

Australian protests against Israeli genocide of Gaza: “The issue is Zionism and imperialism”

Our reporters
7 January 2024

Thousands of protesters turned out to rallies across Australia last weekend, opposing the Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. This was the thirteenth consecutive week of marches since the bloodbath began in October last year and the first demonstrations of the new year.

In Melbourne around 5,000 people attended despite heavy rainfall. After gathering at the State Library of Victoria, they marched to Victoria Barracks, which is used as an administration centre for the Department of Defence. In Sydney around 5,000 attended at Hyde Park.

The protesters continued to call for an immediate ceasefire and demanded the Australian Labor government withdraw its support for Israel, including arms sales and cooperation with the Israeli military.

In Sydney the WSWS spoke to **Mohamed**, 41, who works in construction and regularly attends the rallies. “It’s completely against humanity. It’s taking away people’s human rights. It’s blanket bombing, an absolute massacre and genocide at a mass scale. The western world is doing nothing about it. These people have lives, they have families. Even if you do blame Hamas, they are such a small percentage of this population. If there was one person in a building, they blow the entire building up. These people have been under siege for nearly two decades, so life for them was already horrendous.

“I’ve been speaking to people from Gaza who have just arrived here, with no help from the Australian government. We’ve had to fund them ourselves. It cost nearly \$100,000 to bring a family of five over with air flights, paying off the Egyptians at the Rafa border.

“The first thing they said to me is, ‘what you’re seeing on the news is only scratching the surface, it’s hundreds of times worse.’ What comes out is only from

a couple of dozen journalists in a population of more than two million people under siege and constant blockade.

“The other thing they comment on is the lack of sleep. We don’t even think about it but if you go without sleep for three days you start losing your ability to think clearly. These guys have gone three months, day in, day out, without getting even a partial night’s sleep. At night they’re getting bombarded and during the day they must line up for hours to go to the toilet or go get water.

“When you talk about sub-human, we’re talking about sub-animal, we get locked up in Australia for treating animals the way that the Gazans are getting treated at the moment. That just kills you from the inside if you have any sense of humanity.

“The fact this is being blindly funded by western governments, who are giving them a blank cheque both monetarily and morally to do whatever they wish really does feel like the end times.

“This isn’t even hidden, it’s in plain sight, people getting massacred and Israeli politicians using words such as ‘we’re going to turn Gaza into a parking lot,’ or ‘they all leave.’ That kind of talk should have stopped with the Second World War. What happened to them is now happening to us. This isn’t a Jewish thing, it is 100 percent Zionism that’s the issue, and imperialism.”

When asked about the danger of a broader war breaking out, Mohamed said, “I really hope it doesn’t happen, but I think it’s inevitable. They’re pulling troops out of Gaza to go put them on the South Lebanese border and the Golan Heights. You have the bombings in Iran. The Americans are trying to get a coalition in the Red Sea. They’re trying from every angle to get these countries all involved. The end game

is what's scary.

"Israel's been there for 75 years, and America's had some type of involvement in that area for decades and decades, so what more do they want? They've already got all the oil wells, the gas wells, agreements with a lot of the Gulf countries and, behind closed doors, probably Saudi Arabia as well.

"At a higher level they want to get Russia and China. America's been declining for many, many years and this is their way of weakening those two powers. This is probably their only footstep into that doorway."

When a WSWS reporter pointed out that Australia was a key US linchpin against China, Mohamed said, "That's scary for us as a developed nation that's never been in any of our own wars. This is where they're pushing to and that might be one year away, that might be five years away, might be ten years away, but that's ultimately what they're after. The only thing that's going to stop this are the people of those nations, it's up to Australians and Americans to stop this from happening."

When asked what he thought about socialism, Mohamed said, "anything's better than what we have now. I'm not completely familiar with all the ins and outs but it's definitely something that would interest me because what's happening now isn't working."

Aisha, a Macquarie University student majoring in international relations, said, "Israel's excuse for this genocide is they want to get hostages back and they want to eradicate Hamas, but this has been going on for so many years and there's still Hamas, so they're doing something wrong. It's either that they can't fight Hamas, or they don't want to reveal what they're planning, which is the genocide of the Palestinian people. They don't want to eradicate a threat against the Israeli community, they want to claim Palestinian land."

When asked about the danger of a war by the US against Russia and China, Aisha said, "The US is trying to find any way to weaken Russia and China's allies so they can break their economy and the US can have the strongest economy. I don't just think they're descending us into war, they're also removing all the rights of the working class. If the working class keeps doing things like this [protests], that's how we regain our power."

Katrina, a pastry chef in Melbourne, told the

WSWS, "I'm here because we have to stand up for the oppressed. The power we have as a person in Australia is to be on the street, to let our governments know that we're in support of Palestine. The Australian government's support for what Israel is doing is disgusting, it's absolutely disgraceful. I have been a Labor Party supporter because that's what my parents did, my grandfather was a senator, but I will never ever vote for them again. They have completely lost my support over this."

Asked why she thought the government was aligned so closely with Washington, Katrina said, "Too much following America. America needs to go to war. They need to have war to keep their economic system going, because it is all based on militarism. And if they don't go to war, then their whole economy collapses."

Katrina supported the call for a workers' blockade of ships exporting military equipment to Israel, and spoke about why she thought that had not happened. "Our trade unions are pretty weak these days. They're nowhere near as powerful as they used to be, and I'm disappointed that they're not out here in bigger numbers, because when there is ever a WorkChoices or that sort of [industrial relations law] protest, we're all out there. I'm not a unionist, I haven't got a union because my job doesn't have a good union, so I won't join, but I just think they have totally failed us.

"This affects everybody. Don't just sit in your home in Australia and think, 'This doesn't affect me,' because it does. It affects every single human being, because one day they'll come for you. One day they'll decide you don't have the right, and that's what it comes down to."



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