

Mass protests in Australia declare: “Albanese, you can’t hide: You’re supporting genocide”

Our reporters

20 November 2023

For the sixth weekend in a row, protests were held across Australia against the Israeli genocidal assault on Gaza. This is now the most sustained mass anti-war movement the country has witnessed in decades, as part of global mobilisations.

In Sydney, more than 20,000 workers and young people took to the streets, in Melbourne around 40,000 turned out and in Brisbane 6,000 people attended. There were also rallies in Adelaide and Perth. In the working-class former steel city of Newcastle, north of Sydney, over 1,000 rallied.

Smaller events are being held almost continuously throughout the weeks.

Chants honed in on the responsibility of the Labor government of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, which is fully backing the Israeli genocide. It is a measure of Labor’s crisis that across the country, tens of thousands were on the streets declaring: “Albanese, you can’t hide: You’re supporting genocide.”

In Melbourne, John Shipton, father of courageous whistleblower Julian Assange, addressed the crowd.

He detailed the death toll in Gaza, which exceeds 12,000, with more than 4,500 of them children. Shipton said, “Soil watered with the blood of precious children over the last 36 days—what do they expect will grow from that soil? I can tell you—rage, a hunger for justice that’s swept around the globe and embraced every human being that is sentient enough to have sympathy for another.”

Shipton’s address underscored the connection between the Assange case and the escalating war drive today, led by American imperialism. As it is backing the Gaza genocide, engaging in a proxy war with Russia in Ukraine and threatening conflict with China, the US wants to destroy Assange to intimidate and silence mass anti-war sentiment.

The Labor government, while backing the plans for a catastrophic war with China and supporting Israel’s rampage, has abandoned Assange completely.

That demonstrates that the fight for democratic rights and the struggle against war are entirely connected. They can only be waged in opposition to all the capitalist governments, including the Labor administration, and the profit system itself, which is heading to barbarism.

In Melbourne the WSWs spoke to **Bree**, **Chloe**, and **Jess**, all in their early 20s, who attended the rally together.

Chloe said, “I am hopeful that these demonstrations will eventually make the government listen to us, to realise that what they’re siding with is atrocious and that we should be listening to the Palestinian people and making sure they’re getting protected. Whether that actually happens is hard to say, but that’s where I hope this goes.”

Jess responded, “To be honest, I’m pretty doubtful that the government’s going to do the right thing, but at least through these protests, we are bringing awareness to what is happening, and that means that the people of Australia can provide support even though the government probably won’t.”

Asked why they think the US government and its allies are supporting Israel, the three friends replied at the same time, “Money.” Bree added, “I think the huge reserves of oil and gas in the Middle East are no coincidence, that definitely has something to do with US involvement. That’s probably the same for Australia as well.”

The three women spoke about media efforts to smear the Palestinian solidarity movement as anti-Semitic. Chloe said, “If anyone thinks these protests are anti-

Semitic, or pro-Hamas, they're not listening."

Jess added, "The direction of the media is clearly not working. People can make up their own minds, they can see what's actually happening. It's unprecedented now that there's social media and other ways to find information—people don't just have to get this through the mainstream media. A lot of younger people are making up their own minds, and it's becoming harder for the government to influence them."

Ella, a university graduate in animation, said, "I'm here to protest against bombing of hospitals and killing children. The Labor government's position is depressing, it's frustrating, it's not what I voted for, and it really proves they're just in it for the money. I hate it, it's horrifying."

She spoke about her "wholehearted support" for working class action to halt weapons shipments—"Without any weapons, there is no murder. I support not sending weapons to Israel."

Ella had been following recent workers' struggles in the United States, via social media, "Things like the SAG-AFTRA [Hollywood actors'] strike, their protesting for not being paid enough and not getting the treatment they deserve, people using loopholes to get around paying their workers. It's disgraceful. There was also the UPS [United Parcel Service] ... that was a protest where workers said you need to pay us more or America shuts down. That kind of action works. The working class protesting—if it is big enough, if it is loud enough, if it stops the actual government—this will work."

Karan, who works in the finance sector, said: "This has gone past the point where the Israeli military can exterminate a whole race of people based on where they're born. It's fundamentally wrong, and I believe human beings are better than that. That's why we're here to protest today. The political needle is moving ever so slightly, the US is losing credibility around the world for constantly supporting this violence. We need to move away from this US hegemony."

In Sydney, **Rami** gave a video interview:

Also in Sydney, **Jaz**, originally from Indonesia, spoke with WSWs reporters:

In Brisbane the WSWs spoke to **Juliette**, a Queensland University of Technology student, who said: "The Palestinian issue doesn't end with a ceasefire. It ends when Palestinians are given back their

land. We cannot just continue to allow the Israelis to keep taking the land of Palestinians without any repercussions whatsoever. If we just end with a ceasefire, that issue will come back again in 10 or 15 years.

"This has happened before. This is a continuing issue. This is not the only genocide taking place at the moment, like the one in Sudan. They don't get enough voice. No one is giving them a voice because there are bigger issues at play. This is all a massive scheme for money, business and oil, and stuff like that. This is a peoples' problem, but we are being overruled by governments.

"If the people are not happy with something, why are they being ignored? If you run a government, you should be following the people. Why turn your back on the people? The people are here, saying stop, this is not what we want. So why does some government try to pretend that it is better than all of our opinions?

"It's pretty obvious when you look at opposing news sources and the way they see things. They present things so one-sidedly, like the October 7 event. They want to talk about that and about Hamas being a terrorist group but they don't want to talk about how this is part of the almost century-long attack on Palestinians.

"Hamas only really formed as a resistance group. Half of them are orphans! You would feel the same way if your entire family was attacked. It's coming from a deeper issue, that's been ignored."



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