policy. What we need is a general strike."

A journalist attending the protest said, "The western media treats this crisis as though it began October 7 and completely ignore the context behind it, ignoring the fact that Israel have been occupying Palestine for many years. Ignoring this context in the coverage is not giving the public an honest account of what is happening there. When there are claims of atrocities against Palestinians the media heavily scrutinise it, but when Israel claims atrocities, it's uncritically accepted."

"The protests in London and around the world have been excellent to see. It's a very positive thing that people aren't accepting the version of events that are being presented to them. Lots of people are making an effort to express that they don't agree with the policy of Starmer and Sunak in Israel."

"I agree that workers should go on strike and not manufacture or deliver weapons to Israel, but not just weapons. The trade unions should really be reviewing what their members are making and advocating this kind of action, but the Trade Union Congress's support for increased military spending is disgusting!"

"I absolutely support the call [of the WSW/Socialist Equality Party] for a unity of the Palestinians with the Israeli working class. Without the support of workers in Israel itself this won't end."

Inverness

An Egyptian man living in Inverness said of the response in the Egyptian working class, "Everywhere in the squares there are people shouting and waving flags. The Egyptian people are not their government, they've rejected their government's silence. Egypt's silence makes me feel ashamed to be Egyptian."

Responding to slanders of protesters he said, "To oppose Zionism is not anti-Semitism. I've worked in hospitality all my life and 90 percent of the people I served were Israeli; they are not their government! There's no difference between average people."



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