

Australian pseudo-left promotes pro-genocide Labor Party in Gaza protest movement

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More than four months into the Israeli assault on Gaza, the burning question of how to end the genocide raises fundamental issues of political perspective. Despite the largest and most sustained anti-war movement since the Vietnam War era, the Zionist regime is intensifying its ethnic cleansing operation and all of the imperialist powers are doubling down on their backing of this historic war crime.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party have insisted, this demonstrates the bankruptcy of any perspective of halting the slaughter through appeals to governments or by placing pressure on them. In a period that now spans a third of a year, that perspective has been tried and it has failed.

The genocide is a crime of imperialism, inseparable from the crisis of global capitalism and a broader eruption of militarism and war, including US preparations for war against Iran, a proxy war with Russia in Ukraine and a military build-up directed against China.

The support of the major powers for the annihilation of the Gazans is not only a Middle Eastern question. It is a warning to working people worldwide. As in the 1930s, governments around the world have declared their willingness to commit criminal mass murder, should it advance their interests.

This underscores the urgency of developing an international socialist movement of the working class directed against imperialist war and the profit system itself.

With protest politics increasingly discredited, pseudo-left organisations are doing everything they can to prevent discussion of these broader issues. They are desperately seeking to ensure that mobilisations opposing the genocide remain within the narrow confines of single-issue protest oriented to the political establishment.

Late last month, Solidarity published an article by one of its members, Caitlin Doyle, that was remarkably frank in outlining this perspective. Doyle began by noting “Supporters of Palestine are rightly horrified by [Australian Labor Prime Minister Anthony] Albanese’s support for Israel as it continues to annihilate Gaza.” She gave a brief outline of Labor’s continuous alignment with Zionism, stretching back to the establishment of Israel in 1948.

Doyle concedes that Labor has unwaveringly supported Israel as an imperialist beachhead in the Middle East, its 75-year ethnic cleansing operation against the Palestinians, and is now backing the attempted conclusion of this neo-colonial project in a 21st century version of the Holocaust.

The reader might expect the author to deduce from this that Labor is a rotten imperialist party, against which workers and young people must wage an implacable struggle.

But Doyle draws precisely the opposite conclusion. Not only must Labor members be welcomed lovingly at the protests, were any of

them inclined to attend. Labor members of parliament must be offered a platform to speak. The movement against the genocide, in other words, should be led by those who are supporting it!

To make this argument, Doyle and Solidarity engage in make-believe. Or, to be more precise, they tell a series of demonstrable lies aimed at covering for Labor.

The central falsehood is that Labor is in a great political ferment over the genocide, with opposition extending from the party’s rank-and-file to dissident MPs. The image that is conjured up is of lively and raucous debate and impassioned stands on political principles. Such things may have occurred in one form or another three-quarters of a century ago or more, but to anyone familiar with the bureaucratised Labor Party and its right-wing membership, this is complete nonsense.

Doyle declares: “[S]ince the war on Gaza began, 40 Labor branches have passed motions calling for a ceasefire and four Labor MPs have attended pro-Palestine rallies. Labor-controlled Canterbury-Bankstown Council voted to fly the Palestinian flag until a ceasefire is declared.”

All of which would no doubt warm the hearts of Palestinians in Gaza as the Zionist regime drops US-supplied bombs on their heads, at least some guided by information from the intelligence installation at Pine Gap in central Australia, and Albanese declares that “Israel has a right to defend itself.”

Doyle did not cite a single one of the resolutions passed at Labor branches, and for good reason. They have been miserable, mealy-mouthed motions, all including a denunciation of Hamas and of any Palestinian resistance. None of the resolutions have condemned the Labor leadership and its support for the bombardment or compelled those voting to do anything at all.

Having passed such resolutions, the Labor members, composed of political staffers, careerists, young and old, and a handful of rusted-on types, simply continue campaigning for the Labor leadership, including Albanese.

Doyle’s glorification of a Palestinian flag flying over a council building in suburban Sydney, amid a genocide, is almost too banal to merit a response. The Labor council has hoisted the flag in an obvious attempt to placate intense anger over the genocide among workers in and around Bankstown, which has a large Middle Eastern and Islamic population.

Doyle also does not name the Labor MPs who attended pro-Palestinian events, because their performance hardly substantiated her claims that they are leading a rank-and-file rebellion against the genocide.

At a vigil in the regional New South Wales (NSW) city of

Newcastle in December, little-known Labor backbencher Sharon Claydon mouthed platitudes and banalities. The Zionist onslaught was reduced to a “conflict” caused by “a fundamental failure not to understand or act on our interconnectedness or our common humanity.”

Tim Crackenthorpe, a NSW state Labor MP who accompanied Claydon, was even more vague. Crackenthorpe assured those in attendance that he was doing “everything I can in my electorate to make progress on this issue.”

