

Greens stage walkout of Australian parliament to protest Gaza genocide

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On Monday, Greens MPs walked out of the federal Senate to protest the Labor government's full support for Israel's genocidal onslaught against the Palestinians in Gaza.

The walkout was preceded by several exchanges. Greens Senator Mehreen Faruqi directed a question to Don Farrell, Labor's minister for trade and tourism and deputy leader of the government in the Senate.

Faruqi said: "The State of Israel is carpet-bombing Gaza, targeting civilians and committing war crimes for the world to see. So far, Israel has massacred almost 10,000 Palestinians. Gaza has become a graveyard for children... and yet the Labor government continues to shield Israel from any accountability." She demanded to know if Labor would call for an immediate ceasefire.

In reply, Farrell denounced Hamas and proclaimed Israel's "right to defend itself," the line used by all the imperialist governments, including in Australia, to justify their support for the mass extermination of Palestinians.

At this, Faruqi declared: "The Coalition is morally bankrupt when it comes to Palestine, and Labor have shown themselves to be heartless, gutless, cowards. You are watching the massacre of thousands of Palestinians by Israel, and you are not condemning Israel. You refuse to call for an immediate ceasefire." She said the Greens would "bring the people's protests to parliament," shouted "Free Palestine" and led all Greens MPs in walking out of the Senate.

This undoubtedly reflected and was motivated by growing popular anger over the bombardment, which has seen the largest anti-war demonstrations since the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Faruqi has also won support, because later on Monday she was the subject of a vile onslaught by Senator Pauline Hanson, leader of the right-wing One Nation outfit. Hanson effectively called for pro-Palestinian protests to be banned. She then accused Faruqi, who was born in Pakistan, of not "loving this country" or "abiding by its laws," and declared: "I will actually take you to the airport and put you on a plane."

Hanson's intervention highlights the fraud of the entire

official discussion over Palestine. Mass rallies, opposing an unfolding genocide, and involving growing numbers of Jewish people, are slandered as antisemitic, because they oppose the criminal policies of Israel. Meanwhile, fascistic politicians incite Islamophobia and cheer on the slaughter in Gaza.

It would be a mistake, however, to respond to the actions of the Greens uncritically. The decisive issue for workers and young people is how to end the genocide, and the broader eruption of imperialist militarism, of which it is an expression. To that question, the Greens have no answer.

The walkout had the undeniable character of a stunt. It did not last long. By the evening session, Greens MPs were back in the Senate politely joining in its deliberations. They have not threatened any concerted disruption. Nor have they pledged to block all government legislation, including those bills that are dependent on Greens' votes, until Labor ends its support for the genocide.

The Greens statements on Gaza, moreover, are notable only because the entire political establishment has shifted vastly to the right. In official circles it is now controversial, if not taboo, to call for an end to the carpet bombing of civilians and the mass murder of children.

If it were not for this context, the Greens statements would appear more clearly as what they are: rather tepid expressions of middle-class liberalism, far removed from any sort of militant struggle against war. Faruqi and several other MPs, who have spoken at the mass rallies, have adopted a more "left-wing" tone, but the official statements of the Greens have not strayed greatly from the general narrative of "condemning both side."

The first Greens' statement, by its spokesperson for foreign affairs Senator Jordon Steele-John, declared on October 8: "The right to resist occupation must be in accordance with international law. The premeditated targeting of civilians by Hamas violates these laws. The bombing of Palestinian civilians in response by the State of Israel violates these laws."

On October 16, Steele-John stated: "We all watched in

horror at the brutality and callousness of Hamas' October 7th attacks on innocent civilians. The State of Israel's siege and destruction of Gaza continues the cycle of violence. It is civilians in both places paying the price." On that date, the Greens introduced a motion into parliament, opposing Israel's bombing but beginning with a denunciation of Hamas for "war crimes."

On Tuesday, the day after the walkout, Steele-John issued a statement, which began with a denunciation of the October 7 Palestinian military operation a month before. He declared: "There is no excuse, no justification and no celebration that can be found in attacks that deliberately targeted and sought to traumatise civilian communities. This was not an act of resistance, nor a legitimate military offensive. This was a terrorist act and we will continue to condemn it as such."

While they reference Israel's illegal occupation and the protracted oppression of Palestinians, such statements by the Greens legitimise the depiction of the genocide as a "conflict" between two equal entities rather than a wholesale military slaughter of the Palestinian people aimed at their eradication. The trite condemnations of "both sides" obscure the reality of what is unfolding and equate the actions of the oppressed with those of the oppressor.

As the WSWS has explained, what occurred on October 7 was an uprising of the oppressed that took the form of a military operation because of Gaza's character as an enclosed ghetto surrounded by the Israeli armed forces. The deaths of civilians were tragic. Responsibility lies with the Zionist regime's brutal treatment of the Palestinian masses, including murderous attacks on previous peaceful protests at the Gaza border.

A WSWS perspective on October 10 was diametrically opposed to the mealy-mouthed statements of the Greens, sheeting home responsibility to Israel and its imperialist backers. It noted that "[T]he uprising in Gaza that broke out over the weekend is more akin to a prison break than an 'attack' and only the latest chapter in a long saga."

Amid the hysterical denunciations of this action, the WSWS explained: "Behind all this ferocious imperialist hypocrisy is the fundamental class attitude of the oppressors to any resistance by the oppressed, whether it is in Gaza or anywhere else. 'We, the oppressors, are free to use force whenever we decide that it serves our interests,' they say... 'You, the oppressed, are not under any circumstances permitted to use force in response.'"

Such a class position is anathema to the Greens. They are a party of the affluent upper middle-class, fully committed to the existing parliamentary order and the capitalist system it defends. Over the past period, that has involved an ever-greater alignment with imperialist war.

The Greens were in a de facto coalition government with

Labor in 2011, when it signed on to the US "pivot to Asia," a vast military build-up in preparation for war with China. When Barack Obama announced this catastrophic program from the floor of the Australian parliament, Greens representatives, including current party leader Adam Bandt were first in line to shake his hand.

The Greens backed the US-NATO onslaught against Libya in 2011, which destroyed the country, resulting in more than a decade of conflict between rival militias and the return of open-air slave markets.

The Greens aggressively supported the US-led regime change operation in Syria, at times going further than the government. In 2012, they demanded Labor impose additional sanctions on the Syrian regime. The protracted civil war in that country is now acknowledged to have been connected to one of the largest CIA operations in decades.

More recently, the Greens have given their full-throated support to Washington's proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, lining up with the very same imperialist governments now overseeing the butcher of Gaza, to depict that US-NATO instigated war as one for "sovereignty" and "democracy."

There are differences between the Greens in various countries, but they are differences of degree. It is no accident that the Greens in Germany hold executive positions in a government that is frothing in its support for the Israeli bombardment, and that is instituting police-state bans on pro-Palestinian protests.

The Greens' generally pro-imperialist foreign policy is bound up with their whole class character and domestic orientation. As Bandt has insisted for more than a decade, the Greens are a "responsible" party, committed to "parliamentary stability." Their primary aspiration is to form de facto coalitions with Labor governments, by winning the balance of power in parliament.

This is an organisation that has nothing to do with and is hostile to the fight to mobilise the working class against the pro-war political establishment. The Gaza genocide will not be ended by stunts in parliament, but through mass action by the working class, including to block military supplies to Israel. Above all, what is posed is the necessity for a socialist perspective directed against the descent into capitalist barbarism.



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