

Protesters denounce New Zealand government's support for US-UK Yemen bombings

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16 January 2024

Last Friday, a “snap action” saw a 40-strong group of protesters hold a vigil outside the Auckland offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) to oppose the New Zealand National Party-led government's support for the bombing of Yemen by the United States and United Kingdom.

Two of the world's imperialist powers carried out the illegal act of war against one of the world's poorest countries last Thursday. Their forces launched air, ship and submarine strikes, targeting weapons and logistics facilities in Yemen as well as air defences after Houthi attacks on commercial shipping vessels in the Red Sea. A second round of bombings took place the next night and further attacks have continued since.

New Zealand's Foreign Minister Winston Peters and Defence Minister Judith Collins issued a joint statement of support Friday, declaring: “We are a trading nation that relies on international maritime law and the free flow of goods, and Houthi actions strike at the heart of New Zealand's national security.”

The statement falsely claimed: “Today's response is the inevitable consequence of the Houthis' disregard for international law, peace and stability.”

In fact, the Houthis have invoked international genocide conventions to disrupt commercial shipping in the Red Sea until Israel stops its onslaught on the people of Gaza.

On January 3, New Zealand and 12 other governments signed up to a White House-initiated “final warning” which denounced the Houthis' attacks as “illegal, unacceptable, and profoundly destabilizing.” The Houthis have since defied the intimidation and continued their attacks on cargo ships.

Following the initial bombings on Yemen, the US,

New Zealand, Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, the Republic of Korea and the UK released another statement defending the “precision strikes.” It declared: “[W]e will not hesitate to defend lives and protect the free flow of commerce in one of the world's most critical waterways in the face of continued threats.”

That amounts to a belligerent defence of capitalist economic interests and support for the genocide in Gaza.

As the WSWs Editorial Board statement of January 13 explained, the imperialist attacks on Yemen are a major escalation of the developing war in the Middle East. They are targeting Iran amid an expanding global war, including the US-NATO war against Russia and the developing economic and military conflict against China.

Friday's Auckland protest was organised at short notice in response to the NZ government's collaboration. While relatively small, the event was a sign of widening opposition to the aims of US imperialism and its allies, including New Zealand.

An advertisement for the protest read: “Come show that the people of Aotearoa [New Zealand] will not be complicit in genocide. That we do not support the escalation of war. That we do not support a government that supports rogue strikes on countries without any debate or mandate.”

Protesters carried signs declaring: “Hands off Yemen. This is not in our name” and “We will not be made complicit.”

MFAT's X (Twitter) account, which carried the government's statement, was inundated with nearly 500 replies, most of them hostile.

Several responders noted that New Zealand is now at war without any notice or public discussion and with no explicit UN mandate, which is generally used as a fig-leaf to justify such involvements. There was no parliamentary debate or resolution.

A NZ Palestinian spokesperson, Tameem, posted: “New Zealand has just declared support for the barbaric US & UK strikes against Yemen for its peaceful implementation of the international law to disrupt genocide. Shame on the NZ govt for its genocide complicity and backing unlawful attacks on a sovereign nation.”

Another post declared that “no one” in New Zealand “wanted this, a decision made with zero public debate. We stand with Palestine and Yemen. You have implicated us by your wish to be a US lapdog and we will never forget the blood on your hands ... your legacy will be genocide.”

Rania said: “Yemen isn’t even targeting ships destined for New Zealand, this makes no sense! Also, you’re cool with bombing ppl over ... shipping delays to customers???” Late stage capitalism is as embarrassing as it is barbaric.”

Another respondent noted: “Yemen is abiding by international law by trying to prevent the genocide against Gaza, and doing it without murdering people too. Not only has NZ abandoned its responsibility to prevent genocide, we support bombing anyone who’s trying to stop it. Shame.” There were hundreds more such comments.

As the US-Israeli assault on Gaza expands into a disastrous region-wide conflagration, the entire New Zealand ruling elite is complicit. The conservative National Party and its far-right coalition partners, NZ First and ACT, have seized on the Yemen attack to further integrate the country’s foreign policy with Washington.

None of the opposition parties has released a statement condemning the Yemen attacks or the government’s collusion. Some Labour, Greens and Te P?ti M?ori (*M?ori Party*) figures have previously sought to politically divert the mass protests against the Gaza slaughter, posturing as opposing the massacres while defending Israel’s “right of self-defence.”

The media has played its role, blaming the Houthis for rising costs. *The Post* declared on Monday that shoppers “are being warned to expect more persistent

inflation and less variety on the shelves because of the conflict in the Red Sea.” One report breathlessly announced the country’s supply of Easter eggs was at risk of disruption.

Protests are continuing, however. Last Thursday an urgent rally was held outside the Israeli Embassy and the South African High Commission in Wellington, calling on the government to support the South African genocide case at the International Court of Justice against Israel.

Sunday saw thousands of protesters join those across the world in a Day of Action marking 100 days since the Israeli onslaught on Gaza, which has resulted in over 30,000 deaths and untold injury and suffering. The weekly events in cities and towns around the country are set to continue.



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