

Indonesian protests against Israeli genocide continue

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Protests against Israel's genocide in Gaza have continued in Indonesia over the two weeks since the massive rally in Jakarta on November 5, which drew an estimated two million people.

The protests have been subjected to a near-total media blackout, with coverage largely being shared via social media.

The largest events were held in Bekasi, a city on the eastern outskirts of Jakarta. On November 12, a rally involving a huge crowd of people with Palestinian flags and scarves filled a main thoroughfare in the city centre, leading to road closures. Local media estimated attendance in the tens of thousands.

According to local website *Detik News*, posters read, "Expel the Israeli invaders from Palestine!" and "Boycott Israeli products and their supporters!" Large banners were hung around the city reading, "Bekasi Together With Palestine." The rally was organised by Bekasi Alliance Cares for Palestine, which includes numerous groups, among them the Islamic organisation, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI).

In an interview with CNN Indonesia, Richa Salsabila Danuputri, a protester attending with her family, again refuted the claim that people in Indonesia are supporting the Palestinians only out of religion. "Because I am a creature created by Allah, of course as a human I feel compelled to attend this humanitarian action. Not just because of Islam, but this is humanity," she said.

The following week, last Sunday, another Bekasi rally was held outside the Wibawa Mukti Stadium, drawing a similar number of people from across the Jakarta metropolitan area.

Several other demonstrations took place across Java on November 12. This included a 15,000-strong crowd of university and school students in Tangerang, on the

opposite side of Jakarta from Bekasi, protesting against the genocide.

In the West Java city of Cimahi, near Bandung, a crowd of mostly young people staged a long march from Cimahi Square into the commercial centre. Organisers went around taking donations for humanitarian aid to Palestine.

"We came here on purpose, wanting to help defend Palestine. This is a form of our support for the Palestinian people," Rina Nur Asiyah, 26, told *Detik News*.

In Surakarta, a demonstration including health care workers gathered outside City Hall. The street leading up to it was lined with ambulances as part of the action.

Another rally was held in Pekalongan, in Central Java. The mayor, Achmad Afzan Arslan Djunaid, told the crowd: "We support Palestinian independence, we support stopping colonialism, and we see that it is very sad."

Similar statements were made elsewhere by political and religious leaders. In the major city of Surabaya, where a rally was held November 12, East Java Governor Khofifah Indar Parawansa told the crowd that all they could do was pray and give aid donations. "Today we strengthen our commitment, that we all stand here offering prayers and support for independence for Palestine," she said.

This has been the perspective advanced by the protest leaders. Under pressure from a wave of Indonesian workers and youth who are prepared to take action to stop the genocide, the various parties and representatives of the ruling class are attempting to direct this movement into safe channels. This includes calls to "pray for Palestinians," as well as impotent appeals to the United Nations and the boycott of Israeli consumer products.

The political establishment presents itself as “pro-Palestine” in Indonesia, due to the population’s profound hostility towards colonialism and all forms of imperialist oppression. This is especially evident in the official position taken by the government of President Joko Widodo.

Widodo has condemned Israel’s actions against Gaza and called for a ceasefire. This was reiterated at a recent bilateral meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit in Riyadh.

Indonesia has no formal diplomatic relations with Israel. However, in a meeting last week with US President Joe Biden, Widodo called on US imperialism, Israel’s chief backer in its genocidal war, to help bring about a ceasefire in Gaza.

At the meeting, by elevating ties between the US and Indonesia to a “comprehensive strategic partnership,” the highest level of diplomatic cooperation, Widodo demonstrated that the mass murder of Palestinian civilians is no barrier to working with Washington.

As mass protests across Indonesia continue, token declarations of support for Palestine have become a main plank of the campaign for the upcoming presidential elections in February 2024. With Widodo retiring from office after serving two terms, the three registered candidates are already scrambling to appear more pro-Palestine than their competitors.

Last Friday, Indonesian health workers held an event in Jakarta calling for an end to the genocide. The event included staff from associations of doctors, midwives, pharmacists and dentists.

It was called in response to the ceasing of operations of the Indonesian Hospital, one of the largest trauma hospitals in Gaza. The hospital, which is reportedly sheltering around 700 medical staff and injured people, is currently being surrounded by Israeli tanks.

The Indonesian Medical Association said in a statement, “Attacks on hospitals and healthcare workers constitute violations of international law. A total of 22 hospitals and 49 health centres were forced to stop operating in the Gaza Strip due to Israeli arrogance.” The statements said it was “time to scream to the world, stop genocide.”

Speaking to Al Jazeera, Dr Zecky Eko Triwahyudi, a traumatology doctor from Jakarta who attended the event, explained: “Health facilities, which should not

be targeted, have been targeted by Israeli forces for the past month. Without any basis, excuses are made up as justification for attacking hospitals and health workers. All hospitals in the Gaza Strip have become targets.”

The outrage felt by millions in Indonesia towards Israel’s war crimes, backed by all the imperialist powers, must be turned towards the working class. What is required to end the genocide is the mobilisation of the international working class to put a halt to the onslaught on Gaza and the broader danger of world war.



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