

Protests in Leeds and Sheffield, UK against genocide in Gaza and bombing of Yemen

Our reporters
15 January 2024

At least 500,000 people participated in the national demonstration in London on Saturday calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and opposition to the US-UK bombing of Yemen, with smaller demonstrations held in other UK cities. *World Socialist Web Site* reporters spoke to protestors in Leeds and Sheffield.

Sheffield

About 300 protestors assembled at Ellesmere Green in Burngreave demanding a ceasefire to end the genocide in Gaza. They marched to the city centre where they were joined by hundreds of others.

Adbi, a warehouse worker, called for a global movement to end the ongoing genocide.

“I am here to call for a ceasefire because it is very shameful to watch, in the 21st century, on our screens, children dying because of who they are and where they come from, because they are Palestinian and live in Palestine.

“We have been led to believe that the western powers and western leaders are the front runners in the protection of human rights, well the genocide in Gaza shows that this is not the case. The western powers and leaders are acting shamefully.

“The danger is very clear, despite the reports of Human Rights Watch, the United Nations and organisations like Amnesty International, on the brutality of the war, the British parliament and House of Lords, they are ignoring them. This situation will only lead to a wider escalation, which will be more explosive, affecting not only the Middle East but the wider world. This region is the most important region, it’s the centre of the most diverse religious and ethnic populations and has enormous resources such as energy, which can lead to an escalating situation.

“We have to come together and unite against these imperialist governments, companies and individuals who control this society and are waging war in their own interests. Their interests should not be achieved through brutal force. The world has to come together to block these companies who are sponsoring war.

“Starmer supposedly came in to unite Labour, but Starmer doesn’t represent the ‘many’, but the ‘few’. People who are supporting this war are the very few. These people cannot continue to work in government. They are not for a peaceful, prosperous and equal society, they will lead to more

oppression, more war and more poverty.”

Bea is from Spain and lives in the UK and has participated in other protests and demonstrations against the war. She said, “I am here as I believe it is wrong to stay silent. Our voices must be heard. I can’t stay quiet, through social media streaming we can see what is going on. We can’t think that my life has nothing to do with this—it has—war affects us all. There is ethnic cleansing against the Palestinians, which are all being recorded, we don’t have the excuse that we don’t know what is going on. The mainstream media however have been silent on what is going on, it doesn’t fit the agenda, they stay quiet to defend their political and economic interests.

“The ICJ [International Court of Justice] case by South Africa has shown very transparently all the crimes that have been going on and when social media is not banned, all the information is coming through. I think it is vile that the government are complicit in the crimes. The fact that the same day as ICJ, the UK government bombed Yemen in response is disgusting. Starmer has supported what is going on in Palestine and Yemen. How do these people sleep at night?

“I think we need a ceasefire, stop the killing and starving, we need to have workers actions and put pressure on unions to act. We have to make our voices heard.”

Scarlett, a postgraduate student in History & Politics from Sheffield University was at her very first demonstration.

She said, “I’m here today to join this amazing show of unity. Unless we use our voices to stand-up for something, the world will never change. I think the younger generation are definitely more involved than maybe our parents were and that in itself is amazing because our parents are learning from us. My mum, from what I’ve been sharing with her, was trying to get down to the protests herself today.

“I think, it’s really like a sign of hope. The last few years have been very dark. And the future itself can be dark but the fact that so many of us are willing to show support and stand up for what’s right, it’s really indicative that we can build a better world. We just have to be united to achieve that.

“When I look at the state of where we are right now; where so many people don’t have what they need and others have so much, the message is that we could have it all, we just have to stop giving it to those that don’t know what to do with it.

“We have to create a government for the people, by the people.

“Until we abolish the current system, we’re going to continue to have more and more inequality.”

Leeds

Around 400 protesters in Leeds assembled at Beckett University and marched to City Square.

Ahmed joined the Leeds demonstration with his wife Elizabeth and two children. He had been to previous demonstrations in Manchester.

He said, “I came to Leeds to show solidarity with the Palestinians, we wanted to go to London but it’s a bit too far for the kids.

“I don’t think International Criminal Court case is going to change the circumstances on the ground but I still think it is important to do it and the world should go on record and say this is wrong. People should stand up to it, even if it does not have an effect.

“I have always said if you want peace you have to give the Palestinians a meaningful sovereign state of their own and give them prosperity. Happy people don’t raise war, don’t call for the destruction of their neighbors.

“I have asked myself many times why the US and NATO powers are lining up behind genocide. A lot of the time the governments don’t represent their people as well as they should do. I think the economy around the world is broken, the more you dig into it you see how imbalanced the wealth is. It’s sickening, and it’s all linked.

“The countries with the biggest disparities between the rich and poor seem to be the biggest supporters of this action in the Middle East, and it’s wrong. What is taking place in Palestine and now Yemen is almost like a warning. Days like this are good, it shows people they are not on their own, they may have been thinking it is useless what can I do? Coming to events like this galvanises you.”

Asked for his thoughts on the fact that the trade unions have organized no opposition to the destruction of Gaza, he said, “I think you have a point there. We definitely need to think critically about these things.”

Mohammed, a security guard, said, “I have come here today because of the innocent civilians who are being held by Israel in Palestine. I know that the Israelis keep saying it started on October 7, but it started well before then. We all know that they are committing war crimes. They have been occupying the Palestinian lands for decades now and the people of Palestine just want freedom.

“I’m not going to call it an open prison because you go to a prison if you do something wrong. It’s not a prison because the Palestinians have not done anything wrong. So, how can we call you it an open prison? It’s not. It’s a concentration camp. I mean the freedom of the Palestinian people has been taken away from them for years and years.

“We’ve been seeing every year they’ve been bombed but

since the bombing after October 7 they’ve killed over 8,000 children and innocent civilians while they’re claiming they’re just after Hamas. How can it be? You know, it’s not fair. It’s not justice for the Palestinian people and that’s why I come out. Whenever I come to Leeds, I make sure I try to attend here.

“Israel has to stop killing the innocent people. That’s what everybody out here wants. You know, we want the killing, we want the bombing to stop, that’s what we want.

“The British and the Americans must stop giving their support in helping Netanyahu bomb the innocent civilians. They need to be shown that the international community is clearly against Israel. Israel, who are committing genocide, they need to be shown that they are alone. That they don’t have any friends, that they don’t have any partners. This is the right way to go forward. This is the first thing that needs to happen. Israel needs to know that nobody is with them.”

Asked about his thoughts on the petition to the ICJ by South Africa, he said, “All credit should go to South Africa for standing up for justice. I don’t know, I’m not 100 percent sure, but Israel is still defending their actions in the court, saying it should be thrown out. I mean, it’s just plain and simple arrogance. That’s all they’re showing right now.”

Mohammed also condemned the stance of the Labour Party and its leader Sir Keir Starmer, “Apparently, he recently said he’s for the bombing of the Houthi rebels, which is obscene and vicious. I don’t know how much money the UK gave towards it. I am a security officer, a mobile response officer, and I see homeless people in this country, at night, sleeping out in the streets—it’s freezing at night. I mean there’s people here who need help and they’re funding genocide.”



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)