

Australian school students strike against Gaza genocide, but pseudo-left advance dead end of protest politics

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On Thursday, hundreds of Australian school students walked out of classrooms to protest Israel's genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza following the first strikes a fortnight ago.

More than 300 attended in Melbourne and 200 in Sydney. Smaller rallies were held in Adelaide, Canberra and Wollongong.

The events are part of the international movement that has erupted in opposition to the imperialist-backed onslaught. Students and youth are closely following the unfolding slaughter through social media, bypassing the complicit corporate press.

Anger over the genocide is intersecting with broader hostility to the climate catastrophe, a deepening crisis of social and living standards and war, fuelling a developing political radicalisation of the younger generations. There is a widespread sense that on every front, things are getting worse and are not going to get better any time soon.

At Thursday's strikes, as at the previous walkouts, anger was directed particularly at the federal Labor government, which has given a complete greenlight to the unfolding mass murder. "Albanese, blood on your hands!" was one of the chants, referencing Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

The issue that is emerging from the situation itself, though, is how the fight against genocide can be taken forward. Protests have occurred for more than two months now, but the Israeli regime and the imperialist governments backing it have not only defied the mass sentiment, they have escalated their brazen criminality.

The mass opposition, in other words, has reached something of an impasse or a fork in the road.

In that context, it was notable that Thursday's strikes were substantially smaller than those held two weeks ago when the Melbourne event alone was attended by 1,000 students or more. Various factors could be at play, but it seems likely that one of them was a developing sense that protesting is

not going to end the genocide or fundamentally alter the situation.

Students who addressed the strikes in Sydney and Melbourne spoke movingly and passionately against the genocide.

It was, however, striking that much of what was raised was the same as at the previous event. The question of what to do next was largely not answered or even posed, except for there to be further protests.

Responsibility for that rests entirely with the pseudo-left organisations that have largely organised the strikes, including Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance.

These groups have done everything they can to keep the discussion at the lowest level, to limit the horizons of those who participate to protests and appeals directed to the powers-that-be and to prevent any consideration of the broader context within which the genocide is occurring. No assessment is made from one event to the next, and nothing is analysed or explained.

This is not an accident. Despite their occasional rhetoric, the pseudo-left has nothing to do with the fight for socialism and the interests of the working class, in fact, opposing both. They represent an affluent layer of the upper middle class that advances its privileges within the profit system, especially through the use of various forms of identity politics based on race, gender and sexuality, not class.

The pseudo-left is itself tied to the political establishment by a thousand strings, particularly through its close connections to the Labor-aligned trade union bureaucracy, which has done nothing to oppose the genocide.

A socialist perspective to fight the genocide must be based on an understanding of its root causes and what it signifies for world politics. The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth movement of the Socialist Equality Party, has explained that the mass murder in Gaza is part of an eruption of imperialist militarism stemming from a breakdown of the capitalist system on a

global scale.

The major powers are defending Israel's atrocities because the Zionist state is a linchpin of the whole imperialist nation-state system, not only in the Middle East but internationally. The genocide is the most barbarous manifestation of an explosion of war internationally, including US and Israeli threats of a regional war targeting Lebanon, Syria and Iran, a US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and Washington's preparations for conflict against China in the Indo-Pacific.

As in the 1930s, the capitalist ruling elites are tobogganing to the abyss, with the mass slaughter of Gazans a warning of what imperialism has in store for the entire world's population.

The pseudo-left says nothing about this broader development. One reason is that in line with their class character and rightward trajectory, the pseudo-left groups have increasingly embraced imperialist war.

In the Socialist Alliance's case, that included backing for Australian military intervention in East Timor in 1999, in an imperialist operation aimed at securing the tiny nation's oil, gas and other resources.

Socialist Alternative supported the NATO war against Libya, and then for years campaigned in support of a similar CIA regime-change operation in Syria. Both those operations were also backed by the Zionist regime.

More recently, all of the pseudo-left organisations have promoted the US-NATO proxy war against Russia. They have repeated the lies used by Washington and its allies to justify a war that is aimed at inflicting a defeat on Russia, as part of American imperialism's drive to control the Eurasian landmass, including expressing support for the Ukrainian regime, despite its domination by fascistic forces.

The IYSSE alone, as part of the world Trotskyist movement, has opposed the Ukraine war, sheeting home responsibility to the US and NATO while giving no support to the Russian government, which represents a nationalist oligarchy created through the restoration of capitalism by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union.

By decoupling the horror in Gaza from the issue of imperialist war, the pseudo-left peddles the fraud that protest alone may end the mass murder. The perspective, whether implied or spelled out, is that capitalist governments can be pressured to change course.

This was outlined in a December 1 article on Socialist Alternative's publication *Redflag*, which stated: "The scale of the horrors of the war and revulsion at the actions of our government are driving people onto the streets, in defiance of our 'leaders.'

"The war continues nevertheless. But rather than despair, we must keep protesting for Palestine. And we need to do

what we can to build a bigger movement that can one day challenge this horror, and that ultimately can bring down the whole system that causes it."

The reference to "the whole system" at the end is a throwaway and political cover. The fight for a socialist perspective, which is not even explicitly mentioned, is relegated to the far-off future, i.e., never, with no immediate connection at all to the struggle to end the Gaza genocide.

RedFlag calls for endless protests to pressure capitalist governments, even as it acknowledges they are steadfast in their support for the mass murder. Notwithstanding the warning against "despair," this is a perspective designed to sow demoralisation.

As the IYSSE has insisted, there is a force that can end the genocide and the system that has caused it. That is the international working class. Because of its role in the productive process, and its international character, the working class is the revolutionary force in modern society. That is where students and youth should turn to, not appeals to parliament and the government.

There must be a fight to mobilise workers to block supplies to the Israeli war machine, including through strikes. The chief obstacle to that is the union bureaucracies, which have blocked any industrial action while being defended by the pseudo-left.

But above all, the genocide underscores the urgency of a socialist and revolutionary perspective. Capitalism has nothing to offer young people except mass murder, poverty, climate catastrophe and the threat of nuclear annihilation. The alternative is the struggle for socialism, a world based on peace and social equality. That is possible, as evidenced by the reemergence of the class struggle and the mass opposition that has emerged, but it has to be fought for.

Contact the IYSSE to discuss this perspective and join the fight.

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