

Protesters in the Philippines denounce Israel's genocide in Gaza

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8 December 2023

Since the Israeli genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza began in October, numerous protests have taken place throughout the Philippines opposing this barbaric crime. At times clashing with police, demonstrators have denounced not only Israel, but the roles of both United States imperialism and the government of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr in Manila.

Demonstrators gathered in Quezon City, Metro Manila on November 29, marking the annual International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Protesters held signs demanding Israel “Stop the bombings. Free Palestine.” They also drew attention to the large number of women and children who have been killed since Israel’s slaughter began.

Rallies were also held the previous weekend, with marchers in Manila on November 25 denouncing Israel’s genocide. Demonstrators chanted “Free, free Palestine,” and “US, Israel Terrorists” and headed to the US Embassy before police forcibly diverted them from their planned, and supposedly government-approved, route. The protesters have been mostly youth, students, and large contingents from the Muslim Filipino minority. Thousands too marched on the Philippines’ southern island of Mindanao, where most of the country’s minority Muslim population lives.

Since the Palestinian uprising on October 7, more than 15,500 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza by Israeli forces. When the missing are factored in, the death toll surpasses 20,000. Over the past weekend alone, more than 1,000 people were killed. Nearly the entire population has been internally displaced.

Horried by the unfolding genocide, Filipino protesters have participated in the global anti-war movement, which the bourgeois media has attempted to ignore. In Southeast Asia alone, tens of thousands have repeatedly demonstrated in Malaysia, including

demonstrations at the US embassy in Kuala Lumpur. In Indonesia, over two million converged on National Monument Square in Jakarta on November 4 alone in support of the Palestinian struggle.

Parroting US imperialism, which is backing Israel, the Marcos government in Manila has supported the Israeli genocide on the bogus pretext that the Zionist state has the “right to self-defense.” In reality, the Palestinian uprising of October 7 was sparked by endless provocations from the fascistic Netanyahu regime, which had turned Gaza into a large open-air prison. The Israeli government then seized upon the revolt to carry out long-prepared plans for the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population.

On October 27, even as the death toll in Gaza surpassed 7,000 Palestinians, over half of whom were children, the Philippine government abstained, along with 44 other countries, in a United Nations General Assembly vote for a non-binding resolution calling for a “an immediate, lasting, and long-term humanitarian cease-fire” between Israel and Hamas. The resolution passed with 120 countries in support and 13 countries opposing, including the US and Israel. By abstaining, Manila effectively put its stamp of approval on the genocide taking place.

The Philippine capitalist elite are longstanding supporters of the Zionist state. In 1947, it was the only Asian country to vote with 33 other countries approving UN Resolution 181 that partitioned Palestine and established Israel. In the 1970s, Israel trained and armed the death squads of the brutal dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos, the father of the current president.

In 2018, then President Rodrigo Duterte visited Israel, meeting with Netanyahu at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Remembrance Center, dubbed the “washing machine” for far-right figures. An Israeli daily

Haaretz columnist, Anshel Pfeffer, wrote: “Politicians who are historically tainted with their party’s past associations with fascist and neo-Nazi roots can get Israel’s kashrut [kosher] stamp by visiting the Western Wall and the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial.”

Duterte pledged to support Israel’s repression of Palestine, joining Netanyahu’s coterie of fascistic supporters like Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, India’s Narendra Modi, and Steve Bannon, the advisor to former US President Trump.

By 2022, the Philippines had purchased Israeli military equipment amounting to nearly \$US500 million, making it the third biggest of Israel’s customers. Major purchases included ten coastal defense fast gun boats costing a total of \$US176.6 million, 20 tanks, including support vehicles, costing a total of \$US172 million and two long-range patrol plans costing a total of \$US114 million.

Manila’s support for Israel is also bound up with its alignment with the US-led war drive against China. The “right to self-defense” will no doubt similarly be trotted out for the Philippines in the event that a US-orchestrated provocation in the South China Sea provokes a clash with Beijing. Washington and Manila recently conducted just such an operation around the Second Thomas Shoal, located in the South China Sea. Within the past year, the Marcos regime has also agreed to expand the US military presence in the Philippines while also drawing closer to other imperialist powers in the region, namely Japan.

While the protests in the Philippines show that there is widespread public opposition to war, the organizers of the rallies are seeking to derail both the pro-Palestinian demonstrations and opposition to war more broadly. The organizers include petty-bourgeois layers grouped around Muslim politicians, so-called civic organizations, and the Maoist-aligned Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN). These layers are directing anti-war sentiment into impotent appeals to the administration in Manila and to US and European imperialist governments, Israel’s primary supporters.

The Maoists, in fact, are preparing to openly back the Marcos regime. On November 28, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, a front organization for the Maoists, agreed to begin peace talks with the government, with both sides citing in a joint statement “foreign security threats facing the

country”—that is, China—making it necessary “to unite as a nation.” In other words, as the Maoists falsely posture as opponents of US imperialism in the Middle East, they are openly moving to back US imperialism and its stooge Marcos in the Indo-Pacific.

These are not the layers that will lead an anti-war movement. Only an independent political movement of the international working class can put an end to the danger of war and its cause, capitalism. The protest movement, which includes thousands of sincere youth and students appalled by the genocide of the Palestinians, should turn to the working class and build a genuine Marxist leadership and a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International in the Philippines.



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