

Protests in Britain against Israel's destruction of Gaza: "All the people that have died can't be in vain. This needs to be a catalyst for change"

Our reporters
7 January 2024

Reporting teams from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with people protesting Israel's war on Gaza at demonstrations on Saturday in Manchester and Leeds. These were part of around 50 protests across Britain.

Manchester

Wahida, a mother from Oldham, spoke to WSWs reporters at the demonstration in Manchester's St Peter's Square.

"I knew about the oppression of the Palestinian people years ago, but in those days there was no internet, or smart phones so it wasn't easy to join a group and protest. It's so shocking and painful and you don't know where to go. Now this has happened, I'm not going to let it go until Palestine is free."

Asked about the smear that opposing Zionism and the genocide is antisemitic, Wahida retorted, "That's a lie! Of course, you can criticise actions and countries for what they're doing. It's so nice to see a Jewish protest, so obviously it's nothing to do with Jews because Jews are with us".

On the Labour Party's support for Israel's genocide, she said, "Both the parties we've got now, I wouldn't vote for them. We're going to have to find someone else. I just hope that the power of the people, the voice of the people comes through. It is doing worldwide. The powers that be, the leaders, they're not going to change their mind.

"During the pandemic, Boris Johnson said about the old people, they've all had a 'good innings', let them die, it's disgusting. On the LBC interview [Labour Party leader Sir Keir] Starmer was asked is it right cutting off water and electricity in Gaza, and he said yes it is.

"In one phone call, the American leader could stop the arms to Israel. This situation we're in now, with Palestine being oppressed, it's happening because somebody wants it to happen. Palestine is just the start, they're going to go for the others after that. I didn't know until recently, they've already got South Lebanon, the Golan heights that partly belongs to Syria, they've got that. You learn so much on the internet. A greater Israel contains a lot of other Arab countries.

"The West wanted a base in the Middle East and they got it. We need the leaders to cave into the pressure, but they're just going for it more, saying their strength is unshakeable, 'our partnership is unshakeable with Israel', they're giving them more arms.

"My husband joined me on one march, and then he goes 'no, people lose their jobs, people are getting bullied at work'. I've got a son of 17, he's doing A levels, I've told my son to be careful, you don't know who you're talking to in your peer groups. My friends are with me. But I don't have an employer over my head, so I don't have to worry. When you go on X [formerly Twitter] people ask you where you work, as a friend. Then they go and report you to your employer, to get you sacked."

Leeds

Around 500 people marched from the Leeds City Square, through the main shopping areas before returning to City Square for a rally.

Mariam said, "I think the number of civilian casualties is really heartbreaking. This wasn't just over the last few months, everybody knows about it now.

"I wish our government would listen to the people try to stand for justice. None of the major governments are in line with public opinion and it's just an embarrassment really that these are the people who are leading our country and I agree change needs to happen.

"How many more children have to die until they finally stop—it's a massacre. I also think that the escalation of war in other countries is concerning and when will it actually end. As well as those killed by bombs many are being killed through widespread disease, lack of healthcare and there are so many deaths that aren't being recorded so the figures are even higher."

Shabnam brought a homemade placard reading, "No money for the Poor, NHS and Homelessness!!!, Working Class Elderly and Children, Your Local Area.

She said, “We have so many crises in the UK including homelessness, the elderly, cost of greed, over three thousand people sleeping rough daily and the government, instead of doing something about the crisis, are funding Israel. How do you justify supporting and funding a genocide, I didn’t ask for that. I can’t afford to make ends meet, why is my money going to kill kids? My anger and every single weekend the reason I come out is because the government needs to stop and the people need to unite. People need to wake up and realise what is happening. It’s not just about us or the ethnic minorities.

“Keir Starmer’s views on Palestine are beyond disgusting. If the working class unite we should be able to fight. Where is our money going when we are barely surviving? They just use people as currency—people died in the most horrific way during COVID. The way the government handled everything, having parties while people were dying in hospitals. People died through killing themselves and Do Not Resuscitate policies, whilst the government were having cheese and wine. So people need to understand it’s all connected and when they unite they can achieve great things.”

Jonathan said, “This is textbook genocide, you’ve got to prove intent in action. In this particular case all the genocidal rhetoric that’s coming out of the heads of the Israeli government it is very easy to prove intent. The action you can see, all the people that are being killed every day, the children, the parents are being blown to bits. So, in terms of proving that it’s genocide it’s a very simple case in my opinion. I’m not an expert but I’ve listened to experts who have put the case forward and there’s no ambiguity. What annoys me personally is that everyone seems to think that history started on October 7. This started in 1948 when Israel took over Palestine, but people don’t talk about that.

“The propaganda that’s coming out of the western media and Israeli sources everyone is focussing on October 7. A lot of the IDF [Israel Defence Forces] killed their own people. No one mentions that, they all want to blame Hamas. I have personally taken the time to research this genocide. It gives me a much better understanding and clarity what’s going on. The one thing that I thought united us in the world was the protection and safety of children and I couldn’t be more wrong. More than 12,000 children are dead. The death toll yesterday was 30,636 people killed, it’s unacceptable.

“What makes it worse is our government is supporting it. A lot of people aren’t aware that [prime minister] Rishi Sunak’s wife’s father has got a company which has just made a deal with British Petroleum in the billions with Israel. They are all in bed together and not enough people know about this. America are sending billions to fund this war and look at their own economy—they’ve got an amphetamine epidemic in San Francisco, their own people are suffering. The money they have spent on war could support their own people. It breaks my heart. I agree society has to change.

“All the people that have died can’t be in vain. This needs to

be a catalyst for change in my opinion.”

Maarjan, a student said, “Israel’s claim of ‘self-defense’ is just being used as an excuse to wipe out and ethnically cleanse Palestinians. We really need to stop and just question ourselves and think, why are we believing these false claims of self-defense? In the West Bank, there’s violence there against innocent civilians, where is Hamas there?

“Innocent children are being killed. This is not collateral damage. This whole attack on ‘Hamas’ is actually killing 20,000 plus civilians. How is that self-defense? It’s just an excuse. It’s clear that it’s genocide, deliberate killing. It’s capitalism. The genocide is being justified, by whatever means necessary.

“America and the UK are equally responsible. We know Britain started this entire problem with the occupation. But also the Arab leaders, where are they? We’ve heard empty threats about what they’re going to do to Israel, but we’ve seen no action, and they are just sitting back and watching this happen. The people who are in power are just siding with the enemies because they’re afraid of losing power, afraid of losing money.

“It feels like we’re living in a dystopian society at this point. I mean, just the fact that there’s been this genocide ongoing for months. Nobody has done anything to stop it.”

Education worker **Charlotte** said, “I just can’t believe that it’s still ongoing. I think that there is a plan; it’s a plan that they’ve had for years. I read that their plans were set from 2015, maybe possibly even earlier.

“Speaking up about it is so important, especially people who have children themselves. I just can’t imagine not saying anything about something, so horrific. “If you have a voice, and if you really care about humanity, then use it. I’ve been speaking out, but I’m not meant to speak out because of my job in education, but I’m not going to stop speaking out for something that I believe is right.

“I feel people are being brainwashed by the media.

“When 9/11 happened, we were in the primary school. They got us all into a hall and we had to watch the video on TV. And from that moment, we were drilled into the idea that Muslims and Islam is a terrorist culture. You have to speak up now especially.”



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact