

Mass protests continue in New Zealand against genocide in Gaza

Tom Peters
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For the third week in a row, tens of thousands of people took part in protests across New Zealand on Saturday to oppose the genocidal bombing of Gaza by the Zionist regime in Israel. They joined millions worldwide in what are the largest anti-war protests in decades, across the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America and Australia.

In Auckland, more than 7,000 people marched from Aotea Square to Britomart. In Wellington, 5,000 people marched to parliament from Civic Square. Thousands more joined rallies in Christchurch, Dunedin, Hamilton, Hastings, Nelson, Palmerston North, New Plymouth and Whanganui.

New Zealand's corporate media continues to provide limited coverage of the protests, devoting far more space to the Rugby World Cup. Incoming National Party Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and the outgoing Labour Party government have rejected calls for a ceasefire. Luxon told *Newshub* reporters on Saturday, "From my point of view, what I want to make sure is there's very strong statements that are condemning the Hamas attacks on Israel on October the 7th."

The breakout of Gaza led by Hamas militants has been seized upon by Israel, backed by the United States and all the imperialist governments, to justify mass destruction, slaughter and ethnic cleansing in the Gaza Strip, which has a population of 2.3 million. More than 8,000 people are confirmed dead from the bombing and thousands more are buried in the rubble.

A spokesperson for Justice for Palestine told the Wellington rally on Saturday: "A child in Gaza is being killed every 15 minutes... Parents are writing the names of their children on their children's arms in case they need to identify them.

"The fuel is running out, the hospitals cannot operate.

Doctors are performing surgeries without anaesthetics ... journalists and their families are being targeted and killed. Ambulances are being blown up. There is a complete blackout of power and light and internet right now."

The Wellington march promoted a petition by Palestinian Youth Aotearoa calling on the government to demand an immediate ceasefire that has gained about 20,000 signatures.

Members of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality distributed leaflets promoting a November 13 public meeting at Victoria University of Wellington, titled "Stop Israel's genocide in Gaza!" and spoke with several people in attendance.

Sinead, who works for a non-profit organisation supporting young people, said: "My reason for being here is very simple. I'm against the killing of innocent people regardless of who they are, wherever they are. Calling this 'defending yourself' is farcical: the bombing of an entire people, bombing churches, schools, indiscriminate bombing.

"I feel like there's been no response, whether you're talking about the caretaker [Labour] government or our incoming [National Party] government. I feel like there's been far too much silence."

Anna, who works for a compliance company, said she was there because "I don't support genocide, I don't support apartheid. Since the bombing started it's just consumed my mind, it's all I can think about now." She described the Netanyahu regime as "extremists" whose aim was to take more land from the Palestinians, in a process of colonisation that "has been going on for 75 years."

Anna said she decided not to vote for Labour in the October 14 election because of Labour Prime Minister Chris Hipkins' statements supporting Israel's "right to

defend itself.” “Christopher Luxon and Chris Hipkins are a disgrace,” she said. “What they’ve said is absolutely disgusting. I find it appalling that they support a genocide. It’s horrific.”

She expressed alarm that some countries were seeking to criminalise protest actions in support of the Palestinian people. “In Germany, France, I have seen videos of people getting arrested on the street because they pulled out a flag.”

Anna noted that an incident in which antisemitic language was used at a Sydney protest was being used to smear all protests as “antisemitic.” “Just because I’m anti-Israel, it doesn’t mean I’m anti-Jew. At no point is it okay to be antisemitic just as it isn’t ok to be Islamophobic. We saw Jews here, protesting, because Israel does not stand for Jews. Israel is not doing this because they’re Jewish, they’re doing this because they’re fascists.”

She also denounced the false propaganda being used to stoke hatred against the Palestinians, such as Israel’s claim that Hamas had “beheaded 40 babies.” “They never provided proof. We don’t have any proof of all these claims that Israel is making, they’re just ridiculous.”

Mark, who used to live in Israel and was in the Israeli Defence Force in the 1980s, told the WSWS that he felt Israelis were “blinded by their rage” and unable to understand why Palestinians broke out of Gaza. “If I took your house and put you in the basement for 15 years, and then once a year I opened the door to throw a brick at you, I would expect that when you come out in 15 years, you’re going to be angry,” he said.

Mark stated that there was a risk of another world war, and if this happens “it’s the Americans and the Israelis and the British that made it. The British made it in 1917 with the Balfour declaration [in support of a Zionist state in Palestine] and the Americans have perpetuated that, and the trajectory is really bad. The Americans will be drawing themselves into a bloodbath not only in the Middle East but across the world. Free Palestine—that’s all I can say.”

Ezra, a theatre and M?ori language student, said it was important for indigenous people globally, and for people in western countries, “to support people who are currently going through genocide.” Ezra pointed to the significant numbers of M?ori taking part in the protests, as well as many people from New Zealand’s Jewish

community.

She said she was “deeply ashamed” but not surprised by the government’s support for “the genocide of the Palestinians. Genocide is not self-defence. Bombing hospitals is not defence. Killing children is not defence.”

Ezra urged people “to not give up hope, not fall into despair, and to keep fighting. We are calling for a ceasefire but that is not where this ends, because what then?” People in Gaza “are still left in the largest open air prison that we know to date, they still need help, they need support, they need food, they need medical supplies, they need electricity. More important, they need a process of decolonisation and for people to return home, for them to feel that they are safe within their homes and that their children are safe.”



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