

Australia: Labor government representatives promoted at Gaza vigil in Newcastle

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A vigil last Saturday in Newcastle, north of Sydney, featured a revealing political line-up. While nominally called to oppose the Israeli onslaught against Gaza, pride of place was given to representatives of the Labor Party who are complicit in the war crimes. At the same time, socialists were threatened and intimidated.

The vigil was formally called by a local mosque. Members of the Palestine Action Group (PAG) Newcastle were prominent, operating effectively as marshals.

Over the past two months, dozens of protests have been held across the country, opposing the leveling of Gaza, including several in Newcastle.

Senior representatives of Labor have not attended any of these events, until last Saturday's vigil. The reason is obvious. They have been aggressively asserting Israel's "right to defend itself," as the Zionist regime drops bombs on defenceless Palestinian civilians and openly proclaims its intention to ethnically cleanse them.

The Labor MPs made their appearance days after the Australian government voted in favour of a ceasefire resolution at the United Nations (UN). That was part of a shift in rhetoric, not substance, which is also being performed by the other western governments.

While continuing to back Israel's onslaught, these administrations have issued utterly hypocritical professions of concern over the massive civilian death toll.

The UN vote underscored the sham character of this posturing. It was entirely non-binding. Even in voting for it, the Labor government signalled its unwavering support for Israel, calling only for occasional "pauses" between rounds of bombardment.

Federal Labor member for Newcastle Sharon Claydon addressed the vigil. Her remarks consisted of banalities, cynical evasions and misrepresentations.

Claydon stated that "whilst it's adults that perpetuate this violence, it is the innocent children that bear this cost of violence in Gaza and Israel." The violence was caused, she said, by "a fundamental failure not to understand or act on our interconnectedness or our common humanity."

Representatives of the federal Labor government should be en route to a war crimes tribunal at The Hague, not delivering moralistic homilies before opponents of the slaughter.

What Claydon presented as a "conflict" is a genocide, involving the systematic extermination of oppressed Palestinians, by an advanced industrial state backed by the major imperialist powers. In addition to political support, the Labor government has approved more than 50 arms exports to Israel this year alone, while the Pine Gap spy base in central Australia is likely providing the Zionist regime with targeting information for at least some of its strikes on Gaza.

The Newcastle MP also instructed those in attendance not to let "fear, anger and violence seep into our being or shape our world," to be "thoughtful and considerate" and "to find peaceful ways to move forward."

This from the representative of a government that is not only backing the mass murder in the Middle East, but is also completing Australia's transformation into a frontline state for a US-led war against China in the Indo-Pacific.

Tim Crakanthorp, the state Labor MP for Newcastle, added that he was doing "everything I can in my electorate to make progress on this issue." What the issue was exactly, Crakanthorp did not say, nor what progress he was intending to make or how. His remarks had all the depth of a used car salesman.

Crakanthorp was speaking for a NSW Labor government that has led the offensive against pro-Palestinian protests. The administration threatened to ban one of the first protests in Sydney against the Gaza genocide, on October 15, and has since overseen multiple highly-aggressive police mobilisations.

Local councilor Elizabeth Adamczyk, also of the Labor Party, proclaimed her support for Israel's "right to defend itself," while shedding some crocodile tears about civilian casualties.

Federal Greens Senator Mehreen Faruqi has at times sharply condemned the Labor government over its complicity in the genocide.

Faruqi toned down her rhetoric for the occasion. She had not a word of criticism for the Labor representatives with whom she shared a platform, even given the entirely mealy-mouthed character of their comments.

Instead, Faruqi encouraged those in attendance to keep “calling up their prime minister, government MPs, writing to them. Because of your commitment and courage, the Labor government has found a little sliver of humanity.”

Her remarks summed up the real function of the Greens’ posturing over Gaza. The purpose is to trap opposition back behind the parliamentary set-up and even the Labor government, as it continues to support Israel. The Greens have not ended their collaboration with Labor in parliament, having earlier this year swung behind Labor’s woefully inadequate and pro-business climate and housing legislative packages.

The Greens are a capitalist party, whose primary constituency is the upper middle-class. They have supported imperialist war over the past decade, including the US-led regime-change operations in Syria and Libya and Washington’s proxy war against Russia.

Before the vigil began, Socialist Equality Party (SEP) campaigners were accosted by a representative of the PAG, who did not identify themselves. “No other party is handing out anything except you guys,” the individual complained, before pointing out the SEP members to police officers.

The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and Socialist Alliance are heavily involved in PAG Newcastle.

The CPA, an unreconstructed Stalinist organisation, upholds all of the crimes of the Soviet bureaucracy, including the Moscow Trials, the mass murder of socialists in the 1930s and the betrayal of countless revolutions. It functions as a satellite of Labor and the union bureaucracy.

CPA members control the Sydney branch of the Maritime Union of Australia, which has rejected calls for industrial action in defence of the Palestinians, instead ensuring the orderly loading and unloading of cargo for the Israeli Zim shipping line, which has dedicated its entire fleet to the Zionist bombardment.

Socialist Alliance is a pseudo-left party, tracing its origins to the Pabloite tendency that split from the Trotskyist movement in the 1950s. The Pabloites rejected the revolutionary role of the working class, instead orienting to the Stalinists, social-democrats and union bureaucracies, and falsely presenting them as a vehicle for socialism.

Decades later, the pseudo-left have shifted miles to the right and have no connection to socialism or the interests of the working class. They represent a middle-class layer, tied by a thousand strings to Labor and the corporatist union bureaucracy.

Socialist Alliance has been at the forefront of attempts to

subordinate the pro-Palestinian movement to Labor. Recently, it published an article warning against “sectarians” who would alienate potential allies within the Labor Party.

Whatever the identity of the PAG member who tried to finger SEP representatives to the cops, they were acting on the basis of that political line.

The SEP’s activities and its leaflets could not be tolerated, because the promotion of Labor at the vigil rested on such tenuous and fraudulent foundations. Any criticism, and Claydon and co. could have been sent packing by the crowd.

The orientation pushed by the pseudo-left is a political dead end. It means lining up behind the very political forces that are overseeing Australian assistance for and de facto participation in the genocide.

The alternative is the revolutionary and socialist perspective outlined by the SEP at a public meeting in Sydney last Wednesday. What is required is the independent mobilisation of the working class, to block all military-related supplies to Israel, and to prepare a political general strike to block the unfolding Holocaust.

Above all, political conclusions must be drawn. All those forces that have backed the mass murder are enemies of the working class. The genocide is a crime of imperialism and a warning of what it has in store, not just in the Middle East, but on a global scale.

The burning issue of the day is the construction of a mass political movement of the working class around the world, based on a socialist and revolutionary perspective against the source of war, the capitalist profit system itself.



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