

“Stop Israel’s genocide against Gaza!”—Socialist Equality Party in Australia holds well-attended public meeting

Our reporters

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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) held a strong and animated meeting on Sunday in the western Sydney suburb of Bankstown to oppose the genocidal war unleashed by Israel, supported by the US and all the imperialist powers, including Australia, against the Palestinian population of Gaza.

The well-attended public meeting was livestreamed, with over 150 participating online or in person, many attending their first SEP event.

Sunday’s event was one of the many anti-war interventions—meetings, demonstrations and protests—organised by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and its sections since October 7. The ICFI is the only organisation fighting for a unified movement of the international working class on a revolutionary socialist program to stop the mass murder and systematic devastation of Gaza and the accelerating danger of a third imperialist world war.

The Bankstown meeting was chaired by *World Social Web Site* journalist and SEP leader, Oscar Grenfell, with extensive reports from SEP Assistant National Secretary Max Boddy and SEP National Secretary Cheryl Crisp.

The detailed speeches, together with video clips of the global demonstrations, interviews and other footage, provoked numerous questions and online comments from the highly-engaged audience. The full video of the meeting is available above, and we urge WSWs readers to share it and this article widely on social media.

Opening the meeting, Grenfell said that the Netanyahu regime had taken Israel’s ethno-nationalist foundations and its decades-long oppression of the Palestinian people to its logical conclusion.

“Hitler sought to eliminate European Jewry. Netanyahu is seeking to eliminate the Palestinians,” he said, emphasising the unwavering support of all the imperialist powers, including Australia, for this genocidal policy.

“By openly adopting the mass murder of civilians as their program, these governments are saying there are no limits. There is no line they will not cross. This is bound up with their preparations for a world war and the capitalist agenda of a war against the working class in every country,” he said.

Max Boddy gave a detailed outline of the origins of Zionism and its reactionary national-exclusivist agenda and refuted

contemporary slanders that any criticism of Israel’s decades-long dispossession and oppression of the Palestinians was antisemitic hate speech.

“Zionism is not a religious movement, but a political one with definite historical origins. The real issues, like all great questions in politics, can only be grasped and understood if they are dealt with historically,” he said.

Boddy explained that while Zionism emerged in the aftermath of racist pogroms in Tsarist Russia in the late 19th century, significant sections of Jewish youth and intellectuals throughout Europe rejected this reactionary nationalist outlook and turned towards socialism.

“The best representatives of the Jewish intelligentsia joined the revolutionary movement, including leading figures such as Rosa Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky and even stretching back to Karl Marx himself,” he said.

Hitler’s antisemitism, Boddy said, was related to his hatred of the working class and, quoting from a biography of the Nazi leader, said, “The labour movement did not repel [Hitler] because it was led by Jews; the Jews repelled him because they led the labour movement.”

The speaker explained Zionism’s evolution in the 20th century. From the outset, it was an anti-socialist ideology based on nationalism and religious and ethnic exclusion of the Jews from the rest of the working class.

Boddy traced out the political circumstances that led to the rise of Zionism and the relationship between the emergence of the counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union and the defeats of the working class in the 1920s and 30s.

“The defeat of Trotsky and the Left Opposition in Russia, and the victory of Stalinism, had a catastrophic impact on the outcome of the class struggle in Germany when, in 1933, the Nazi regime came to power,” the speaker said.

“Zionism grew and developed because of the defeat of the German working class, setting in train a series of events that function in the political situation today. Without the victory of Hitler and fascism, there would never have been a mass Zionist movement or a mass migration of Jews to Palestine,” Boddy said.

The establishment of Israel in 1948, he said, was “a tragedy not only for the Palestinians but for the Jewish people as well,” and the subsequent dispossession of the Palestinian population, leading

up to today's bloody assault on Gaza.

The resistance of the Palestinian people, however, had not been broken, he said. Israel's murderous bombardment and the unwavering support by its imperialist backers reflect the barbarity of capitalism, which was "beset by crises" on every front, and in a desperate struggle for survival was heading towards a new world war.

