

Health workers prominent at Australian protests against Gaza genocide: ‘I’d never vote Labor again’

Our reporters
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Protests against the genocide in Gaza were held in major Australian cities last weekend, coinciding with four months of the Israeli offensive. The weekly mass rallies are now the longest that have been held in the country since at least the anti-Vietnam War movement.

Last weekend’s protests coincided with a new stage of the genocide, as Israel launches an offensive on Rafah, the southernmost city of the strip. Having been forced through bombardment and threats to the south, the oppressed Palestinians are now facing an onslaught aimed at a final solution.

A notable feature of the Sydney protest, attended by several thousand, was an organised contingent of health workers numbering around thirty. Health staff have been doxxed and subjected to malicious regulatory complaints by Zionists for speaking out against the mass murder of their Gazan colleagues.

The health staff contingent was organised independently of the unions, which have done nothing to oppose the historic war crimes, including repeated Israeli assaults on hospitals, or to defend their victimised members.

WSWS reporters spoke to some of those in attendance.

In Sydney, **Jamahl**, who has just finished high school and plans to study medicine, said: “Equally as horrible as what’s happening in Gaza is the way that not so much the Western people, but the Western governments stand around and watch it happen, and even worse, in some cases they support it. They pay for Israel, they support Israel with their funds. As well as that they take away funds that support Gaza, from the Palestinian people that are struggling.”

Speaking on the attempted victimisation of health workers and other witch hunts orchestrated by pro-Israeli Zionists, he commented: “I think that’s the extension of what’s been happening within the government, and in

Gaza itself. You’re not allowed to speak in Gaza, and in Australia, people don’t let you speak freely either. But if you speak out, trying to support people who have no representation in their country, you are instantly descended upon and attacked.”

Jamahl said this had to be opposed. “One of the many hearts of Australia is the doctors and the nurses. Everyone that works in healthcare, everyone that keeps everyone running. They’re quite an important force.

“They’re the ones who have seen and felt the most for the people, because they see many different people day by day. They help people in extreme situations. They know, I think, almost the most about what people need, and so their opinions, their support, is one of the most important perspectives that we need.”

He noted that in Gaza, health workers were being systematically targeted by Israel, which has murdered at least 340 of them. “I think it’s a deliberate effort to cut off, like I said before the hearts of the country. Without healthcare workers, the people themselves won’t be able to survive.

“It’s the healthcare workers that perform surgeries, perform amputations for all those people that have been struck by the bombings. They provide all the aid, all the support, and so by targeting them, Israel is trying to effectively stop the people in Gaza from being able to regenerate and keep going.”

Harris, a worker originally from Pakistan, condemned the Labor government for supporting the genocide. “Their response is very unfortunate. I thought Labor is supposed to be a left-wing party, for the workers, but they’re not acting on anything, not doing anything.

“In fact, many of the western Sydney electoral seats are won by Labor, where a lot of people overwhelmingly have the view that Israel is on the wrong side, but it

doesn't look like Labor is really interested in any action.

A WSWS reporter noted that Labor's backing for Israel was bound up with its alignment with US imperialism, including in advanced preparations for a catastrophic war against China. Harris responded, "I actually happened to watch that documentary by John Pilger who recently passed away. It warned of 'The coming war on China' and explained how the mainstream media is trying to generate consensus for such a war.

"Since that film was made, the Labor government has agreed to buy nuclear-powered submarines for \$368 billion, clearly directed against China. It looks like Australia is probably tied itself to the US overall imperial interests and preparing for a wider conflict with China."

In Melbourne, **Pavani**, who is retired, said: "I came because children are dying. The killing must stop. It has to do with economic interests, like the sale of arms and armaments. I think it was Eisenhower who first warned us about the US militarisation.

"It also pays governments to be able to have the ability to do clandestine things against their own citizens if necessary. Israel has been allowed to experiment with weapons in Palestine, which could be used more broadly.

"Politicians act in their own interests. Once we nominate them into positions, everything they promised us flies out the door and then it's all about getting as much as you can, the aggrandizement of power, of money, of whatever advantage they can get.

"When the whole banking crisis happened in 2008, people came out in protest and nothing changed, because it wasn't enough. Politicians are not going to actually change their actions until the numbers are larger, until there are more voices saying 'enough,' none of this is sufficient."

Phillip said: "I'd never vote Labor again. It's pathetic, they're not all that different from the Liberal Party. Labor has become a non-labour party."

On the Greens, he added: "They're probably going to be bought off by the same interests as Labor has. There's no doubt that lobbying and the role of money in elections plays a very big part. Certainly in America. I can see that in the United States you've got to have the support of the Israeli lobby to get a seat in Congress. And it's the same here.

Phillip pointed to the hypocrisy of the US and its allies. In conducting a proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, they have denounced the Russian regime for carrying out bombings and other acts of war.

"What the Palestine situation has done, the Israeli attack

on Gaza, it's called into question the whole Ukrainian situation. So that is blowing up in America's face. It's interesting that people are saying it's basically the same operation. It's the American hegemony. They can't stand any alternative."

"The whole American hegemony aims to discredit any alternative to capitalism. I think the younger people are waking up to what has been going on. They're getting their information from alternative media. If you go on YouTube, for example, there's a whole host of information and actually a lot of the blogs that are critical of Israel are run by Jewish people in America, people like Norman Finkelstein. Surely you can't be accused of anti-Semitism when you're a Jew."

Sophia, a 26-year-old waitress, stated: "I'm just horrified at the ongoing genocide in Gaza. Every day I follow Palestinian coverage on Instagram and everyday I'm seeing more and more atrocities. Coming to protest seems like something small that I can do."

On Rafah she said: "It's horrific, that's where the refugee camps are. That's where people were fleeing to, and now they're going to attack there as well."

"It makes a mockery of democracy that the Western governments are supporting these atrocities. There are people worldwide, in these Western countries, like here, that are coming out week on week to say to the government 'This isn't what we agree with. Condemn this genocide!' And then the governments of these Western countries are continuing to support Israel. I mean I don't know enough about it to say with confidence, but I just feel like it's all wrapped up in money and power and influence.

"I think if there is a way to create solidarity internationally there needs to be a counterweight definitely to private interests and the interest of capital. It can be hard to maybe imagine, maybe I haven't given enough thought to what the alternative would look like."



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