

Workers and young people speak out against Gaza genocide at SEP (Australia) public meeting

Our reporters

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A Socialist Equality Party (SEP) meeting on Sunday opposing Israel's onslaught in Gaza evoked a strong response, with more than 150 people attending in-person in Sydney and online via Zoom.

SEP national secretary Cheryl Crisp and assistant national secretary Max Boddy delivered detailed reports, denouncing the Australian Labor governments support for the genocide and placing it in the context of the broader eruption of imperialist violence.

The speakers emphasised the necessity to mobilise the working class internationally to halt the attack on Gaza. They elaborated a socialist perspective, directed against the source of the violence, the capitalist system itself. This included a detailed review of the reactionary origins of Zionism, and an explanation of the burning relevance of the internationalist perspective personified by Leon Trotsky.

The full event can be viewed here. Below are the comments of several participants.

Adrian, who works at a community legal aid centre and has participated in the mass protests opposing Israel's genocide, said: "What I found particularly illuminating was understanding the processes that gave way to Zionism's rise. Situating these current events in that historical context can help diagnose the issue."

Adrian said he had been struck by "the reference to the Russian Revolution and the hijacking of that revolution by the Stalinists, the shift away from international world revolution to socialism in one country and how that set into play different events. The failure of revolutions in other advanced countries, like Germany, led to the rise of fascism. That then resulted in the Holocaust and mass slaughter of the Jewish people. There was a mass displacement of Jewish people that no Western country wanted. That set into motion the creation of the occupied state of Israel."

He said the speeches helped him "understand how Zionism goes hand in hand with imperialism as opposed to what you

might hear in the media where they try to present this whole conflict as a religious war. It would be a disservice to relegate the entire history of these events to just a religious conflict over faith when it's not that, there are material processes in play directly related to capitalist and imperialist interests."

Speaking on the latest developments, Adrian said: "It's absolutely disgusting what's happening in Gaza. It is part of a move towards a potential Third World War. This is the creation of a new battlefield, the same as Russia and Ukraine, and the move of imperial powers towards greater war because that's the only way they can get out of the crises of capitalism.

"Mobilising the international working class is the only way that we can get out of this situation and prevent future wars. The only solution is socialism. If we understand this as a byproduct of capitalism, then the only way to combat it is through socialism. The international working class must be mobilized for that purpose and utilise its power as the only force in society that generates the wealth."

Zane, a 15-year-old high school student who met the SEP at a pro-Palestinian rally in Melbourne, said: "The meeting was comprehensive and very informative. I didn't know the history behind Zionism. A lot of the time when we hear about the state of Israel, it is after the Holocaust where the history begins. But the Jews were persecuted in Europe even before the Holocaust. The reality is the Zionists were talking about establishing a homeland a long time before the Holocaust."

Zane was scathing of the Labor government's support for the genocide, saying: "Frankly, it's as if we were funding Germany in the 1940s. It's not as though they don't know what is going on. Without a doubt our leaders know it if we, the people, know. It's all about capitalism staying in power, and to suppress the majority, which is the working class."

He also spoke about the broader eruption of militarism, including the \$368 billion earmarked by the Labor

government for nuclear-powered submarines for a US-led war in China.

Zane said: “In the most direct sense the Australian government is wasting our money, a third of a trillion dollars on submarines. There’s no doubt that the Australian people need money, look at the housing and the cost-of-living crisis. But they choose to waste it on war with China that has no benefit for us except to the capitalists in the US who profit from weapons sales. The Australian people are forced to just accept it.

“We’ve tried in the past to ask the capitalist leaders to stop war, but as we’ve seen with the Iraq war, that didn’t work. I think the approach which we’re taking now, which is the unification of the working class, that’s the stronger approach, and really the only one that will work. There is no working-class person who knows what is going on, who will support this war.”

Zane also spoke on the call by the Palestinian trade unions to block the supply of arms to Israel. “Great call but it’ll only work if the unions agree, but as you said, they won’t. That’s why we need organisations like yours, separate to the unions to actually listen to the cause of the workers, actually facilitate the embargo on sales of arms.”

Daniel, a student at the University of Melbourne, said: “The meeting covered the history of the conflict, which I didn’t really know. It is easy to say it’s a religious conflict, but it’s not as the webinar explained. I have heard the term Zionism, but I didn’t know the deep history of it.

“There was an outline of the struggle of the Trotskyist positions and the consequences of the Stalinist regime. The Trotskyist position being the struggle of international socialism against the Stalinist movement, which had a national position. That’s similar to what our governments are now, they essentially have a nationalist program, which defends capitalism. And Trotskyism is the big counter to that.

Daniel said that the support for Israel by the Australian government is “unsettling. It feels like it’s all linked to this political camaraderie with the US and the UK.” He noted that given there is a “rapid militarisation” of Australia, in line with the US conflict with China, “it is not surprising that the government would take the support that it has for Israel, but it’s not acceptable.

“Young people are facing World War. There are the submarines over in Perth and there’s the US bombers stationed in the Northern Territory and positioning around all the islands in the region approaching China. Who’s going to war? It’s the working class, it’s the young people who are being recruited and sent off. I’ve got cousins who are training, who are going to be part of the military. Where are they going to end up? They are going to be on the front

line.”

Kieran, a Brisbane chef, said he found the meeting “very interesting,” especially the historical material on how Jews had been displaced from Europe last century and channelled toward Israel.

“It really opened my eyes,” he said. “I had seen snippets of this information before but never really looked into it. It’s really fascinating. I got a lot out of the historical material, on how the Jews did not need to go to Palestine to find a home. The European powers really made a mash of that.

“I learnt a lot more about why the Jews went to Israel. They were thrown out of Europe and blocked from entering the US to escape Hitler. I can’t believe that the US did not allow Jews into America during World War II. That’s crazy!

“You don’t find out about such history until years later. You have to put the pieces together to understand what happened. The British have a lot to answer for as well. What they did in Palestine is like what they did with the partition of India and Pakistan—they lined them up against each other.

“And the French had a hand in the Middle East too. It’s all divide and conquer, and then leave, unless a place has resources like oil.

“We also discussed how none of the Arab regimes have done anything to stop the genocide in Gaza. The Arab and Jewish workers have a common interest in getting rid of all these regime.”

Matt, a Gold Coast student, said it was “good to go over the history” involved in the establishment of Israel.

Referring to the emergence of Stalinism and the defeat of the Trotskyist Left Opposition in the Soviet Union, he explained, “I really enjoyed hearing about the ties between the revolutionary failure in Russia and the victory of the Nazis and the rise of Zionism.

“That is absolutely important. There are the questions of history that people know of, but don’t go into enough. Unless you go into that essential knowledge, which I haven’t done myself in the past, you can’t understand the present. With the crisis in the Middle East, it is presented as ‘just complicated,’ which gives rise to the ‘both-sideness’ that the right wing, and the Labor government, exploit.

“The Jewish people were wanting to migrate to the US and Canada, not Palestine. The conflation between the Jews and Zionism is one of the more insidious things these days.”



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