The emergence of masses of workers and young people to oppose the genocide in Gaza, he concluded, requires a program and perspective that enables the movement to develop an understanding of its tasks. That perspective, Boddy said, "is the program of international socialism which animated and guided the October revolution of 1917, opening the way for a new chapter in mankind's development."

SEP National Secretary Cheryl Crisp told the meeting that although the 21st century has not yet reached the first quarter of its life, it is characterised by ongoing and continuous wars, each one bloodier and more terrible than the last.

The world, she continued, is witnessing the greatest crisis since the end of World War II, with wars in Ukraine and Gaza, and the US preparing for war against Iran and its military provocations against China.

"Unless a movement of the international working class prevents it, we are seeing the first stages of World War III. The war in Gaza is certainly not the first war of this century, but the level of brutality and barbarism is only comparable to that of WWII," she said.

Crisp reviewed the horrendous death toll in Gaza, almost half of them children, and the systematic destruction of hospitals, schools, water and other basic infrastructure. She noted that the death toll in the West Bank continues to rise as Israeli settlers' attacks on Palestinians more than double.

"The horror that is unfolding before the eyes of millions of people throughout the world has come as a shock. The world has seemingly transformed overnight. What, in fact, has happened is that reality has emerged. What is being witnessed is the real face of capitalism," Crisp said.

"That the state of Israel requires wholesale bloodshed and the extermination of the Palestinians to maintain its existence is a realisation being thrust on the world's population. This is not a religious conflict. It is not one of Jew against Arab. It is that of capitalism that faces an existential crisis in terms of the economic, social and political relations against the working class...

"This is a battlefield that is repeated in Ukraine and prepared in Asia against China. The perspective of US imperialism, along with the European bourgeoisie, is the redivision of the world. Colonialism has returned...

"There will not be a change of heart or direction by a reshuffling of personnel or parties—they are all tarred with the same brush—the defence of the capitalist property relations and social conditions which arise from it," she warned.

Crisp noted government attempts to ban protests in Germany, France, Italy and other countries and the censorious actions of university authorities in Australia. Last week, Victoria University administration in Melbourne blocked the IYSSE from holding its annual general meeting on Gaza. The pseudo-left Solidarity

organisation was also stopped from holding a meeting on Gaza at Sydney University.

"We have been banned from distributing leaflets, discussing with students, our posters which advertise our AGM on Gaza have been torn down by security. We are being dictated to on what we can discuss at our AGM," she said.

Crisp also referred to the role of the unions in Australia in backing the Albanese Labor government's support for the genocide against the Gaza Palestinians. While the Stalinist-run Maritime Union of Australia postures as an opponent of the war, one of its officials threatened SEP members at a public meeting on Friday for daring to ask whether the union planned to take any industrial action to stop the shipment of military equipment to Israel.

"There is only one force that can prevent war, and that is the international working class. The four decades of the suppression of the class struggle is over," she said.

"Whether the new and rising generations of the world will have a world in which to grow and develop will be bound up with the decisions which people in this meeting and throughout the world make... Young people and others must study the lessons of history, the struggles of the working class, of the strategic experiences of our movement as the basis for the building of the ICFI as the world party of socialist revolution. We urge you to make up your mind. Make the decision to join our movement. There is not unlimited time."

The compelling reports provoked a broad range of questions—too extensive to fully report here—with important replies and discussion. Several participants, online and in person at the meeting, asked how to mobilise workers to strike, impose bans and organise other forms of direct action to stop the onslaught in Gaza.

Others wanted to know about the role played by the Arab ruling elites in the Middle East, how to combat media bias and educate workers, and the pernicious role played by the Democratic Socialist of America and other pseudo-left organisations.

The strong proactive response to the meeting reflects the sharp changes in mass consciousness internationally, driven by deep-seated anti-war sentiment and mass hostility to the establishment governments, parties and the corporate media.



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