Also in December, Tony Burke, Labor’s leader of the House of Representatives, attended a vigil in Bankstown for the Palestinians who had been killed in Gaza. Burke does not appear to have addressed the gathering. Having stood around and looked sad for a few minutes, the right-wing Labor leader went back to collaborating with Albanese, Foreign Minister Penny Wong and other architects of Australia’s support for the genocide, without batting an eyelid.

It is this inspiring record that Doyle passionately argues must be embraced and extended. “The involvement of dissident Labor MPs on speaking platforms will build the movement’s power through drawing in people who still look to Labor as a progressive force and are disappointed by its stance on Palestine,” Doyle writes.

The issue, noted above, is that there are no dissident MPs.

It is true that in NSW, some Labor state parliamentarians signed an open letter, months ago, vaguely warning against Israel’s bombardment. But Albanese and Wong have also shed crocodile tears over the mass casualties, without altering their support for Israel one iota.

If it is those NSW MPs Doyle has in mind, another issue arises. The NSW Labor government, without any apparent internal dissent, threatened to ban all pro-Palestinian protests early in the genocide and has presided over massive and at times violent police mobilisations against them ever since. Doyle is advocating that rallies be addressed by those who have sought to illegalise them.

Doyle writes: “So far the Palestine Action Group has voted to exclude Labor speakers from the platform at their weekly rallies in Sydney. Many on the left, including the Greens, say that Labor is essentially the same as the Liberal Party. But Labor MPs who speak out and break with Albanese and the Labor leadership’s position increase the political pressure on the Labor government over Palestine. More internal dissent makes it harder for the government to continue supporting Israel.”

The Greens are a pro-capitalist party, committed to collaborating with Labor in parliament and hostile to socialism. The various Palestine Action Groups are amorphous and politically-diffuse bodies, composed of representatives of the pseudo-left, as well as Palestinian activists, who, their sincerity notwithstanding, are largely wedded to limited protest politics.

But Solidarity, which sometimes claims to be a socialist organisation, outflanks all of them, even the Greens, from the right. The nonsense about “internal dissent” and “political pressure” cannot hide the fact that Solidarity is functioning as a political agency of Labor, insisting that workers and young people give deference to and collaborate with this pro-war, big business party as it greenlights a genocide.

Doyle attempts to give her bankrupt arguments a theoretical veneer, by pointing to the “dual” character of Labor.

It is true that Labor was founded by the unions as a mass party of the working-class. But even on its founding in the 1890s, Labor refused to affiliate to the then socialist Second International. It has always been a

party that opposes socialism and defends capitalism.

Doyle’s suggestion that Labor remains a workers’ party in any way is a sham.

Labor has no active mass membership in the working-class, where even its vote has plummeted to historically low levels. It dispensed with any program of social reforms, however limited, decades ago, as the globalisation of production rendered obsolete any program of national economic regulation. It was the Labor Party that imposed the agenda associated with Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the US, of economic deregulation, privatisation and the destruction of hundreds of thousands of jobs. Labor, in other words, is an unalloyed party of big business.

The same transformation has occurred in the trade unions. Their bureaucracies have become the chief enforcers of the unending onslaught against jobs, wages and conditions. That is true of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), with which Solidarity has close and opportunist relations. It has presided over one sell-out after another, reducing the port workforce to a fraction of what it once was.

While Labor has openly backed the genocide, the MUA has helped facilitate it, ensuring the orderly loading and unloading of cargo for the ZIM shipping line, which has dedicated its entire fleet to the Israeli war effort, and angrily rejecting suggestions of industrial action.

Doyle hails the unholy alliance of the pro-genocide Labor Party and the union bureaucracy, proclaiming: “Since many trade union officials and activists are Labor Party members, this also increases the pressure on the Labor party from within.”

The union officials, functioning as agents of the Labor government and the corporations, have done nothing to oppose the genocide or have tacitly aided it, as in the case of the MUA, so there is no “pressure” whatsoever. On Gaza, as on every other fundamental issue, Labor and the corrupt union officialdom are one and the same.

Solidarity’s right-wing positions are not an accident. Solidarity traces its origins to a tendency that broke from the Trotskyist movement at the outset of World War Two, adapting to imperialism, rejecting the revolutionary role of the working class and the fight to build a leadership to overthrow capitalism.

Neither they nor the pseudo-left more broadly has anything to do with socialism and the working class. They are hostile to both and represent a layer of the upper middle-class, ensconced in academia, the upper echelons of the public sector and the union bureaucracy, which seeks to advance its own privileges within the framework of the capitalist profit system.

That is why the pseudo-left is intensely hostile to any suggestion of a political struggle against Labor or the union bureaucracy. Groups such as Solidarity are not defenders of the Palestinian people. They are the last line of defence of the very political forces responsible for the genocide.

Workers and young people seeking to end the genocide should reject the line of the pseudo-left with contempt, turn to the working class and take up a socialist perspective aimed at putting an end to the capitalist system on a world scale.



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