

New Zealand meeting discusses the socialist perspective to stop the genocide in Gaza

Our reporter

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The Socialist Equality Group and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality held an online public meeting in New Zealand on Monday, titled “Stop Israel’s Genocide Against Gaza!” The webinar was attended by about 40 people, with several taking part as a group at Victoria University of Wellington and others joining from different parts of New Zealand and Australia, as well as Sri Lanka and the United States.

The meeting was one of a number organised by the Trotskyist movement, which is fighting to mobilise the international working class to stop Israel’s genocide and the developing global imperialist war.

Cheryl Crisp, national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party in Australia (SEP), who chaired the meeting, described the horrifying situation in Gaza. In little more than a month Israel’s military has killed more than 11,000 people, almost half of them children, and flattened much of the Gaza Strip. Water has been cut off and hospitals are being bombed by Israel. Patients, including newborn babies, are dying because of a lack of electricity and medical supplies.

While capitalist governments, including Labour in New Zealand, support Israel’s mass murder of the Palestinian people, “the slaughter is compelling people from all over the world to take a stand.” The crucial questions facing the growing anti-war movement were: “how did the world get to this point?” and “what political program is needed to stop the descent into world war and barbarism?”

Max Boddy, assistant national secretary of the SEP in Australia, delivered a report that reviewed the history of Zionism as a right-wing nationalist political movement, supported by Britain and other imperialist powers to establish the state of Israel through the violent dispossession of the Palestinian people.

“Critical to understanding Zionism is understanding that it directly opposed the international solidarity of the working class as the path to the liberation of the Jews,” Boddy said. The growth of support for Zionism was bound up with demoralisation following the defeats of socialist revolutions in Europe, the Stalinist betrayal of the Russian Revolution, and the Nazi Holocaust.

Stalin’s nationalist repudiation of the world socialist revolution and the Soviet bureaucracy’s defeat of the Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky produced catastrophes for the working class, including the coming to power of Hitler in 1933. The Stalinists rejected Trotsky’s call for a united front of the Communist and Social Democratic Parties in Germany, which would have

mobilised the working class to defeat fascism in Europe.

“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 stated.

While Zionism is the most brutal form of imperialist-backed nationalism, Boddy explained that national political programs were “not only a dead-end for the Jewish working class, but for the Palestinians as well.” He denounced the Palestinian Authority led by Mahmoud Abbas, which has been offered by Washington and by Israel the job of policing the Palestinian masses in the West Bank and in Gaza.

“The liberation of the Palestinian people can never be achieved by an abortion of a nation state brokered by imperialism,” he said. Instead of the bankrupt “two state solution,” the working class and oppressed peoples of the Middle East had to unite with the Israeli working class in a common struggle against imperialism, to put an end to poverty, ethnic cleansing and war through the establishment of a socialist society.

In his report to the meeting, Socialist Equality Group leader Tom Peters said “the endorsement of Israel’s atrocities by every imperialist government—including Australia and New Zealand—must be taken as a warning of what they are also prepared to do anywhere in the world to defend their interests.”

He explained that the bombing of Gaza is one front in an expanding global war. “Last year the US and NATO instigated a bloody war with Russia over Ukraine, which has already cost hundreds of thousands of lives and is triggering growing opposition in Ukraine. The Biden administration has now positioned warships and tens of thousands of troops into the Middle East, threatening a wider war against Iran.”

Meanwhile, the US continues to arm Taiwan, “with the clear aim of using it in the same way that they have used Ukraine, to provoke a war with China.”

The US ruling class aims to solve its economic crisis by redividing the world, regardless of how many tens of millions of people have to die for this to be achieved. New Zealand, as a minor imperialist power, is supporting Washington to ensure its share of the spoils.

War abroad is inextricably linked with war against the working class at home. Peters pointed to the attacks on protests in solidarity with the people of Gaza, in Britain, Germany, the United States and within Israel itself. He highlighted the censure of US congresswoman Rashida Tlaib “because of her factual statements

that the US government is supporting Israel's genocide."

Peters denounced the NZ Labour Party government for joining the global efforts to smear anti-war protests as antisemitic. He also warned that the incoming right-wing coalition government of National, ACT and NZ First Parties would make deep cuts to public services, with Labour's support, in order to fund a vast expansion of the military to prepare for war with China.

