

# Mass protests in Malaysia against Gaza genocide

Kurt Brown  
8 November 2023

Since the Israeli government began its genocidal attack on Gaza in October, significant protests have taken place throughout Malaysia, as part of the powerful global mass demonstrations opposing the onslaught.

In a recent display that attracted international attention through social media, approximately 50,000 supporters of the Terengganu Football Club in a packed stadium waved Palestinian flags and chanted for an end to the bombing during a home game against Kuala Lumpur City on November 3. Terengganu FC has approximately 195,000 supporters on Facebook and 213,000 supporters on Instagram where people also expressed their support for the pro-Palestinian demonstration.

While such events have spread widely online, the mass mobilisations in Malaysia, as well as enormous demonstrations in nearby Indonesia involving as many as two million people, have been blacked out almost entirely by the Western press.

Major protests have taken place in Malaysia each week, with those on October 13, 24, and 28, attracting some 50,000 people each.

The October 28 demonstration was one of the biggest, with large numbers of people participating in rallies in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur (KL) and in the states of Sabah and Sarawak. In KL, tens of thousands marched on the US Embassy waving hundreds of Palestinian flags and denouncing Washington's support for genocide. Home-made placards read, "Stop Killing! Stop Bombing!" and "Israel Has the Right to Defend Itself Actually Means Bombing Babies."

In Kuching, the capital of Sarawak, 20-year-old student Marlisa Tening, who is Christian, made clear that the conflict was not based on race or religion. In

comments to the *Malay Mail*, she said: "I stand with Palestine and what happened in Palestine is not a matter of religion. They have suffered from Israeli crimes."

On October 24, a capacity crowd of more than 16,000 protesters attended a solidarity concert, entitled "Malaysia is with Palestine," in Axiata Arena in KL. Large numbers of protesters held Palestinian flags and banners with comments such as "Free Palestine," "Stop the War," and "We Stand with Palestine."

Channel News Asia reported that the protesters included students, professionals, and refugees. A 20-year-old student, Nurul Anis Syafiqah, stated that "This is not just about religion, it is about humanity." Another student, commenting on the actions of Israel, stated: "The way they are seizing land, taking [it] from the Palestinians, that is wrong."

Other developments have indicated a particular ferment among young people, including high school students.

A Malaysian content creator and his 15-year-old friend created a server (a virtual computer environment) for the popular online video game Roblox as a space for players, mostly children, to protest the atrocities taking place in Gaza. Remarkably, while only 200 players can join the server at a time, the server had 275,000 visits as of late October. A TikTok video of one of the virtual protests received 3.2 million views.

Almost half of Roblox players are no more than 12 years old. Some parents posted on social media that their children had attended such protests. Organisers and participants have had to adopt expressions like "Palestine will be free" since the expression "Free Palestine" is censored on the Roblox server.

The outpouring of support for Palestinians in different facets of daily life is in revulsion to what has taken place in the past month. Israeli forces have

murdered more than 11,000 people, including 5,000 children. Over 30,000 Gazans have been injured. These figures, however, do not include bodies yet to be recovered from the extensive rubble and debris.

Unlike in the imperialist countries, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has postured as an opponent of the war in Gaza. He addressed the October 24 stadium event in KL, telling those gathered that he stood “with the Palestinian people yesterday, today and tomorrow.”

Anwar has noted that the US government, the principal backer of the Israeli regime and its chief arms supplier, has made two formal diplomatic representations to the government on October 13 and 28 over its stance of condemning the Israeli assault.

In addition, the Malaysian ambassador to Washington was summoned on October 18. In all cases, the US has put pressure on the Malaysian government to label Hamas a terrorist organisation. The Malaysian government has never recognised the state of Israel.

Those actions further underscore the lawlessness of US imperialism. While overseeing a genocide in the Middle East that recalls the worst crimes of the 20th century, Washington is threatening governments around the world that do not line up fully behind the mass murder.

Anwar’s statements undoubtedly reflect the depth and breadth of opposition to the Israeli bombardment in the Malaysian population. As with other countries in South East Asia, Malaysia was subjected to centuries-long colonial occupations, against which there were protracted mass struggles.

Beginning in 1948, there was a twelve-year armed struggle against British colonial rule. Britain and its allies used brutal counter-insurgency methods later deployed by the US against Vietnam.

Those experiences undoubtedly come to mind, when Malaysian workers and young people watch the images of Palestinians being slaughtered by a heavily-armed imperialist state everyday.

Anwar is, however, the pro-business representative of a political establishment that offers no way forward for working people in Malaysia or anywhere else. The political set-up has been roiled by continuing crisis, resulting from the social polarisation between a small elite and the vast mass of the population.

In that context, Anwar has increasingly pitched to Islamist forces, in a bid to nullify Islamist opposition

parties and to provide a base of support for his rule.

Muslims, predominantly ethnic Malays, represent 70 percent of the 34 million people in Malaysia, with ethnic Chinese and ethnic Indians representing 22.5 percent and 6.5 percent, respectively. Although there is an identification with the plight of Palestinians on religious grounds, there exists widespread support for Palestinians on the basis of opposition to war and to the policies and actions of the Israeli government.

Collins Chong Yew Keat, a foreign policy and security strategist from the University of Malaya, commented that “An overwhelming Muslim and non-Muslim population is supportive of the Palestinian cause in the name of humanitarian grounds.” Chairman of the Viva Palestina Malaysia aid group, Dr Musa Mohd Nordin similarly noted that “it cannot be denied that the principal reason is the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice and equality.”

Anwar is attempting to head off this movement, lest it begin to develop into a broader struggle outside the control of the government.

At the same time, Anwar’s government is seeking to balance between Washington and Beijing, amid a growing US war drive against China. That precarious act has been further complicated by the eruption of war in the Middle East.

As is the case internationally, workers in Malaysia should strike out on an alternative route. Their mobilisations are part of a developing global movement. It must be developed as a conscious international struggle against the root cause of the genocide in Gaza, and the broader eruption of imperialist militarism, the capitalist system itself.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**