

Australia: Committee for Public Education holds online meeting opposing genocide in Gaza

Our reporters

1 December 2023

A meeting of the Committee for Public Education (CFPE) on Monday night attended by teachers, students and university staff unanimously endorsed a resolution opposing the Israeli genocide in Gaza, and condemning the Australian Labor government as well as the teacher unions for their complicity. The meeting called on educators to discuss the war at their workplaces, and organise resolutions, and other solidarity actions through the formation of independent rank-and-file committees.

The main report was delivered by Sue Phillips, the national convenor of the CFPE and a member of the Socialist Equality Party. She explained: “Every day the situation in Gaza reaches new depths of barbarism, an unfolding catastrophe of historic proportions. The carpet bombing and growing death toll of more than 20,000 civilians, including women, the elderly, disabled, children, babies, and health professionals, is utterly horrifying. The murderous program, is however, not a mistake or accident, it is deliberate.

“Schools, hospitals and refugee camps are being systematically targeted because the war against the Palestinian people, is a war of ethnic cleansing, a genocidal war. Children are being murdered, consciously eliminated, in an attempt to destroy the next and future generations of Palestinians. Every week on average, a thousand children have died—more than a 100 every single day or one child dying every 10 minutes. This is the program of genocide and ethnic cleansing.”

Phillips pointed to the growing global opposition of workers and youth, and the desperate attempt by capitalist governments to criminalise and intimidate people through an array of anti-democratic measures.

Just hours before the CFPE meeting, Victorian state Labor deputy premier and education minister Ben Carroll had threatened teachers with disciplinary measures if they expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people at their workplaces, and initiated discussions with students on the war. Carroll labelled this “inflammatory, divisive and sowing seeds of disharmony.”

Australian Education Union (AEU) state president Meredith Peace (annual salary and benefits \$247,000) told the media that

the union did not support a “week of action” initiated by a group of teachers, and she remained silent on the government’s threats.

Phillips stressed that Peace’s comments underlined once again the union bureaucracy’s refusal to defend members, and highlighted the subservience of the AEU to both the state Labor government and the Albanese government, which is actively supporting the genocidal war in Gaza. Any perspective that the AEU can be pressured to change course is a complete dead-end. Teachers need to develop independent rank-and-file committees and turn out to the working class who are the force that can alone halt supplies and production of military equipment to Israel. The capitalist governments that are perpetrating war crimes must be brought down.

In the course of the discussion, several teachers from New South Wales reported their recent experiences at regional union meetings, where they had been blocked by teacher union officials from discussing resolutions in support of Palestinians or ruled out of order.

Morgan Peach, president of the University of Melbourne International Youth and Students for Social Equality club, spoke in the discussion about the recent high schools strikes in the previous week. He explained that, “In Melbourne the strike involved more than a thousand young people who stood up against the media barrage of lies and denunciations from the entire media and political establishment. The Labor government played the key role in this, it sought to intimidate students from taking strike action, calling on schools to punish those who went.”

He continued, “It’s clear that students are educating themselves on the internet about what’s happening in Gaza as well as the whole history of Israel. Lots of students expressed contempt for the idea that opponents of Israel’s genocide are antisemitic and fuelling hatred and racism. Some students also drew broader conclusions, understanding that the Western powers backing Israel are capitalist powers with interests in the region. Students are being radicalised by these events, which is what the ruling elite in Australia fears most.”

Other discussion in the meeting involved the history of

Zionism. Participants were encouraged to read the recent lecture by David North, "[Genocide in Gaza: Imperialism descends into the abyss](#)," and an important exposure by Jean Shaoul, titled "[Israel's lies of October 7 incursion fall apart](#)."

Supporting the resolution and in discussion on the student strike and educator action, one teacher commented in the chat, "It's essential that students are informed about the current and global issues. They are the next generation." The teacher then thanked meeting participants for clarification on the role of the Albanese government as a pro-imperialist supporter of the Zionist state of Israel.

Another public school primary teacher responded: "I fully support the resolution passed at the CFPE meeting. The atrocities being committed in Gaza are abhorrent. We need to call out the governments, including the Albanese government, for supporting this genocide, and the unions, including the AEU, who stand by it. The recent directives stopping teachers from engaging in real discussion with our students is unacceptable."

The unanimously endorsed CFPE resolution read:

This meeting of the CFPE condemns the genocide being perpetrated against the Palestinian people by the Zionist state of Israel and its imperialist backers. This includes the Albanese Labor government, which has joined with the Liberal-National Coalition in giving its full backing to the Israeli regime.

As of November 27, more than 20,000 Palestinians have been killed, with thousands of other civilians unaccounted for, no doubt buried beneath the rubble. Hospitals, schools, orphanages, mosques and refugee camps have been carpet bombed—all warcrimes—leading to a humanitarian disaster of historic proportions.

More than a hundred innocent children are dying every single day, on average a thousand children every week, or one child every 10 minutes.

The next generation of Palestinians are being systematically expelled and exterminated. As stated by UNICEF at the end of October, "Gaza has become a graveyard for thousands of children."

Up until November 11, 300 schools in Gaza had been bombed. A total of 3,117 students and 183 teachers have been killed, and another 4,183 children and 403 teachers injured. Even before the latest onslaught, UNICEF reported more than 800,000 children in Gaza—three-quarters of its entire child population—were identified as seriously traumatised, needing urgent mental health and psychosocial support.

The CFPE demands the immediate halt to the war. The siege on Gaza must be ended, and food, water, electricity, medical care, and all other necessities must be made available immediately.

The CFPE stands in solidarity with the world-wide protests, including strikes, blockades and actions such as the school strike of students in Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide last week. Teachers must oppose any attempt by schools to discipline students who have participated in or are planning further strikes.

We likewise reject recent anti-democratic directives targeting public school teachers in Victoria. State Labor Education Minister Ben Carroll, and Department of Education bureaucrats following the government's lead, have targeted for potential victimisation and sacking teachers who have participated in solidarity actions at their schools.

The CFPE rejects and condemns the false accusation that support for the Palestinian people amounts to antisemitism.

We condemn the inaction of the teacher and university unions, whose silence amounts to an endorsement of the Albanese government's support for Israel. The CFPE supports the call of the Palestinian trade unions for global solidarity, halting the arms trade with Israel as well as funding and military research.

We call on all educators to discuss the war at their workplaces, organise resolutions, and demonstrations, and form independent rank-and-file committees, turning to other sections of the working class to develop a unified movement against genocide and war.

On Thursday night, the above resolution was also passed at an AEU Inner West regional meeting in Melbourne. We encourage educators throughout Australia to move similar statements at schools and universities.

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