

Australian protesters: “We need a general strike to stop the Gaza genocide!”

Our reporters

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Tens of thousands again turned out across Australia to protest the deepening Israeli genocide in Gaza. Despite the approach of the holiday season, more than 20,000 total participated in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and Adelaide.

These were the first rallies since the Australian Labor government voted for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza at the United Nations (UN). The vote is not worth the paper it is written on. It is entirely non-binding and does not commit a single country to anything. It will also not impede the Israel regime from continuing its bombardment and starvation of the population.

At the UN, moreover, Australia effectively argued against any genuine ceasefire. Instead, it called for humanitarian “pauses” between rounds of bombardment and signalled support for a full Israeli victory over the oppressed Palestinians. Given the indiscriminate mass murder and the genocidal statements of Israeli government officials, such a victory would amount to the completion of a 21st century Holocaust.

Labor’s posturing, intended to dampen-down anger, has been promoted by the Greens and fake-left groups. In Sydney, federal Greens Senator Mehreen Faruqi declared that Labor’s vote was “because of people power...that the Labor government has been forced...to show a slither of humanity.”

Those remarks, echoed by other speakers, are aimed at bolstering the lie that governments can be pressured to end the bombardment through further protest alone. In reality, the governments, including in Australia, have doubled down. They are continuing to assist Israel logistically and politically, while presiding over censorship and threats against those opposing the war crimes.

As the Socialist Equality Party has insisted, the

genocide can only be ended through the mobilisation of the working class, including through strikes to block military supplies being dispatched to Israel. That requires a struggle against the Labor-aligned union apparatus, which has prevented any action.

Above all, the genocide is a crime of capitalism, highlighting the urgency of building a socialist anti-war movement of the international working class. This perspective will be outlined at a public meeting Wednesday, 7pm at the Lakemba Senior Citizens centre in Sydney and online via Zoom. Register now to attend.

In Melbourne, **Reham**, a teacher, told the WSWS: “I am here as a human being, as an educator and as an Arab. I am absolutely mortified about what is happening in the Middle East. I campaigned for the anti-apartheid movement at university in the late ‘80s, the early ‘90s—there are huge parallels between Israel and South Africa. We drew attention to that apartheid axis; we were attacked then for antisemitism—we fought that argument and we won.

“Palestinians are living under appalling conditions, there is a genocide. There are now mass massacres of refugees in tents, bulldozers ran over refugees in tents last night—it is worse than Tiananmen Square, but our media does not cover it. So, I am here today because I am absolutely furious.”

She continued, “I am concerned about our freedoms and rights here—we need to campaign for our right to speak unhindered. When we stand against Israel, we stand against an expansionist, apartheid non-secular government that is racist, by its own definition. It differentiates against Palestinians, it differentiates against any non-Jews. Palestinians within the 1948 borders are discriminated against on every level. And then you have the second-class citizens—black Jews are

discriminated against; Sephardic Jews are discriminated against.

“We are not antisemitic, and we cannot let the Israeli state stop our dialogue while massacring the Palestinian people, who are among the poorest people in the world. They have been limiting Gazans’ diets, their food, there has been ethnic cleansing, and they don’t want the world to talk about it.”

Asked about the active role of the Albanese government in the genocide, Reham said: “When you look at what America has done in the Middle East, the wars they have waged on false bases, like the Iraq war where millions of people were killed, Australia was complicit. I was in the anti-Iraq war demonstrations, then they demolished Iraq, its infrastructure, its people, its history, and they are doing it again.”

Juno, who studies international relations at university, similarly denounced the Albanese Labor government. “I think it’s shameful, especially considering the historical context, not just with what is happening in Palestine but also the ongoing violence against indigenous people. I wish the UN ceasefire resolution would have some effect but unfortunately, I do not think so, because the General Assembly is non-binding. The Security Council is just rigged, there’s no way for international institutions to go forward.”

He continued, “Palestine is treated as a laboratory for new mechanisms of state violence and repression, and how to mobilise for genocide, to oppress and exploit nations and peoples. I do see some utility in protest, but I believe that direct action is more important. A general strike is the goal that we must work towards, to stop the ongoing genocide.”

In Sydney, **Varun** said he was attending because he was shocked by the war crimes he had seen over the previous two months.

“There’s no reason for this sort of response even if hostages were taken,” he said. “This is quite unprecedented and the killing of civilians is never acceptable. It is the worst crime. Also, Israel claims it is trying to get the hostages back, but yesterday they shot three hostages who had escaped from Hamas. That shows there is more to this.”

Varun said he was “not surprised” the major powers were backing Israel. “There’s been a lot of unity in fighting wars in the past, and it hasn’t mattered at all whether they were justified, or not.”

Peter, a Melbourne high school student, said, “The Australian government’s role is completely despicable, but entirely expected. These governments benefit from this horrific system of genocide and exploitation because they are the imperialist powers in the world. In Israel’s case, they benefit from having a military base in the Middle East, from which they can exert their influence over their semi-colonies.”

Asked about the continuation of the Israeli assault on Gaza despite the global demonstrations, Peter said, “There has never been any change in the world from just peaceful protests. We need a more radical flank, a more militant flank that is actively telling the governments, if you don’t do what we demand then we will deal with you differently.

“I agree that strike action is a good way of actively interfering with the productive process. But the union leadership in this country is all led by the Labor Party, they all benefit from ties with Israel, they don’t want to do anything that harms that. They are going to keep trying to help the Israelis even though the workers clearly oppose it.

“The only way we can achieve any sort of change, end any of the horrific consequences of capitalism is overthrowing it, there’s no reforming or fixing it.”



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