Peters explained that protests, while important, were not enough to stop the war. "We support the call by the Palestinian trade unions for workers to block the shipment of war materiel to Israel," he said.

He highlighted the stand taken by Will Lehman, a socialist autoworker in the United States, whose video statements calling for the shutdown of military-related production have gone viral on social media. Lehman, backed by the Socialist Equality Party, is fighting to mobilise rank-and-file auto workers against the union bureaucracy which supports the Biden administration and its wars.

Above all, Peters said, the working class needed its own socialist party. "We are living in a revolutionary period of history; the same contradictions that give rise to world war, also create the conditions for revolutionary struggles" which can put an end to capitalism, the source of war, he said. But the history of the twentieth century demonstrated that this requires the necessary leadership, based on the principles of Trotskyism upheld by the International Committee of the Fourth International.

The reports were followed by about an hour of discussion. Several audience members asked what immediate actions they could take to support the people of Gaza.

Replying to these questions, Crisp warned that unless the anti-war protests were animated by "the fight for an alternative, for a socialist society, then [they] will end up in despair and disillusionment, as they did after the 2003 protests against the war in Iraq."

The global protests against the invasion of Iraq, despite their massive size, did not succeed in stopping the war, because they were politically subordinated to the Democrats in the United States, Labour in New Zealand and similar capitalist parties in every country.

In response to one audience member, who suggested that socialist revolution was "impossible," Crisp replied that the task of overthrowing capitalism was difficult, but that "reforming capitalism is an impossible task." Capitalism was confronted with an "existential crisis," caused by the contradictions between global, privately-owned productive forces and the nation-state system, leading inevitably towards world war. The issue confronting the working class was to build the necessary revolutionary leadership.

John Braddock, a member of the Socialist Equality Group and writer for the *World Socialist Web Site*, explained that the eruption of global protests has discredited parliamentary politics in every country. But he warned that "it's necessary to be clear about who's putting forward what in these demonstrations."

In New Zealand, the Greens and Te Pahi Mōri have called for a ceasefire and denounced Israel's actions as a genocide. Braddock pointed out, however, that had Labour won enough votes in the October election, both these parties would have joined a Labour-

led government and dropped their anti-war posturing.

"We have to oppose any attempts to turn [the protests] back to appeals to parliament," he said. "The working class has to take matters into its own hands in whatever way it can, using whatever tools are available, using its own organisations but above all its own party."

Saed, a Palestinian living in Nelson, told the WSWs that he appreciated the report on the history of Zionism and the support it received from British imperialism.

He also endorsed the points made about anti-democratic attacks on protesters, saying that some people in Nelson were "a little bit scared" to join protests because of the attempts to intimidate protesters internationally. He noted that local Labour MP Rachel Boyack had been attacked by the far-right for joining a protest; she later "expressed regret" to *Newstalk ZB* for taking part.

Saed added: "So many Zionists complain about the chant 'From the river to the sea,' saying that it is used by Hamas. That's not correct, it was used before Hamas was created." The chant was "not against the Jewish people; we are against the idea of Zionism."

He said non-Jewish people living in Israel were treated as "third-class citizens." In the past month, 150 people had been killed by settlers in the West Bank, "but the police and the government didn't do anything, because they want the Palestinians to feel scared and to leave this area. My family is there, I know what is happening there."

He said a video shown during the meeting of anti-Zionist orthodox Jews being assaulted by Israeli police exposed claims that Israel is a democracy. "If you carry the Palestinian flag, they will stop you and arrest you. They are not a democracy, they just say that for the media. They are carrying out a genocide in Gaza. Where's the human rights? Where's the democracy?"

Saed said calling for a ceasefire was not enough, and that "all the protests on the war should demand an end to the occupation of Palestine."

He agreed that capitalist interests were behind the US and other powers' support for Israel. "Because Russia stopped supplying Europe with gas, so where can they get gas? From Gaza, from Syria, from the region." He pointed out that Gaza had hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of offshore natural gas, and Israel had used the Hamas attack on October 7 as an excuse to seize these resources.



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