

More Australian school students prepare to strike against Gaza genocide

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Protests planned by Australian high school students opposing Israel's genocidal onslaught against Gaza are spreading.

This welcome development has seen student strikes organised for Friday in Sydney, Adelaide and the working-class steel city of Wollongong. They join Melbourne school kids who are going to walk out of classrooms on Thursday in opposition to the bombardment.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality supports the strikes and urges the widest participation of young people.

Demonstrations by schoolchildren against the Israeli war have emerged internationally, including in the US, Canada and Britain. Youth are joining in the mass movement which has erupted around the world, involving millions of protesters.

Young people are being compelled to take a stand by the daily images of the imperialist-backed slaughter taking place in Gaza.

More than 13,000 Palestinians have been killed, over 5,000 of them children. The Israeli government is carrying out blatant war crimes—targeting civilians, schools, hospitals and essential infrastructure. And it is doing so with the complete backing of the imperialist powers.

The federal Labor government has been as aggressive as any in the world in insisting on Israel's "right to defend itself," as bombs rain down on the civilians of Gaza. Labor has angrily rejected calls for a ceasefire, while the joint Pine Gap spy base in central Australia helps coordinate Israeli airstrikes.

As the list of school strikes has expanded, the attacks against them by the political and media establishment have intensified.

New South Wales (NSW) state Labor Premier Chris Minns declared that students should not attend the protests, but stay at school to "get educated." A spokeswoman for NSW Education Minister Prue Car said, "students are expected to attend school on school days, not take time off from their lessons to attend protests."

Their remarks are almost identical to those of Victorian state Labor Premier Jacinta Allan and Education Minister Ben Carroll who spoke out against Thursday's planned school strike in Melbourne.

The fears that the strikes will disrupt "education" are transparently absurd, as though participating in a single protest

for several school hours will irreparably damage a student's learning.

The very Labor governments pushing this line are presiding over the greatest crisis of the public education system in decades. The state Labor administrations in NSW and Victoria have both pushed through regressive industrial agreements covering the schools. The deals, signed off on by the corporatised education unions, lock-in real pay cuts for teachers and entrench massive staff shortages and classroom overcrowding.

While in uproar over students missing a few hours' class, the NSW and Victorian governments have created such a dire situation that growing numbers of lessons are not going ahead at all. Instead, it often happens, especially in oppressed working-class schools, that groups of students are herded together in a large space and effectively babysat.

As it has slashed expenditure on public education and healthcare, the federal Labor government has massively expanded military spending, including the \$368 billion AUKUS commitment to acquire nuclear-powered submarines for a US-led war against China.

What is really occurring is that the Labor governments are now directing a broader assault on democratic rights against children.

When demonstrations opposing Israel's onslaught first erupted in October, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's federal Labor government hysterically denounced the pro-Palestinian protests. The Minns administration threatened to ban them and to unleash an unprecedented police crackdown.

As with those dictatorial actions, the schoolchildren are being subjected to lies and slander.

A letter sent to the Victorian government by pro-Israeli forces and reported in the press hysterically described the Melbourne school strike as "mass exploitation of children." It stated that children protesting would threaten "liberty, safety, security and tolerance."

This is the fraudulent line that opposition to the Israeli state is antisemitism.

But in fact equating all Jewish people with the war crimes of the Israeli military is both false and itself antisemitic. Students are protesting, not because they are hostile to Jewish people,

but because they oppose a genocide. Many Jewish people who have joined the global protests have noted the parallels between the onslaught on oppressed people in Gaza by an advanced industrial state, and the mass extermination of European Jewry in the Nazi Holocaust.

The attacks on the student strikes underscore the perverse and fraudulent character of the whole official discussion about “safety” and “hate speech.” While falsely deploying such terms, government officials, media commentators and Zionist groups are literally vilifying children, whose “wrongdoing” is to oppose war crimes.

They are doing so, arm in arm with extreme right-wing forces.

In a deranged opinion piece for the *Herald Sun*, commentator Andrew Bolt this week launched a tirade against students planning to participate. “How many of these lecturing children could even find Gaza on a map?” Bolt asked.

Asserting that protesters, including children, were Hamas supporters, Bolt asked: “Oh, have I insulted you by putting you on the side of mass-murdering, head-hacking, pack-raping terrorists?”

Bolt’s ranting about the Palestinian military action of October 7 is lurid. As the WWSWS has explained, what occurred had the character of a desperate prison break. It simply cannot be understood outside the context of 75 years of occupation and oppression, and Gaza’s status as an open-air concentration camp surrounded on all sides by the Israeli Defence Force.

The Palestinian attack, moreover, was merely the pretext for a long-planned Israeli onslaught aimed at clearing Gaza and the other occupied territories of all Palestinians. Bolt legitimises the worst elements of this ethnic cleansing, describing the systematic Israeli bombardment of hospitals as “Palestinian civilians...dying in the crossfire.”

In McCarthyite fashion, the Murdoch-commentator asserted that the “young and foolish, ignorant of history” children were being manipulated and “preyed upon” by left-wing groups. Bolt identified one young female activist by her full name.

That is the stuff of far-right witch-hunts. Bolt’s own credentials, moreover, further undermine claims that the attacks on the school strikes are part of a struggle against antisemitism and racism.

As per his Wikipedia page, “Bolt has spoken out against the changing racial demographics of Australia. In August 2018, Bolt wrote an article titled ‘Tidal wave of new tribes dividing us’ in which he argues that a ‘tidal wave’ of migrants is swamping Australia, forming enclaves and ‘changing our culture.’”

The Wikipedia article states that “Bolt has also spoken approvingly of Jean Raspail’s book *The Camp of the Saints*, a novel depicting Europe being swamped by grotesquely-caricatured Asian immigrants.”

The line-up of the whole establishment against the student strikes, from the Labor governments to the extreme far-right,

must be opposed.

The ruling elite is terrified that the strikes against the Gaza genocide will develop into a mass movement of students and youth, as occurred during the Vietnam war. The opposition to the Israeli bombardment intersects with broader anger over the climate catastrophe, a social and cost-of-living crisis, and an eruption of militarism, including Australia’s frontline role in the US preparations for a disastrous war against China.

In supporting the strikes, the IYSSE raises the critical issues of political perspective that are posed. The mass slaughter in Gaza is the true face of capitalism and imperialism. It shows the future that this outlived social order offers young people, not only in the Middle East, but globally.

The alternative is a turn to the working class, the great revolutionary force in society, and a fight for international socialism to establish a world based on peace and social equality.

Details of the strikes:

Melbourne

1:30 p.m. Thursday, 23 November

Flinders Street Station

Sydney

1:30 p.m. Friday, 24 November

Sydney Town Hall

Adelaide

1:00 p.m. Thursday, 23 November

Parliament House of South Australia

Wollongong

12:30 p.m. Friday, 24 November

Wollongong Town Hall



To contact the WWSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wwsws.org/contact