

Australian pseudo-left and Greens seek to wear down Gaza protests by appealing to pro-genocide Labor government

Mike Head
28 February 2024

A warning must be drawn from the smaller attendances at last weekend's protests in Australia against the Israeli genocide in Gaza. In Melbourne, where an average of 20,000 people has rallied for 20 weeks in a row, the numbers fell to less than 5,000. In Sydney, the turnout was down to around 2,000. In Brisbane, just 300 joined a march to protest outside the electoral office of the Labor government's Treasurer Jim Chalmers.

This does not represent any lessening of the outrage felt by broad layers of the population. On the contrary, it reflects growing frustration with the bankrupt political perspective being pushed by the speakers at the events, which is designed to wear down the mass movement.

Australia's federal and state Labor governments and their police forces, backed by the corporate media and a vehement Zionist business lobby, have not been able to shut down the protests. That is despite falsely accusing participants of antisemitism and threatening arrests on serious charges. But the dead-end political line peddled at the protests, particularly by the Greens and pseudo-left groups, could suffocate the demonstrations.

Together with millions worldwide, thousands of people across Australia, mostly young and working class, have continued to rally and march repeatedly, now for nearly five months, to voice their horrified opposition to the naked extermination of Gaza's population, and the complicity in this barbarism of every imperialist government, including the Australian Labor government.

But it has become painfully obvious to many participants that the orientation being advanced at these demonstrations—that the same pro-genocide governments can be pressured to halt the mass killing and devastation in Gaza—has failed.

In fact, the more that the rally organisers and speakers have called on people to keep appealing to these governments, week after week, the more the Zionist regime in Israel has accelerated its atrocities, backed to the hilt by the Biden administration in Washington and its allies in Europe, Canada and Australia.

As a result, more than 30,000 Palestinians have been slaughtered, mostly women and children. Refugee camps,

hospitals, schools and universities have been pulverised. Now the Netanyahu government is murdering the survivors it has herded into Rafah, the southern-most enclave of the Gaza Strip.

Fully aware of the deepening hostility to it, the Australian government, led by the "left-wing" Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Foreign Minister Penny Wong, have parroted Biden's White House in shedding crocodile tears over the mass casualties. They have issued mealy-mouthed calls for a temporary truce, while doubling down on their support for Israel and Biden, who has greenlighted the assault on Rafah.

Albanese's government directly intensified its support for the Israeli onslaught by joining the US in suspending funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) without even a shred of evidence to prove the Netanyahu government's allegation that a dozen UNRWA staff participated in the October 7 breakout from Gaza.

At the protests in Australia, the more reviled the Albanese government has become, the more the speakers have sought to prop it up by promoting futile hopes of cajoling it to reverse course. They have beseeched participants to keep sending letters, emails and petitions to Labor members of parliament, which have all fallen on deaf ears, and continue protesting every week.

This was graphically on display at Sunday's Sydney Gaza rally. Josh Lees, a member of the pseudo-left Socialist Alternative, demagogically denounced former Liberal-National Prime Minister Scott Morrison for speaking at a Zionist rally in Sydney. Lees noted in passing that Israel's genocide was "supported by the Australian government." He did everything he could to downplay Labor's role. He emphasised that "only" one Labor Party speaker addressed the pro-Israel rally, as if that did not display Labor's unwavering commitment to Zionism and its Washington backers.

Representing the Greens, Senator David Shoebridge promoted his party's claims to be pushing the Labor government to halt Australian arms exports to Israel. This is just one component of the government's active participation in the genocide as part of the US military alliance, including the use of the Pine Gap satellite targeting base in central Australia.

“We can hold our government to account,” Shoebridge insisted. “I’ll go back down to the Senate this week. We will continue to make the case.”

This is a charade. For all their posturing, the Greens are trying to shore up the government. They are working closely with it, making one pro-business deal after another on issues such as housing and greenhouse emissions, and aiming to form a coalition government with Labor after the next election.

The Greens and the pseudo-left groups do not oppose US-led militarism or the underlying capitalist profit system. They publicly supported the US-led regime-change operations in Libya and Syria in the 2010s, as did Israel. They back the escalating US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, provoked and orchestrated by the same ruling class in Washington that is arming and funding the genocide in Gaza.

The deadly impact of peddling illusions of convincing the progovernment Labor government to alter its trajectory was shown at last Saturday’s rally outside Chalmers’ office at Logan Central in southeastern Brisbane. About 300 people participated, well down on the previous three such events, none of which succeeded in altering the direction of Chalmers or the government one iota.

The Facebook ads for the rally urged people to “call on our government to demand that Israel does not invade Rafah and ends the genocide.” They offered no perspective except more futile protests. “We have been protesting, marching, pocketing, chanting—and we will continue to so,” they said. “We will not relent until justice and freedom prevail.”

The ads acknowledged that Albanese and Wong had rebuffed demands for a ceasefire, “despite hundreds of thousands of Australians demonstrating in all cities, calling on the government to support a ceasefire.” Yet the ads still claimed that Chalmers and other Labor ministers could be swayed by a letter-writing campaign. They urged people to bring letters to the rally “for Jim demanding he reinstate UNRWA funding, cut ties and place sanctions on Apartheid Israel.”

These proposals were hardly likely to win much support, given the Labor government’s unwavering backing for Israel’s supposed right to defend itself by exterminating people in Gaza.

Speakers at the rally reinforced the bankrupt perspective. Sam Watson, a pseudo-left activist, introduced as an indigenous speaker, branded Labor as a “party of genocide.” Yet he ended by declaring: “These weekly protests are only thing that is keeping pressure on our governments right now to make any steps towards a ceasefire or to sanctioning Israel. Those things haven’t been achieved, so we need to keep fighting for them. So, I will see you next weekend and the weekend after.”

Lessons must be drawn from 2003, when millions of people globally, including in Australia, took to the streets to oppose the impending US-led invasion of Iraq. That mass movement, however, failed to halt the catastrophic onslaught.

Above all that was because the Greens and fake-left

organisations subordinated the movement to appeals to the United Nations and the European powers and peddled the fraud that official opposition parties, such as Labor in Australia and the Democrats in the US, represented a “lesser evil.”

The only political party that has exposed and opposed these dead-end traps is the Socialist Equality Party (SEP). From the outset of the Gaza genocide, we have explained that it is not an isolated development. It is the most barbaric expression of imperialist militarism and the plunge into a third world war.

The Gaza onslaught is inseparable from the US-led plans to expand the Middle Eastern war, particularly targeting Iran, Washington’s proxy conflict against Russia in Ukraine, and advanced US preparations against its main target—China.

Today, amid the bitter political experiences of the Gaza protests, there is significant and growing interest in the revolutionary socialist perspective advanced by SEP campaigners at the rallies, with attendees seeking out SEP leaflets and purchasing our Marxist literature.

This points the way forward. What is posed is the need for a revolutionary and socialist movement of the working class internationally. The independent strength of the global working class must be mobilised, including through industrial action, to halt military supplies to Israel. That requires a political struggle against Labor and its trade union bureaucracy, which is blocking any such fight.

Halting the genocide requires a struggle against capitalism—the system that creates this disaster. This means uniting workers all over the world in an international anti-war movement aimed at establishing a global socialist society based on peace and social equality.

To discuss the burning necessity for this perspective, we urge our readers to register for the SEP public meetings in Sydney, Melbourne, Newcastle and Brisbane next week on “How to stop the genocide in Gaza.”



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact