

Ex-Australian PMs back Israeli genocide in Gaza

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31 October 2023

All Australia's living former prime ministers except for Paul Keating issued a statement on Monday backing Israel's escalating war of annihilation against the entire 2.3 million people of Gaza. It is a bipartisan statement of support for the US-backed genocide, signed by ex-leaders of both Australia's ruling parties—Labor and the Liberal-National Coalition.

Just as the Israeli ground invasion began, unleashing even greater death and destruction on the tiny, long-besieged enclave, the ex-PMs declared: "On the battlefield in Israel and Gaza we do not presume to give strategic advice to Israel."

This echoed White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby, who made clear last Friday that the Biden administration will support Israel's actions no matter what atrocities it is carrying out. "We're not drawing red lines for Israel," Kirby said.

With breathtaking hypocrisy, the former PMs claimed to be "horrified by the thousands of deaths and injuries inflicted on innocent Palestinian civilians, including many, many Palestinian children." But they effectively blamed the Palestinian themselves, not Israel, for the mass murder.

Such a statement demonstrates the immense divide that has opened up between the overwhelming public opposition to the genocide and the capitalist political establishment, which unconditionally supports the racially-based state of Israel and its backers in Washington.

The criminal war in Gaza, in flagrant defiance of international law, has produced mass disgust and outrage globally. It is increasingly clear, as revealed by leaked Israeli intelligence reports, that the onslaught is part of an ethnic cleansing offensive to drive the Palestinian population into Egypt's Sinai Desert.

Across Australia, tens of thousands have taken to the streets, joining millions worldwide, to voice their horror and anger over people being slaughtered by relentless Israeli bombardments, combined with deliberate starvation and denial of medical facilities. The demonstrations in Australia have been marked by deep hostility toward the current Albanese Labor government and its total support for the Israeli atrocities.

Monday's statement is an attempt to counter, intimidate and suppress this mass opposition, predominantly young and working class, which is also driven by hostility to the Labor

government's huge military spending in preparation to join a US-led war against China, and its imposition of a worsening cost-of-living crisis.

The timing of the statement, and the fact that it came from Australia, is both significant and chilling. It was released as the Netanyahu regime in Israel rejected all calls for humanitarian ceasefires and declared its intent to openly attack hospitals, schools and mosques, knowing it has the full backing of the Biden administration and all the other imperialist powers, including Australia.

Under Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's government, the alignment of the Australian ruling class behind US imperialism has been taken to a new level, further cemented by Albanese's state visit to Washington last week. That includes backing the Israeli violence as well as the US proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and its intensifying economic and military provocations against China.

The stand by the former PMs underscores how pivotal Australian imperialism has become to Washington's militarist drive to assert global hegemony. The US support for the Israeli genocide is a crucial component of this, directed against Iran, as well as Russia and China.

Large protests against the Gaza onslaught have erupted also throughout the Indo-Pacific region, in which the Australian government spearheads the demand that governments line up behind the US confrontation with China.

The statement shows that there is no line that the representatives of Australian imperialism will not cross, not even the extermination of civilians via the levelling of hospitals and apartment blocks, and the forcible removal of a population. It is a warning of the barbaric crimes they are prepared to embrace in joining US aggression against China, no less than they and their predecessors did in the invasions of Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan.

These signing the statement were John Howard (in office from 1996 to 2007), Kevin Rudd (2007–2010), Julia Gillard (2010–2013), Tony Abbott (2013–2015), Malcolm Turnbull (2015–2018) and Scott Morrison (2018–2022). Rudd and Gillard headed Labor governments, the rest Liberal-National Coalition ones, showing the essential agreement between the two ruling parties.

All the signatories have been directly complicit in many war crimes committed by the US and its allies, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq, where millions were killed and entire cities obliterated. They all endorsed the proven lies, such as “weapons of mass destruction,” concocted as the pretext. They also did so in defiance of massive protests in Australia and internationally.

Keating, who led a right-wing, pro-US Labor government from 1991 to 1996, issued a brief statement saying that he refused to sign the document because he had been asked to do so by Mark Leibler, an Australian Zionist Federation leader. In recent years, Keating has been a critic, from an Australian nationalist standpoint, of the growing dependence of Australian governments on the US military alliance against China, which is Australian capitalism’s biggest export market.

While Abbott and Turnbull claimed credit for drafting the statement, the Zionist Federation immediately hailed it, declaring: “The fact that the former prime ministers are from both major political parties highlights that the condemnation of Hamas and its terror campaign, and support for Israel’s right to defend itself transcends politics.”

The Labor-Coalition unity certainly shows the unlimited support for Israel and the US within the ruling political elite, and its willingness to perpetrate their lies. The statement completely twists the truth about the Gaza onslaught and buries the decades-long history of Israeli oppression of the Palestinians.

While feigning concern for the killing of children, the statement cynically blames Hamas, not Israel, for the carpet bombing of Gaza. It perversely claims that Hamas, which it brands as “terrorist,” wants “Israel to invade and bomb Gaza,” to promote “hatred of Jews.”

The statement justifies the Israeli onslaught by attributing it to “the cruel and murderous attack on Israeli families by Hamas on October 7,” as if history began on that date. It declares the October 7 events to be the greatest attack on Jews since the Holocaust. In truth, the flattening of Gaza resembles that Nazi barbarity, and the uprising in Gaza, a giant open-air prison for decades, recalls that of the Warsaw Ghetto.

As the Israeli government and military describe Palestinians as “animals” and employ the methods of extermination, their operation amounts to the Zionist regime’s “Final Solution” of the Palestinian question. This is the logic of establishing the state of Israel in 1948 through the violent expulsion of more than 700,000 Palestinians, followed by multiple massacres, including in previous military operations and occupations of Gaza.

As the WSWS has explained, the October 7 uprising had an element of tragedy, but that was entirely attributable to the insufferable oppression of the Palestinians. Like every desperate rebellion against colonial domination historically, the violent methods of the oppressors invariably provoke vengeance.

The creation of Israel was, as Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International warned, a “bloody trap” for the Jews, pitting them against the oppressed Arab masses. Zionism was never a solution to the historic persecution of the Jewish people. It is based on a reactionary racist ideology that blames the rest of humanity for anti-semitism, rather than the economic, political and social crisis of capitalism that is witnessing a revival of far-right neo-Nazism.

Today, the maintenance of a Jewish apartheid state, lurching toward fascism itself, is bound up with its role as an armed garrison of US imperialism, involved in all the wars instigated by Washington for resources and global domination, with disastrous consequences.

The former PMs’ statement concludes by endorsing, “as we did in office, the Australian government’s enduring support for a two-state solution as the basis for long-term lasting peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.”

The Zionist regime has long ago rejected any “two-state” proposal, which itself is based on a reactionary vision of dividing the Jewish and Arab masses along ethnic lines into rival nation-states. In reality, the liberation of the Palestinian people can be achieved only through a unified struggle of the working class, Arab and Jewish, against the Zionist regime as well as the treacherous Arab and Iranian capitalist regimes, and their replacement with a union of socialist republics throughout the Middle East and the entire world.

As the ex-PMs’ statement shows, the achievement of this, the only progressive solution for humanity, requires a conscious political fight to overturn the entire capitalist ruling class, free of any illusions that they or their political servants can be pressured, even by massive protests, to change course.

The Socialist Equality Party is holding a public meeting this Sunday to discuss how to take forward the fight to stop the Israeli genocide against the population of Gaza, 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!



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