

Workers and youth speak out at Australian marches against Israel's onslaught 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 in protest to the Israeli regime's genocidal war against Gaza. In Sydney more than 15,000 marched and Melbourne around 25,000 attended a rally on Sunday. About 500 joined a vigil in Brisbane on Friday.

A broad range of workers and young people joined the protests, expressing widespread anger at the horrors being witnessed in Gaza. There was also mass anger directed toward the Labor government and its complete support for the Israeli atrocities.

Over the weekend the Australian government abstained on a vote for a toothless, non-binding United Nations General Assembly resolution calling for a "humanitarian truce" between Israel and Hamas and for aid to be allowed into Gaza. Claiming the resolution was "incomplete," Australia joined nations such as Canada, the UK and Germany in abstaining. The US, Israel and 12 other countries voted No.

Foreign Minister Penny Wong said she was "deeply concerned" about the loss of life in Gaza, while immediately reiterating that Israel "has a right to defend itself." That was as the Gaza death toll approached 8,000, many of them children.

The Socialist Equality Party is holding a public meeting to discuss how to take forward the fight to stop the genocide, above all through the mobilisation of the international working class.

The meeting will be on Sunday, November 5 at 4 p.m. (AEDT) in Community Room 1, Bryan Brown Theatre, 80 Rickard Rd, Bankstown, New South Wales (NSW). For those unable to attend in person, the event will be livestreamed via Zoom. Reserve your seat now!

In Sydney we spoke to **Andrea** and her daughter **Ava**, who were in Sydney from Melbourne for the weekend. Andrea said "I can't believe what Israel is doing. I'm here to support Palestine because the atrocities are absolutely disgraceful. I can't believe this is actually happening."

Ava said: "I'm here to support Palestine. I think it is

disgusting that they are trapped in their own country. I think that there is no way that they [the Palestinians] are going to get help if no-one says anything."

Asked what she thought of the Australian government's attitude, Andrea said: "I am confused and appalled, and I feel like we must be listening to different news. I honestly don't understand."

Ava commented: "I think [the governments] are choosing to be ignorant because it's the easy option to support Israel. Not just our country's government, but America and celebrities. The news isn't covering it enough. If you turned on the news now you would see everything that has gone on in Israel at the start but nothing about Palestine and all the civilians being killed."

Grace had left her husband's hospital sickbed to come to the Sydney demonstration. "It seems to me that there is a lot of propaganda," she said. "The truth has gone missing in this war, just like most wars. I'd like to see there be a ceasefire straight away."

Speaking about the millions demonstrating against the attacks by the Israeli government, Grace drew broader conclusions. "If this kind of people power can't make our politicians and the people who wield power sit back and think about humanity, I don't know what will," she said.

"They don't listen to us about climate change either. Our world is in a very precarious state. There is what is happening in Palestine, there's Ukraine, there's wars all over the place. But there are also floods and immediately bush fires. We've lost so many in the northern hemisphere and it's our turn when summer comes here."

Asked what she thought about the working class taking action, Grace replied: "I think it's a great call. That's not to say that it is a black and white issue. It's the money—you must follow the dollars."

When the WSWS reporter said we are fighting for the international working class to become an independent political force to fight for socialism, Grace replied: "That would be a great thing. Thank you for interviewing me. I hope what you're planning for does transpire and the

working people unite.”

At the Melbourne rally, **Ben**, explained: “I’m here because I am sick of hearing about the constant mistreatment and genocidal conditions the Palestinians are facing. Also, the continual denial from Western people in power, governments, of what is really happening. It’s appalling that even with Israeli authorities themselves not even hiding their brutality, the Western powers still deny what’s happening.

“Whatever crimes Hamas has done, it is nothing compared to what Israel has done. I am not going to deny that there is Hamas and there are issues, but Israel is a full-on militarised state with the backing of the most powerful militaries of the world. They can crush pretty much anything that will be thrown at them. It is not a fair fight.”

Ben spoke on the historical issues. “One of the most insidious things about all this, is that there is a conflation with Israel and Jewishness in general. The way I see it, Jews have existed before Israel and will exist after Israel. It says a lot when anti-Semites seem fond of Israel. They see it as an ideal ethnic state and a place to push all the Jews towards so that they don’t have to deal with it themselves.

“From my understanding the original Zionists, in the founding documents, spoke of stuff like this as well. Theodore Herzl said that we can have our own state with settler colonialism, and Europeans won’t have to worry about us anymore, because they hate us.”

Jessie, a tattoo-shop worker, and **Kate**, who works in freight boarding and international logistics, attended the rally together. Jessie said: “We are here because we do not support the genocide of the Palestinian people and we call for a ceasefire immediately so that the Gaza people can get immediate necessary aid and innocent lives can stop being lost. Taken I should say, they are not ‘lost’—they are being taken.”

Kate added: “It’s really horrifying, the communications going down in Gaza, and seeing everybody I’ve been following on Instagram have their voices go silent, a nightmare. We are watching an entire people being wiped off the face of the earth. This is the absolute least we can do, the bare minimum is to show up today.”

Jessie spoke about the mass global demonstrations in defence of the Palestinian people. “It shows a good shift away from just believing what the media and headlines show you. It shows the power of social media and that you can get the real messages out, and you don’t have to rely on the newspapers and the radio to try to find out what is going on.

“When one of the hostages were released, all the headlines were saying ‘she went through hell,’ but when you watched the whole interview with her, she was saying she had been treated well. They were given medication, she was treated kindly, they were given food, but that’s not the agenda the

Western media wants to push.”

On the call issued by the WSWs for a political general strike, Jessie said: “Agreed, absolutely, nothing is more important than making sure this stops. I would be willing to lose weeks of work for this. I will not be bombed, it’s the least we can do, sacrifice a day of work, a week of work. If we can make sure this message is heard, and that something is done, there is nothing that I wouldn’t do.”

In Brisbane, **Ollie** said the US, as well as Israel, was responsible for what was happening in Gaza, together with any other state that backed the Netanyahu regime. “The European powers gave the Israeli state Palestinian land in 1947 and so they are ultimately responsible for the slaughter. Since then, Israel has continued to displace Palestinians in acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing.

“The US has been very vocal in supporting Israel because it sees it as a way to suppress the Middle East. The US will do anything it can to get support for its military.”

Asked about the role of the Labor government, Ollie said: “I have never been a fan of the Labor Party but I am very frustrated with it right now. I am both an American and Australian citizen and the way that Australia has continuously aligned itself with the US, and specifically the US military, is disgusting.

“Labor should listen to the people and consider the facts of the situation, and not just side with their US ally, and actually consider the interests of the people. I don’t have a lot of hope that they will do that.

“I am surprised by how supportive they have been of Israel, seeing them light up the Sydney Opera House in blue and white. I wasn’t expecting them to take it that far. I doubt that they would be doing this if it wasn’t for the support they get from the US military,” he said.



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