

# Protests continue as NZ government refuses to condemn Israel's genocide

Our reporters

22 January 2024

With barely any media coverage, thousands of people took part in protest actions across New Zealand in recent days, as part of escalating global rallies against Israel's genocidal war on the people of Gaza. After more than three months of indiscriminate bombing, a brutal ground invasion and a blockade that has produced mass starvation, more than 25,000 people have been confirmed dead and around 63,000 wounded, with thousands more unaccounted for.

On Sunday, hundreds of people marched to the US consulate in Auckland to protest against Washington's continued funding and logistical support for the Netanyahu regime's barbaric slaughter. It was reportedly the 15th rally in the city since Israel's war began. Protesters carried placards saying, "Bombing kids is not self defence," "Gaza is starving to death," "10,000 children murdered in Gaza," as well as "Hands off Yemen."

Events were also held in Wellington, Hamilton, Christchurch, Tauranga, Palmerston North, New Plymouth, Nelson, Hastings, Dunedin, Invercargill, Whanganui and Whangarei, most of which went unreported in the corporate media. Organisers called on the National Party-led coalition government to support the case launched by South Africa at the International Court of Justice, accusing the Israeli government of genocide.

In a press conference on January 18, Prime Minister Christopher Luxon was asked to respond to statements by Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the war on Gaza would continue regardless of the outcome of the court case in The Hague.

Luxon replied that Israel "has a right to defend itself, but it has a huge obligation to make sure that it is compliant with international law." Both the current government, and the previous Labour Party-led

government, endorsed Israel's war on Gaza based on the lie that Israel is engaged in self defence.

The New Zealand government is also supporting the US-led attacks against Yemen in response to Houthi militants' efforts to disrupt shipping to Israel. While defending Israeli atrocities, Luxon told reporters that New Zealand was standing up for "international law" against "illegal" actions by the Houthis. The government's hypocrisy has been widely condemned on social media, with many accusing it of being more concerned about shipping containers than human lives.

An online petition started this month by Katrina Mitchell-Kouttab, a member of New Zealand's Palestinian community, calling for the government to demand an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and to condemn Israel's genocide in Gaza, has received nearly 12,000 signatures so far.

While National Party MPs took part in a summer retreat in Christchurch last week, a number of Palestine solidarity events were held, including a rally on January 20 led by healthcare workers highlighting the fact that more than 300 medical workers have been murdered in Gaza.

Dr Mohamed Abu Dalu, who is from Palestine, addressed the gathering: "In just over 100 days, Gaza has almost entirely been reduced to rubble and made completely uninhabitable. Its people face unrelenting military bombardment, obliteration of their homes and families, unimaginable pain. Starvation, death and dying is everywhere, and nowhere is safe.

"At the heart of this systemic, widespread destruction has been deliberate targeting of the healthcare system by the Israeli occupation force... Out of 121 ambulances, only 6 are now functioning for a population of 2 million people. Out of 36 hospitals, only 9 remain and are only partially functioning, and

only in the south of the strip. These hospitals are on their knees, running at least 45 times their capacity.”

Hospitals in Gaza are under siege, with thousands trapped inside. They are being denied medical supplies, as well as fuel and water. Dr Dalu explained that Israeli forces had also attacked healthcare facilities in the West Bank, in blatant violation of international law.

“The WHO has repeatedly warned of the imminent risk of famine and the spread of infectious diseases. It is not imminent: it is happening right now and it is projected to kill as many people in Gaza as those killed by the bombs and military hardware.” He urged healthcare workers to speak out, adding: “The silence of medical institutions around the world, including Aotearoa [New Zealand], has been deafening.”

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with people attending a solidarity picnic and educational event held in Wellington on Sunday, which attracted about 150 attendees.

**Ramia**, who is from Syria, said she was pleased to see the diverse turnout in support of Palestinians, which she compared with the protests against apartheid in South Africa. She pointed to the expansion of the war, saying that Israel was “bombing Syria, there are bombs in Damascus where I used to live. It’s terrifying to me that Israel considers it okay to do that.”

Asked about the bombing of Yemen by the US and UK she said, “I feel so gutted because that whole country has been bombed for so many years. All they [the Houthis] said was: ‘No ships are going to Israel if no aid is going to Gaza.’ They are pushing to get aid to Gaza.”

She said the expansion of the war would deepen the economic crisis already afflicting Europe and the rest of the world, and was not in the interests of ordinary people anywhere. “Citizens should ask for this conflict to be resolved, to fight for a ceasefire and for the rights of the Palestinians so they can have constant peace.” She urged the New Zealand government to do the same.

**Hagam**, from Indonesia, said: “What is going on in Palestine is a human tragedy where innocent people, whether they are Muslim or not, are under occupation. The Israeli government has blocked all access to basic rights such as free education, good environment, schools, access to health.”

He said it made sense for the Palestinians to get support from Yemen, since Israel was being supported

by the US and its allies. “If the world keeps silent about the situation in Palestine, many other countries will become involved and there will be chaos in the future,” he said.

“The world has to move more quickly to solve this problem. I believe the New Zealand government as an independent country should stand for humanity and should stand for truth and support the rights of the people of Palestine.”

More protests are planned for the coming weekend.



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