

New Zealand protests continue against genocide in Gaza as new far-right government backs Israel

Tom Peters
6 December 2023

Despite a near-blackout in the media, thousands of people across New Zealand continue to take part in global protests against the genocidal bombing of the Gaza Strip by Israel.

In the space of two months, Israel has killed 21,000 people, almost half of them children, and destroyed or damaged half the buildings in the enclave, including hospitals and schools. Some 1.8 million people have been displaced, forced into smaller and smaller areas. The unmistakable aim of the Netanyahu regime is to clear the Gaza Strip by killing its people through bombing, starvation and disease, and expelling the survivors.

On Tuesday, hundreds of people protested in Wellington on the first day of parliament sitting following the October election. This followed protests last week by thousands of people in Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Nelson, Hastings, New Plymouth, Whanganui, Tauranga and other towns.

The protest groups Justice for Palestine and Alternative Jewish Voices presented a briefing to the incoming government urging it “to address the immediate situation in Gaza and to play a role in establishing a new pathway to a just peace in Palestine and Israel,” including calling for a ceasefire and an end to the blockade of Gaza and the occupation of the West Bank.

The new National Party-led government, like the former Labour Party-led government, is supporting Israel’s atrocities. A major role is being played by National’s far-right and fervently pro-Zionist coalition partners, the NZ First and ACT Parties, which received just 6 and 8.6 percent of the votes respectively.

On December 1, NZ First leader and foreign minister Winston Peters called on “all parties involved” to “work urgently towards a long-term ceasefire” in Gaza. He reiterated, however, that the government “supported the right of Israel to defend itself against Hamas’ terrorist attacks.” In fact, the Israeli state took steps to facilitate the Hamas-led operation on October 7, in order to use it as the pretext for a long-planned assault on Gaza.

On the same day, Peters issued a provocative statement glorifying the deceased US war criminal Henry Kissinger as “a towering figure in international affairs.” Kissinger played a major role in the imperialist war against Vietnam and the bombing of Laos and Cambodia, which killed more than a million people, and in supporting far-right dictatorships in Latin America. Last week, Peters delivered a major speech calling for stronger military ties with the US, as it prepares for war against China in the Indo-Pacific region.

As is the case in Australia and other countries, efforts are underway to demonise and crack down on anti-war protests. On November 23, six people were arrested at Ports of Auckland, where about 200 people were protesting and calling on workers to stop servicing ships controlled by Israeli company ZIM.

The shipping company has pledged to use its resources to support Israel’s military. The Maritime Union issued a statement declaring that it supported the protest, but it and New Zealand’s other trade unions have refused to organise any strikes or other actions to stop Israeli shipping operations.

The Wellington protest on Tuesday was addressed by Green MP Golriz Ghahraman, who described Israel’s

actions as “genocide” and called for a permanent ceasefire. The Greens, however, were part of the Labour-led government, which backed Israel and strengthened ties with US imperialism, including sending troops to Britain to assist in training Ukrainian conscripts for the war against Russia.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to several people attending the rally.

Nikita, a doctor, said the destruction of healthcare facilities in Gaza was “just insanity” and “not following international law.” She added: “I don’t think there’d be any discussion if Wellington Hospital was bombed.” She denounced the New Zealand government as “cowards” for remaining silent on these crimes.

Pinky said media outlets like *Stuff* and Radio NZ were reporting “very little” about Gaza, and she got more information through social media posts by people like Gaza filmmaker and independent reporter Bisan Owda.

She said the media was very focused on the hostages taken by Hamas, while ignoring “over 10,000 Palestinians imprisoned in Israel that have not been charged. Have they not been kidnapped? Some of them are children who have thrown rocks at tanks.”

Pinky described the response of former Labour Party Prime Minister Chris Hipkins, who refused for weeks to call for a ceasefire, as “incredibly weak.”

Asked why Israel was able to get away with its unrelenting bombardment, she said it was “because they’re funded by the US and there’s oil and gas [in the region]. It’s all down to money.”

She also pointed out how the United Nations was compromised, noting that UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell, who recently visited Gaza, is married to Thomas E. Donilon, chairman of BlackRock Investments, “which invests in military weapons of mass destruction. His brother [Mike Donilon] is a chief advisor to Joe Biden.”

Lev, who has just finished high school, said Israel was engaged in “genocide” and its destruction of civilian infrastructure “extends far beyond targeting Hamas. Even then, you need to realise that Hamas, fundamentally, is a resistance movement.” He said peaceful pathways for Palestinians to defend their rights and hold Israel accountable had been blocked, and the two-state solution was “not going to happen.”

Israel had “continually expanded, continually broken

ceasefire agreements.” Nothing could be done against Israel because the US “has a veto on the Security Council.” The only realistic solution was for Israel to be “demilitarised” and for the state to cease to exist in its current form.

“Increasingly, in Israel, there’s a huge amount of nationalism, there’s a huge amount of racism towards Arabs and Muslims in the region. It’s so culturally ingrained that I genuinely think there needs to be a cultural shift that needs to be pushed for.”

He noted that there were many accounts of journalists being deliberately targeted by Israeli forces, and this was part of a broader attempt to destroy “the cultural ability of the Palestinians, as well as the physical ability, to resist occupation.”

Lev pointed out that the New Zealand government’s position was “not representative of the New Zealand people. I’ve never met a Zionist in New Zealand. I find it ridiculous.”

He stated that capitalism was the root cause of war, pointing in particular to the profits being made by weapons manufacturers. In addition, he said, “states like America need an enemy, they need someone to vilify,” to divert internal tensions and opposition. While Lev supported protests, he agreed that “stronger action” was needed including stopping exports to Israel. “Anything that damages Israel’s ability to act as a violent state is a good action.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact