

Widespread protests in Britain and Ireland against Israel's Gaza genocide

Our reporters
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Protests were held in Britain and Ireland on Saturday against Israel's genocide in Gaza. There was no national demonstration in London this weekend, with smaller protests being held around the capital. WSWs reporters spoke to some of those attending the protests and distributed leaflets for public meetings on "How can the genocide in Gaza be stopped?"

London

Around 300 people turned out to protest outside arms company BAE's London Offices in Southwark.

Hannah, who works in events management, told our reporters, "We're seeing heartbreak day after day, and it's been going on for months now. It's unthinkable that we're still here. But just to sit at home and watch it, and to think that there's nothing to be done, I can't live with that. It's better to get out on the streets.

"I've been protesting since October, but I've certainly been conscious of the occupation of Palestine for a long time, desperately hoping that things would get better. I know the right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu doesn't speak for all Israelis, but it's hard to be hopeful. I don't know what the future will hold, but it's unbelievable that it's got so catastrophically bad.

"From where we are now it's really hard to see a way forward. I don't claim to be an expert, but obviously Palestinians need to be in control of their own lives, which they haven't been for a very long time. That's just a very basic thing. I know that there's been problems within Palestinian democracy, and when people have suffered so much anger rises to a degree that it's hard for people to make decisions that are right for long-term peace."

Asked about the role of British politicians and political parties in the genocide in Gaza, Hannah said, "It is just shocking. It's unbelievable. Both our major

parties were against a ceasefire. It just destroys my faith in our politicians, which was already low. How can I have any belief in people who won't vote for a ceasefire when thousands of people are dying?"

Speaking about the upcoming general election in the UK, Hannah said, "There are other issues that are important to me of course, but this really undermines any faith that I had."

She had been inspired by protests in the United States, saying "The impression given of the American population is that they all support Israel, but actually there have been large demonstrations, even in Texas, in Washington."

Aisha explained, "I'm here because there's an unprecedented genocide in plain sight with the complicity of Western leaders and firms like BAE, who are arming Israel and their war crimes and genocide and getting away with it.

"What I find extraordinary, and this is going on all over the Western world, is that it's the people that are calling out the war crimes and genocide that are being criminalised and demonised and being told that we're doing something wrong. It's an extraordinary dystopian horror that we've found ourselves in.

"I genuinely think that, historically, there's never been anything like it. I know, of course, historically there have been worse atrocities but we've never seen it livestreamed, against a blockaded, besieged civilian population who cannot move, who have already been under occupation for 75 years. It's relentless, day after day on our screens.

"And it's not that they're just not doing anything about it, and violating their obligations under international law, but then they're aiding and abetting it and contributing to it. Selling arms and housing the arms companies. Elbit systems are in the UK, that's

their headquarters, and nothing's been done about it. And the people trying to do something about it are being criminalised.

"I think it's a gamechanger, I really do, because I think they're exposed. Things that precede my lifetime like Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Vietnam—these horrors that we know from history—you used to think, 'I'm so glad we've moved on from that', or we had a sense post the universal declaration of human rights, 'Never again' and all of that bullshit. Nothing has changed. It was a great veneer, but now the gloves are off and we're seeing true colours now.

"This colonialist, settler, racist, genocidal mindset hasn't gone anywhere actually, and now they're quite brazen about it. We're looking at 30,000 dead in only 100 days in front of the world, and condoned, or endorsed. We've gone backward.

"This whole notion of international humanitarian law, international human rights, the Geneva Convention, all of that is utterly discredited. I worked in human rights for 20 years, and it's lost all credibility. You have this International Court of Justice ruling but, firstly, what are they going to rule? And secondly, how would they ever enforce it?

"For 50, 60, 70 years they had us all believing that this was a genuinely collaborative project for a better world. But it's rubbish, all it has done is secure, as has the WTO, the World Bank, Western hegemony."

Speaking about Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer's backing for the genocide, Aisha said, "He's a disgrace isn't he? I mean how many people have left the Labour Party because of it? Just like we all joined; we've all left."

She described the witch-hunt of anti-Zionists as antisemites begun in the Labour Party as "a nonsense; it's an absolute nonsense. There's no legitimacy to it; they've lost any legitimacy, any credibility."

Aisha added, "The only silver lining for me is that the entire world is mobilising for Palestine. I've been involved in the Palestine issue for decades and I've never seen anything like this."

Speaking about the way forward for the movement against the genocide, she said, "It's got to be grassroots hasn't it? It's got to be enough people." When WSWS reporters raised the prospect of strikes not only against companies like BAE, but political strikes against complicit governments she responded, "Yes, yes, I'd

love to see more of that."

Manchester

SEP members campaigned at the University of Manchester for the upcoming public meeting, speaking to students and workers. Two students, Ash, and his friend, also called Ash, spoke to the WSWS.

Belfast

In Belfast, a demonstration took place one day after a public sector strike in Northern Ireland involving 150,000 workers. The rally at Writers Square was organised by the Mothers for Gaza group and attended by around 1,500.

Protesters marched through the city centre to protest outside BBC headquarters in Ormeau Avenue, with around 2,000 on the demo by this time. 120 workers and youth put on blue press vests and lined up at the wall of the BBC building, equivalent to the number of journalists killed by Israel in Gaza. They were protesting the failure of the BBC and other media to cover the opening day of the International Court of Justice in which South Africa's lawyers put forward its devastating case proving that Israeli was committing war crimes in Gaza. The media instead gave full coverage to Israel's response.



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