

Twenty weeks of protests in Australia against Gaza genocide

Our reporters
28 February 2024

Last weekend marked the 20th week of consecutive mass protests around Australia against Israel's ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza. Thousands again rallied and marched in Melbourne and Sydney, while hundreds demonstrated in Brisbane and elsewhere around the country.

The protests have been sustained over almost five months because there is immense opposition of workers and young people to the Zionist regime's barbaric onslaught, and the complicity of governments worldwide, including the federal Labor government led by Anthony Albanese.

Steadily shrinking numbers at the weekly rallies do not reflect any lessening of this opposition, but rather the growing frustration of demonstrators with the bankrupt perspective advanced by rally organisers and speakers, of plaintive appeals to the very governments perpetrating the genocide. This is covered in more detail here.

WSWS reporters spoke to some of those in attendance at the Sydney and Melbourne rallies.

In Sydney, **Emily**, an environmental scientist, said, "When October 7 happened, I could see how the media and the government framed it, completely supporting Israel. I felt quite shocked with the media bias and lack of context for what was happening. From the beginning it has been about justifying the continuation of genocide against the Palestinians.

"From the start I could see Labor supported the genocide, talking about 'Israel's right to defend itself.' I have read up more on it and Labor is also providing support to Israel, both diplomatically and through surveillance, as well as potentially sending weapons. Labor is a main player in this conflict that supports Israel's quest for Palestinian land."

Emily said she attends the protests to support the

people of Gaza but, "it's clear they're not doing anything. It's been 20 weeks of protesting with no result. The Labor government doesn't care. What is put forward at the protests is that we must appeal to the government, but there is no point, because the genocide aligns with their interest in supporting the US in having a hold in the Middle East.

"Previously I had the view that Labor was maybe a more progressive government than the Liberals. Now it's obvious they are just another side of the same coin. They are working in the interests of the ruling class.

"I'm increasingly convinced that socialism is the only option. I don't think we can get anywhere meaningful in the current system. There's clearly a need for a change, for a system that doesn't work in the interests of profit and exploitation," she said.

Emily said she had seen other organisations claiming to be socialist at the rallies and had spoken to them. They either asked her to sign a petition or told her 'We have to keep up the pressure.'

"What does that even mean? It's getting people to look like they're doing something, letting off steam. They openly say the petition won't have any impact, so why spend time and energy doing that?

"It's an incredibly shallow approach and disingenuous. Acting as a 'socialist' organisation and asking people to sign a petition or buy a flag, and trying to convince people that this will have some sort of impact. It's a distraction from working towards meaningful change."

In Melbourne, University academic **Catherine** denounced the Labor government of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, which has supported Israel's bombardment of Gaza.

"It has taken 30,000 deaths for Albanese and [Foreign Minister] Penny Wong to make a statement and, even

then, they're empty words. Nothing's happening," she said. "I've known for a long, long time that billions of dollars go every year to funding Israel."

"I think the world has woken up to Israel. It's probably the positive thing out of this, that the world has woken up to them."

Sara, who works in communications, said: "The situation in Gaza is terrible, not just for the past few months, but it has been what, almost a hundred years. I myself have a friend in Palestine and he is protecting his family at the moment. He has cousins who have died.

"The most disgusting thing is the lack of support from our current government. It's all about weak words, very carefully scripted words, so that they stay on the side of the USA and other western nations rather than taking a stand against what is clearly happening, which is genocide."

Sara drew a link between the silencing of media opposition to the Gaza genocide and the persecution of journalist Julian Assange, who exposed previous war crimes of US and Australian imperialism.

"I remember being in school in 2003 when we were joining forces with the US for the Iraq war. I almost didn't believe it. I thought I must have been looking at something fake. It was unbelievable in that time that Australia would do something like that. Clearly, we haven't been taught about history, because we saw that was all based on lies, making enemies out of people and stereotyping."

She denounced the state-owned Australian Broadcasting Corporation's firing of pro-Palestinian journalist Antoinette Lattouf: "True journalism won't exist if we're not careful, if we're going this far. That's the scary thing."

Bucko, a retired journalist from the US, told WSWS reporters, "I think Assange is another person who is being persecuted by the US terror regime."

Linking Assange's case to the Israeli onslaught on the Palestinian people, Bucko said: "It's all about covering up the truth. Assange brought reality in front of their face as clear as helicopters shooting people down in the streets."

He raised the long-held US plans to attack Iran. "Iran is being targeted because they are resisting Israel, so Israel is trying to amp it up in Lebanon and draw the United States in. They're just playing with matches in

the oilfields."

A member of the Mums for Palestine group, **Rian**, said: "I used to think that Labor were good, you know. They're not. They're just another [Liberal-National] Coalition. They've cut funding to UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East]. They're completely silent. The Palestinian community in Australia are getting nothing from the government. It's disgusting."

Rian expressed her agreement with the perspective elaborated on the *World Socialist Web Site* for an international movement of the working class to engage in political strikes to end the genocide: "That would be wonderful. You have to hit them where it hurts and if everyone stops working, it's going to hurt a lot."



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