

# IYSSE in New Zealand campaigns at Otago University against genocide in Gaza

Our reporters

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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth organisation of the world Trotskyist movement, is campaigning this week to build a club at the University of Otago in Dunedin, in New Zealand's South Island.

Members of the IYSSE have been distributing articles from the *World Socialist Web Site*, signing up members and speaking with students during Orientation Week and promoting an initial meeting on Thursday, at 3.00pm in the OUSA Clubs & Societies building, room 5, titled, “Stop the genocide in Gaza! Build a socialist anti-war movement!”

The meeting will discuss the genocidal war that Israel is waging against the population of Gaza in the context of the global crisis of capitalism. It will explain the urgent need for young people to take up the fight for socialism in the working class, which is the only way to stop the genocide and the developing third world war.

The imperialist powers, led by the United States, are resorting to military violence to uphold their domination over the world's resources and markets. This includes instigating war against Russia over Ukraine, threatening war against Iran and the far-advanced preparations for war against China.

New Zealand's ruling class, an imperialist ally of the US, is deeply involved in these brutal wars and war plans. The previous Labour government sent troops to Britain to assist with training Ukrainian conscripts to fight Russia. The current National Party-led government has sent military personnel to assist with the US-led bombing of Yemen and is further integrating the country into the military build-up against China.

The IYSSE's campaign is directed against the growing militarisation of society, including the promotion of war to young people. This can be seen

this week at the Otago University Students' Association's (OUSA) “Tent City” installation, where the student union has provided a prominent space for the New Zealand Defence Force to carry out a recruitment drive.

The government and opposition parties all agree that the military's budget and numbers must be significantly expanded, while public services are slashed to pay for it.

Dozens of students who spoke with the IYSSE and signed up for its Otago club expressed outrage and horror at the destruction of Gaza, and opposition towards the New Zealand government's support for Israel and the US. Many of them have joined the weekly protests held in Dunedin and across New Zealand as part of the global movement against the genocide.

**Tia**, who studies law and philosophy, said “one of the biggest reasons I wanted to go [to the protests] was because a lot of the media has been spreading false information about what's actually happening. It's coming across as if it's a war, but it can't be a war if one side is not fighting back.”

She said “a lot of the tactics that have been used [against the Palestinians] are right out of the Nazi handbook.” Israel was not fighting “terrorism,” she added, pointing to the thousands of children killed in Gaza.

Asked why the New Zealand government was supporting the Netanyahu regime, Tia said: “I think it just comes down to capitalism and money.” She agreed with the call from Palestine's trade unions for workers internationally to take strike action to stop weapons and other supplies from going to Israel's military.

**Jamshid**, a student from Iran, said “as long as western countries like the US support Israel, they will

continue to kill people in Gaza and it's impossible to stop them. They should follow the UN resolution of 1967 and accept the Palestinian country."

Asked why the US was supplying Israel with unlimited weapons, he said this was due to the power of Zionists within the US and the greed of weapons manufacturers. Israel provided "a good opportunity to sell their weapons and kill people.

"I think the problem in the Middle East is not Iran, not Palestinians, not Arab countries. The main problem is the presence of the US; as long as the US is in the Middle East, there are problems. They shoot people, they sell weapons to countries to kill each other."

The military interventions in the region were "not about democracy, not about [solving] problems for the people. It's just about money for the US and western companies which need resources."

He said young people had to think critically and "not accept all the things the western media tell them. They tell lies. They say Palestinians, Arabs are dangerous, they don't accept democracy, they are barbarians, things like that. But if you review the history, you can see the Middle Eastern countries were the most civilised in the world."

Jamshid added that there was "a big difference between the Jewish people and the Israeli government. The problem is Zionism, not religion, it's discrimination and racism." He compared the crimes against the Palestinians to the atrocities perpetrated against Jewish people in the Second World War.

**Divine**, a dental student, told the IYSSE that she had a friend in New Zealand whose family was from Gaza. "Her home was bombed. She's lost family members. She's devastated." She said it was "just disgusting" that nothing had been done to stop Israel. "It's war crimes, what's happening, having their water cut off and isolating people. It is a genocide."

Divine said governments were refusing to denounce Israel because they were "scared of the US. I think if everyone stood up, we could make a big change. If small countries stood up and said: 'This is not okay, we've learned from the past, we've seen what World War I and World War II did, let's be better.' You'd expect that in 2024."

She saw parallels between the dispossession of M?ori during the colonisation of New Zealand by Britain and the driving out of Palestinians from their land. She said

the New Zealand government should speak out and take a stand for Palestinians, but added: "Look at what they're doing now. How can they do anything [to support] other people when they can't even do it for our own people here?"

The National-led government, which includes the far-right ACT and New Zealand First parties, has announced sweeping cuts to public services, attacks on welfare recipients, and is attempting to stoke racism against indigenous M?ori in order to divide the working class.

"I just don't understand why we have to be on the wrong side of history," Divine said. "What happens when they speak about this in 20 or 30 years and they're studying it in high school? People are going to be really frustrated that we didn't do anything when we had the chance."

**Ruby**, who is studying politics, said: "Israel is breaking all the international rules and international law, but it's being backed by America. What the Israeli state is doing is not OK by any measure. It's up to ordinary people to help out and to become informed about what's going on. That's very important."

Regarding the claims made by politicians and the corporate media that opposition to Israel's actions is antisemitic, she said: "That is actually really stupid. Whenever Israel does something criminal, these people will mask it by saying 'You're being antisemitic.' It's not antisemitic at all, it's protesting for the basic rights of the Palestinians."



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