

“Stop the Gaza genocide! Build a socialist anti-war movement!”—SEP (Australia) holds well-attended public meeting

Our reporters

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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) held an important and well-attended meeting on Wednesday in Sydney, to discuss the way forward for the working class in the fight to stop Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

Despite the approach of the holiday season, and the meeting being held on a weeknight, more than 150 people attended, either online or in person.

There is widespread anger over the genocide in the southwest suburb of Lakemba, where the meeting was held. A diverse working-class area, it has a large migrant community, including many people from the Middle East and of an Islamic background.

In-person attendees included Palestinians, who had emigrated during earlier Israeli assaults, as well as youth who had been born in the diaspora. Other attendees, workers, students and retirees, were of various backgrounds, some who have long held socialist convictions, others who have been politicised by the unfolding events.

Livestream participants tuned in from across Australia. There were also international listeners, including from New Zealand, Germany, India and one participant in a Middle Eastern country.

Comments from some of those who attended are published here.

The meeting was chaired by SEP National Secretary Cheryl Crisp, and speeches were given by Max Boddy, assistant national secretary of the SEP, and Evrim Yazgin, national convenor of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the party’s youth movement.

The expansive reports provoked lively discussion and questions, which were addressed by the panelists and in contributions from other leading SEP members, Peter Symonds and Nick Beams. A recording of the meeting is included above.

Crisp opened by paying tribute to Helen Halyard, a 52-year veteran of the SEP and its predecessor, the Workers League, in the United States, who died suddenly on November 28, after dedicating “her entire adult life to the fight to build the revolutionary party for the overthrow of capitalism.”

“Helen was part of a generation,” Crisp continued,

“politicised through war and the mass struggles of the working class,” in a period when, “through the development of technology, the Vietnam War was reported and televised in a way no other war was.”

Similarly, Crisp explained, the “unrelenting war and slaughter” unleashed against Gaza is rapidly transforming the world view of millions of people in Australia and globally.

Citing Vladimir Lenin’s statement, “There are decades where it appears nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen,” Crisp noted, “We have passed from the first part of the comment to the second.”

Yazgin declared, “Biden’s full-throated support for the atrocities carried out by Israel in Gaza is intended to send a message to the world: ‘There are no limits. Colonialism is back.’ Genocide is now the policy of all the imperialist powers.”

He explained that Israel’s bombardment of Gaza is rooted in decades of US-led imperialist aggression aimed at controlling the resource-rich Middle East. But this is “just one arena of a global war for world domination, targeting Russia in Europe and China in the Pacific.”

This is, Yazgin said, “the working out of a perspective that US and global imperialism have been developing since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.” The final betrayal of the October Revolution by the Stalinist bureaucracy paved the way for US imperialism to “openly and ruthlessly” try to reestablish its global hegemony and overcome the crisis of world capitalism.

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) was the sole political tendency to anticipate this. Basing itself upon the “scientific method of Marxism,” the ICFI warned in 1991 that “a new period of war and social misery was on the cards unless the working class was mobilised against capitalism.”

The daily horrors being inflicted upon the people of Gaza are the starkest demonstration of the correctness of this analysis, and that Trotskyism “has become a living necessity for the working class youth.

“For an end to war, poverty, authoritarianism, climate

catastrophe and mass illness, the working class must end capitalism. For the working class to carry out its historic task, it must be led by a Marxist revolutionary party, based on the lessons of history and oriented to the seizure of power by the world working class.”

Boddy explained that workers and young people confront a choice between two opposed perspectives:

- That advanced by the SEP “for the independent action and mobilisation of the working class, drawing on the colossal experiences of the 20th and 21st centuries;” or,

- “That of the trap laid by all other political tendencies to appeal to the very governments responsible for the genocide.”

He explained that the Australian government’s posture of support for a ceasefire is entirely phoney. Labor’s position is that, “far from a permanent ceasefire, Israel’s genocidal campaign should continue indefinitely, with a series of ‘pauses’ to give a humanitarian veneer to the mass murder.”

Confronted with mass popular opposition to this pro-Zionist, pro-war line, Labor has lurched further to the right, seeking to “vilify all expressions of support for the Palestinians, including the rallies and protests, the strikes by high school students, and in the fields of theatre, visual arts and sport.”

The Greens present no alternative, as is demonstrated by their history of close collaboration with Labor, including backing US-led regime change operations in Syria and the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

The trade union bureaucracy, Boddy explained, has “defended the Labor Party’s pro-Zionist position by ensuring not a single political strike has occurred since the onslaught began.”

This is most sharply expressed by the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), which has forced port workers to remain on the job, loading and unloading Israeli ships, while its leaders falsely profess their support for the hundreds of protesters taking part in “Block the Boat” rallies at ports around the country.

The pseudo-left is providing political cover for the perfidy of all of these organisations, hailing token gestures as a substitute for industrial and political action, promoting illusions that Labor can be pressured to the left and engaging in outright falsification of the role being played by the unions.

That, Boddy explained, is because these organisations “represent the interests of the upper middle class, and seek to keep workers shackled to the political setup, including the Labor Party and the trade unions, as capitalism is driving toward world war and dictatorship.”

Boddy cited a recent article, “How can we build the movement for the liberation of Palestine?” published by Socialist Alliance, “explicitly calling for a deeper turn to Labor.”

Its author declared: “While we are angry with Labor for its stance on Palestine, and many other things, we need to work with pro-Palestine activists within Labor: They are an

important source of pressure on the hierarchy, as are the unions. We must partner with Labor activists to deepen that pressure until the Labor hierarchy caves in.”

Boddy responded, “This perspective is not a way forward but a dead end. You cannot pressure the pro-capitalist and pro-Zionist parties responsible for the slaughter. The last two-and-a-half months have proven that.”

He continued, “We insist that there is an alternative to the capitalist system, which is socialism.” Critical to realising this perspective is the fight to build a revolutionary party based on the example of the Bolshevik Party, which led the Russian working class to victory in 1917.

Boddy concluded: “What faces everybody here today is the question of joining our movement, building the party of socialist revolution, assimilating the essential historical lessons, and bringing this necessary socialist consciousness into the movement of workers and youth. Only through this perspective will there be an end to the bloodshed and imperialist war.”

The reports provoked a broad range of questions. Attendees asked about the global corporate media coverup of pro-Palestinian protests, the impact of the propaganda campaign on workers, and how workers can organise to fight genocide in the face of opposition from the union leadership.

They also wanted to know more about the economic development and geo-strategic interests of Israel and how these intersected with the broader interests of imperialism, as well as what impact the immense technical progress since 1917 had on the relevance of the Marxist program advanced by Lenin and Trotsky to the situation today.

These questions and more were addressed by the speakers in the course of the discussion, which can be viewed in full in the video above. We urge readers to watch the meeting video, share it widely on social media, and contact the SEP to join the fight for a socialist alternative to imperialist war and genocide.



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