

# Australian protesters oppose bombing of Yemen, ongoing Gaza genocide

Our reporters  
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Thousands turned out at Free Palestine rallies over the weekend, which were part of a global mobilisation including a demonstration of half a million in London and a large manifestation in Washington.

Some 20,000 participated in Melbourne, 5,000 or more in Sydney and smaller numbers at several other events across the country.

The rallies were held in the immediate aftermath of the US and Britain launching bombing raids on Yemen. Australia, under the Labor government, provided unspecified assistance to this act of war, while also vocally supporting it.

The attack on Yemen is a defence of Israel's ability to continue the genocide, after Houthi forces from that country carried out limited operations against Israeli bound shipping in the Red Sea. It also marks a further turn towards a regionwide US-led war targeting Iran. Labor's Foreign Minister Penny Wong has arrived in the Middle East to solidarise the government further with this agenda and to underline its backing for Israel.

The protests were also held after hearings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the South African genocide case against Israel. Despite the unprecedented character of the case, and the powerful factual material presented by the South African lawyers, it has largely been blacked out by the Australian media.

The WSWs spoke to participants about these developments.

**Wayne**, a social worker originally from the United Kingdom. "I'm here to show my support to the Palestinian people and to show my disdain and disgust at the Israeli government and the countries throughout the world who are supporting Israel, the UK and especially the United States. I think power is in the people.

"It's disgusting that Israel is doing this. Israel needs to take some responsibility. This is genocide. This is no different to the Holocaust and the concentration camps."

Asked about the bombing of Yemen, Wayne said, "I think it shows what side they're on. I think the Houthis are taking action because they're showing solidarity with the

Palestinians like we are. I think that them bombing Yemen just shows they are definitely in support of and in cahoots with Israel, it shows where their values and what their morals are like."

WSWS reporters noted that trade union leaders, including in Australia, had ensured there was no industrial action to block military-related Israeli shipping. Wayne responded, "I think it's important that all trade unions come together especially on issues like this. If trade unions can't stand up for issues such as that, why do they exist at all?"

On the South African legal case, Wayne added, "I think South Africa has done an incredible job taking it to the International Court of Justice. I found it really ironic how the whole thing was set up in the first place as a result of the Holocaust. And now, the Israeli state, which claims to have been founded in response to the Holocaust, is perpetrating similar crimes. It's just mind blowing to me and I think it's incredibly powerful that South Africa are the people who do this given their history of apartheid. It makes it more of a powerful impact."

**Jenny**, a retiree, said: "What's happening in Gaza is genocide. And the escalation of the war into Yemen is a bad move on everybody's part—it's only going to create a greater section of warfare, so I'm really hoping for a peaceful solution. It's very interesting that South African lawyers are the ones who have stepped forward to conduct the case. They have a very good basis of fact behind them. I don't know what will happen but I hope more countries support their stand."

She continued: "The Zionist lobby says that any criticism of Israel is antisemitic and it is a very strong group in a number of countries. But I'm just hoping that at some point people will see what's happening in Gaza and what's been happening for more than 70 years. The protests represent a great silent majority who do understand that this is really wrong and that what the Israeli government is doing is criminal, a war crime.

"People are afraid to speak out—if you're in an art industry, all the financial support is being pulled from

anybody who offers even the slightest bit of criticism towards the Israeli government. We just have to push on and hope that enough demonstrations will finally convince people that they must change their view.”

**Carol**, a mother, stated: “The expansion of the war to Yemen is an absolute joke. I’m very annoyed that the government has tried to paint Australia’s involvement in these strikes as related to the movement of our cargo. It obviously has nothing to do with that. Yemen is only attacking ships that are going to Israel. It’s a targeted attack by Yemen, and for us to have anything to do with it says a lot about the Australian government and where they’re choosing to stand on this.”

She added: “I’m very hopeful that South Africa has put together a great legal case. They’ve got all the evidence they need. Israel has repeatedly told on themselves. The main thing is that if the ICJ finds Israel guilty of committing genocide, then it puts the leaders of the US, Australia, and the UK into a position where they are liable for conspiracy.”

**Lucas**, a 26-year-old carpenter who recently came to Australia from France, said: “I’ve been looking, like almost all young people, at the images coming from Gaza, from journalists over there like Motaz [Azaiza] on Instagram and it’s revolting, it’s disgusting. You just feel like you’ve got to do something. Right now what’s happening is a genocide. As to why France is supporting it, Israel is just the West. The western imperialist upper class feels closer to Israelis than to Palestinians and Lebanese people. [French President Emmanuel] Macron is very pro-American and he’s pro-business so whatever’s good for business is good for Macron. He has no spine and he’ll go wherever the wind pushes him.”

Lucas explained that he had been fined for attending a proscribed pro-Palestinian rally in France: “The Palestinian protests were illegal for a few weeks. I went when they were and got a €135 [about \$A225, \$US150] fine.”

On the South African genocide charge, he responded: “If the case goes in Israel’s favour, we’re going to hear so much about it every time we bring up the genocide, they’re going to be like ‘oh but it’s not a genocide because those people said so.’ If it goes against Israel, it’s good. It’s another way to talk about it and it goes on TV. But I don’t have much hope because even if they do convict Israel, America’s going to put the veto on any UN resolution and there’s no army to back it. It’s symbolic. But symbolic is still better than nothing.”

**Ali**, a sales worker, said: “I’m a big supporter of the Palestine movement. We can go about our business, but halfway across the world, people literally right at this moment are being bombed, and they’re being killed and they’re dying. So any sort of input that I can have, even

though it might not make a difference, is my way of showing support, of trying to support a freedom movement.”

He denounced the mainstream media in Australia: “On what is happening in Palestine, what is happening in the genocidal war there, it’s not publicised enough. We’re not covering it enough here in Australia. Definitely from a day-to-day stance, there’s just a total absence of media about it. It’s not actually until you hop onto Google and deeply search using keywords that you actually find out what is going on, so I feel like media are just choosing to not cover it, purposely. Likewise with the demonstrations around the world. This demonstration here is part of a global demonstration. There has been absolutely no publicity about that as well. How will Australian people become aware if there is no information about it?”

Ali explained that he had supported the election of Anthony Albanese, adding: “I’m actually surprised as to his lack of action. I actually thought he would be for a Free Palestine movement, but with the recent Australian-backed bombings in Yemen, it’s distasteful and his lack of action on the Free Palestine movement is very, very deafening.”

Ali said that he had not been aware of the Labor government’s active support for the Israeli onslaught, including through the supply of bomb targets in Gaza via the Pine Gap intelligence base. He spoke on his concerns on the danger of war with China: “What is happening in the South China Sea and AUKUS alliance-backed movements in general is worrying at a global level. Palestine happened and then Yemen happened, it makes me just ask ‘What’s next?’ And Australia’s role globally is not one that fills me with joy at the moment. I think we should be going in the opposite direction and it is worrying. Almost sickening on a daily basis.”



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