

Australian Committee for Public Education campaigns against Israeli genocide in Gaza

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The Committee for Public Education (CFPE) is campaigning for the defence of the Palestinian people among educators and school staff throughout Australia.

On Wednesday an important resolution was endorsed at a meeting of public school secondary teachers in the western suburbs of Melbourne. The resolution, moved by Will Marshall, a long-standing teacher and member of the CFPE and the Socialist Equality Party, stated:

This meeting of educators condemns the genocide being perpetrated against the Palestinian people by the Zionist State of Israel and its imperialist backers the US and others. This includes the Albanese Labor government, which has joined with the Liberal/National Coalition to give its full backing to the Israeli regime.

Recent figures from the Palestinian Health Ministry say that more than 13,300 Palestinians had been killed, including 5,600 children and 3,550 women. Hundreds of children are dying every single day. It is a crime against humanity to expel over a million people from their homes and prevent water, fuel and other necessities from reaching them. It is also a crime against humanity to shell and bomb hospitals, ambulances, refugee camps and schools.

We stand in solidarity with the global protests including school and university students who are taking strike action on Thursday November 23 in Melbourne.

We oppose any action to threaten students with disciplinary action for asserting their democratic right to strike. No student(s) or teacher(s) should be victimised for speaking out and opposing the atrocities being carried out against Palestinians in Gaza. We also reject the claim that support for Palestinian people amounts to antisemitism.

We condemn the silence of the teachers' and university unions who refuse to take action opposing

the genocide of the Palestinian people.

We call on all educators to respectfully discuss the war at their workplaces, organise resolutions, and demonstrations, and form rank and file committees, turning to other sections of the working class aimed at bringing the genocide and war to an end.

The resolution provides an example and political lead for educators nationally, advancing a way forward in the struggle to stop the horrific atrocities that continue in Gaza.

The federal Australian Education Union and its state-based affiliates have issued pro-forma statements encouraging Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to call for a ceasefire. These muted appeals, which have not been circulated beyond social media posts, serve only to cover the union bureaucrats' refusal to mobilise teachers, school staff, and other educators against the Israeli genocide, and against the federal Labor government's active support for the Israeli government.

The CFPE's campaign underscores that the working class needs to organise independently of the trade union apparatuses in defence of the Palestinian people, developing networks of workplace rank-and-file committees to build a globally unified movement against the Israeli government and its backers.

This perspective will be discussed at an important **CFPE online meeting that is being held on Monday, November 27 at 7 p.m., Australian Eastern Daylight Time**. We encourage educators to contact us to register and receive the Zoom link.

CFPE members recently spoke with several public school teachers in Melbourne about the crisis in Palestine.

Fi, a teacher at a school in the northern suburbs, attended last Sunday's mass rally in central Melbourne. She explained: "I've come to every demonstration with my friend Helena since the invasion started, since the genocide. I don't like seeing innocent civilians murdered or populations being punished for the actions of a small group

such as Hamas.

“The Israeli government and military don’t see the Palestinian population as people, who suffer, who have feelings. The government has tried to dehumanise the Palestinians. Too many people have died, too many children, people that have never done anything wrong but just want to live their lives in peace.”

She continued: “As a teacher dealing with kids that have been impacted by trauma, it’s an unbearable thought. How are we going to help these kids recover, when they see and experience these sorts of things in Gaza? How do you help them understand and integrate that into feeling safe, and being ready to learn, and all the things that they need going forward in life? As teachers, we have a whole population of students that have been witness to this.”

Fi spoke of the impact of the slander campaign being waged by the political and media establishment against the Free Palestine movement: “I think among some teachers there is genuine fear that any call to stop bombing innocent people will be misconstrued as antisemitic, which is unbelievable. It is promoting fear and attempting to intimidate people to be silent. I’m not antisemitic—half my family are Jewish. How can anyone, whether you’re Jewish, or Muslim, or Christian, or atheist, or agnostic or whatever you are, not speak out against something like this?”

The teacher expressed her support for student strikes organised to protest the genocide. “Students need a voice,” she explained, “it is important for their wellbeing to allow them to speak out. Some people unfairly accuse young people of being insular and self-absorbed—it is great to see them now speaking out for their peers, for their own generation in Gaza who are being bombed.”

Sarah, a secondary teacher in Melbourne’s northern suburbs, told the CFPE: “As far as I can see the teacher union is refusing to take a stance on Gaza. It has a friendship with the current government and that means they cease to speak out against them. I’m appalled and beyond disgusted by the silence of the Albanese government with more than 13,000 civilians killed during this conflict, at least 5,000 being children. Gaza has been called an open-air prison. In fact, worse than an open-air prison it is more like a concentration camp. The government’s silence signifies that they are green-lighting the tragedy that is taking place, and doing so with my tax dollars. To not support a cease fire is promoting violence.”

She continued: “I support students striking. We want an informed body of students, they need to be out there. I did that when I was young, I went to demonstrations during school time against the Iraq war. I work in a low socio-economic school, and I see the effect of what’s going on—wages are stagnant, people are suffering—through the

kids. We have a lot of refugees, a lot of non-English speaking families, just struggling to pay bills. We don’t have money for education or for our health system, but we do for war.”

Sarah concluded: “It’s fantastic to see people coming together. Friends of ours are Palestinian and others Jewish, and they have all spoken out against the Israeli government. This crisis has been going too long, for 75 years. The goal should be to stop supplying the Israeli government, have a ceasefire, and work towards a real solution for the Palestinian people. I think it’s correct to stop the shipment of arms to Israel.”

Philippa, a secondary teacher in the western suburbs of Melbourne, said: “I am appalled by what is taking place, the occupation, the killing, torment, the human and structural damage. People should be out opposing what is taking place—at every opportunity we need to demonstrate, show our own students and children that we care about children. It’s not antisemitic to support the Palestinians. It is nonsense that Israel has the right to defend itself, this goes against international law. Gaza is not another country and Israel can’t defend itself from one of its own occupied territories. That is not a thing in law, it’s just more rubbish.

“With the bombing of ambulances and hospitals, initially Israel was saying that it wasn’t doing this, but now it is saying it doesn’t care. Their basic position is, ‘We’ve got the power here, we’re backed by other Western powers, we don’t care whether you believe our stories any more—we just say and do whatever we feel like.’ The message the US and Israel is trying to give to the world is that they are in charge of everything, and don’t try to stop it. We need to oppose this at every opportunity.”

We encourage all educators to contact the CFPE and join the global campaign against the Israeli genocide:

Email: cfpe.aus@gmail.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/commforpubliceducation

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/opposeaeusellout>

Twitter: @CFPE_Australia



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact