

“How to end the genocide in Gaza”—strong responses to SEP public meetings in key Australian cities

Our reporters
12 March 2024

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) held public meetings last week in four Australian cities to discuss and oppose the murderous and ongoing ethnic cleansing war by Israel, supported by the US and all the imperialist powers, including Australia, against the Palestinian population of Gaza.

Held in Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne and Brisbane, the meetings titled “How to end the genocide in Gaza” were the third organised by the SEP in Australia since last October. They followed numerous anti-war meetings by other sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) during this time.

Last week’s meetings attracted a broad cross section of workers, students and others horrified by Israel’s military barbarism but wanting to go beyond protest appeals to the Albanese Labor government, which maintains unwavering support for Israel and its war crimes. Many audience members were attending their first SEP public event.

Central to all meetings were discussions on the political lessons of the past five months and the necessity for the building of a socialist and international anti-war party in the working class. Detailed answers were given to questions on the role being played by the trade unions, the Greens and pseudo-left groups and their responses to the Gaza genocide. SEP speakers explained how these organisations corralled the mass opposition, diverting it into dead-end appeals to the Labor government.

To this end, the meetings noted the political importance of the decision by the SEP in the US to stand Joe Kishore as the party’s candidate in the forthcoming US presidential elections and Jerry White as his vice-presidential running mate. This campaign will be decisive in winning American workers and youth to the SEP’s socialist and anti-imperialist war policies. Kishore is the national secretary of the US SEP and White is a long-standing member of the party’s National Committee and the Labor editor of the *World Socialist Web Site*.

Sydney

SEP national secretary Cheryl Crisp gave the main report in Sydney, which was an online and in-person meeting with audience members joining from across Australia and internationally. It was also addressed by SEP assistant national secretary Max Boddy, who also chaired the event, and Dr Zewlan Moor, a Queensland general practitioner who spoke in a personal capacity via pre-recorded video.

Moor is one of scores of medical professionals in Australia falsely accused of antisemitism by Zionist ideologues for publicly denouncing the Netanyahu government’s mass murder of Palestinians and its deliberate targeting of hospitals and health workers. Pro-Israeli zealots have reported about 60 medical professionals to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, potentially threatening their careers and ability to work. Moor spoke in person at the Brisbane meeting.

Boddy reviewed the Albanese government’s immediate endorsement of the Israeli attack on Gaza and explained that this was in line with Labor’s

history as a pro-capitalist party that has supported every imperialist war since its formation.

“Labor is the party of imperialist war and has constantly backed Israel since its formation in 1948, including every campaign of ethnic cleansing waged against the Palestinians. Any idea that their positions on Gaza can be changed through protest, petitions, appeals or letter writing is a fraud and a conscious lie,” Boddy said.

SEP national secretary Cheryl Crisp told the meeting that the Gaza genocide had to be seen within the context of NATO’s ongoing war against Russia in Ukraine, the most significant military conflict in Europe since WWII, and the US-led preparations for war against Iran and China.

“The barbarism that has accompanied Israel’s onslaught, which is supported by the US and every imperialist government, is the result of the increasingly desperate and crisis-ridden situation of capitalism. The mass death that characterised the 20th century has returned in the 21st,” Crisp said.

Crisp noted the unprecedented persistence of the international mass protests since Israel launched its brutal assault on Gaza but added, “The political perspective of those leading these events is that protest alone will change the government’s mind. That appeal and pressure will suffice. It won’t,” she said.

This perspective was a dead end, the speaker said, and that ordinary people needed to realise that the only way to prevent mankind descending into the abyss of nuclear war was by rejecting all those parties who claimed that capitalism must be defended, and its excesses ameliorated. “The interests of the working class can only be taken forward through the building of an international revolutionary movement,” she said.

Following the reports, one audience member said that the pro-Zionist elements were powerful and could only be combatted, and a mass movement developed if the SEP and others opposed to the Gaza genocide, aligned themselves with Greens or like-minded formations.

His suggestion was opposed by SEP speakers who carefully explained that the Greens were a pro-capitalist party and that what was required was the independent mobilisation of the international working class, the most powerful force.

Crisp responded to the question by pointing out that a mass movement against the Gaza genocide already existed—the largest and most persistent in post-WWII war history—but that its perspective was to force capitalism to reform itself. This was futile, she said, and explained that the historic challenge confronting the working class and the only way forward was in struggle to put an end to capitalism, the source of war.

“The overthrow of capitalism and its replacement with socialism is, of course, a challenge, but it is the only way the interests of the vast bulk of the world’s population can be fulfilled,” Crisp said.

Speaking after the Sydney meeting, **Emily**, a 33-year-old climate

scientist, said it was necessary to place the Gaza genocide in a broader greater context. “It’s useful to have the situation framed as not just an individual conflict because it’s broader, comes from US war ambitions, and has much larger implications globally. The impact of escalation towards nuclear war will have global consequences,” she said.

“I thought the question about joining forces with the Greens and ‘more mainstream movements’ was important. I think lots of people would be wondering that too and wouldn’t want to join a movement that doesn’t have momentum or popular support. But the answers given point to the fact that this movement has a history and isn’t just a few people deciding to think this way.

“The mainstream movements that this person was suggesting have interests completely counter to the working class. The Greens, for example, don’t want the same things. They’re a capitalist party,” Emily said.

Newcastle

The Newcastle meeting, which was on March 8, included several workers and youth attending their first SEP event. Newcastle is a large regional city located 170 kilometres north of Sydney in the Hunter Valley and the centre of New South Wales’ coal industry.

SEP National Committee members Nick Beams and Julia Thomas addressed the meeting. Beams provided a detailed overview of the response of the trade unions to the Gaza genocide and the various pseudo-left formations that constantly foster illusions that the Labor Party can be pressured to change course.

The speaker referred to the *Green Left*, the newspaper of pseudo-left Socialist Alliance, which declared in December: “While we are angry with Labor for its stance on Palestine, and many other things, we need to work with pro-Palestinian activists within Labor. They are an important source of pressure on the hierarchy, as are the unions. We must partner with Labor activists to deepen that pressure until the Labor hierarchy gives in.”

This fantastic assertion, Beams said, was the equivalent of a religious miracle where “water can be turned into wine.” These, and other claims, by the pseudo left, he said, were aimed at preventing a mass mobilisation of the workers in Australia against the Albanese government and its pro-war policies.

The Q&A session began with a couple attendees asking for a copy of Nick Beams’ speech. Other audience members asked about the origins of war, which provoked further discussion on Israel’s origins and role as a garrison state for US imperialism in the Middle East.

After the meeting **Joe**, an 18-year-old University of Newcastle student, said:

“I’ve been a political person for a long time, since I was 15 or 16, and I’ve been to quite a few political meetings—Young Labor, Pride and Protest—but this party really struck a chord with me. Everything that was said just clicked. I really think socialism is the way to go for the country and for the world. It makes sense. Who would you trust more with the fate of the world, a bunch of rich people who are isolated in every single way from the normal person, or the millions, billions of working people around the world who go through the same day-to-day experiences and struggles?

“Our generation is pretty politically knowledgeable, thanks to the internet, but a lot of young people have the mindset that there’s nothing we can do. I used to be like that. The biggest weapon the ruling class uses against us is misinformation. If people actually organised and looked into who the powers-that-be are and studied this history, the world would be a much better place. There’s the classic adage that history repeats itself but if we learn from the mistakes of the past, we can do better,” Joe said.

Melbourne

University of Melbourne International Youth and Students for Socialist Equality president Morgan Peach and SEP assistant national secretary

Max Boddy addressed the Melbourne meeting on March 9.

Peach detailed Labor’s enormous military expansion program, including the announcement of \$368 billion over 30 years for nuclear powered submarines. “To pay for this workers’ conditions must be slashed even further. That is what is behind Labor’s massive austerity program,” he explained.

“What is occurring in Gaza is not an isolated episode: it is what is in store for the working class everywhere, including in this region, unless the capitalist system responsible for the crisis is stopped,” Peach said.

Following these reports, questions were asked about how to develop a mass anti-war movement and the SEP’s prognosis of the current situation in Gaza.

Daniel, a member of the University of Melbourne IYSSE said the meeting explained “the crucial questions on what tangible steps forward can be taken and the focus of workers and the movement that clearly has the potential to be harnessed.”

Daniel said the movement, “needs to reach out to workers, to show them there is the possibility for revolution and how that can happen, not only in the national frameworks we live under, but the interconnectivity of the world.”

Gaza, he added, is “absolutely an atrocity” but despite the mass global protests, “the war crimes were being escalated and justified behind claims of Israeli’s right to defend itself. There’s nothing else to describe it,” he added, “but genocide.”

A Melbourne health worker said, “It’s clear what needs to be done. On October 26 the Palestinian Trade Unions made the call. They clearly instructed for the working class of the world to stop all support and collaboration with the state of Israel. The unions need to call a strike, and no longer allow Israeli ships into the ports. We have to down tools properly, not just have an optional picket line. The unity of the working class brings hope,” she added.

Referring to tragic self-immolation protest by Aaron Bushnell, a 25-year-old member of the US air force, the health worker said, “We cannot have any more people feel that they are so helpless that they are compelled to self-immolate. We need people like Aaron Bushnell alive, not dead.”

“The US Socialist Equality Party election campaign is essential knowledge. Even though it is a US election, it is an election of world-wide consequence. There must be an international movement against war because it affects us internationally and all we have in common is that we are workers. It crosses national, racial, ethnic or religious lines. Getting rid of capitalism is going to be hard work, but it’s the best thing on the table,” she said.

Crystal, a first-year student at Victoria University, said “it was great to learn what the Socialist Equality Party is all about. As a young adult getting into politics, I’m at the age where I can now legally vote and it’s good to see what certain parties are about that align with my beliefs.”

The 19-year-old student, who is from Melbourne’s outer western working-class suburb of Melton, added: “My grandparents immigrated here with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Growing up as a working-class citizen in a working-class family, moving out of home and still being a working-class citizen—people born poor tend to stay poor.

“This is a situation that affects everyone, and it’s getting worse. A lot of people of a similar age share similar sentiments, wanting a better future for both themselves and the people coming after,” Crystal said.

Referring the genocide in Gaza and the threat of world war, she added: “A full mobilisation of the working class is the correct idea but it’s an unbelievably massive and complex thing to do.”

Brisbane

Those participating in Brisbane meeting on March 10 included people originally from the Middle East, including Palestine, as well as students,

workers and retired workers.

The question and discussion period saw angry and passionate comments about the failure of the weekly mass protests to stop the genocide. Several members of the audience bitterly denounced the Labor government and its ongoing support for the Israeli mass murder.

One participant asked: “Where do we go from here? Where do we start?” He suggested following the example of Mahatma Gandhi’s “non-violent resistance” against British rule in India.

In responding, Cheryl Crisp and the meeting’s chair, Mike Head, explained that Gandhi had acted to head off the upsurge of the working class across the Indian sub-continent and had helped orchestrate the settlement with British imperialism that led to the catastrophic partition of India and Pakistan at the cost of millions of lives.

They emphasised that the only solution to the genocide and the underlying plunge toward a third world war lay in the overthrow of all the governments responsible and the capitalist profit system internationally. That required clear revolutionary leadership, provided by the building of the SEP and its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International.

The engaged response to last week’s meetings and the high level of discussion indicates that important layers of the mass movement are seriously considering the revolutionary socialist and internationalist perspective advanced by the ICFI. This was reflected in the positive response to calls for attendees to become electoral members of the SEP, with numbers signing up. More than \$4,000 was donated to the SEP’s monthly fund and over \$250 worth of the party’s Marxist and Trotskyist literature was purchased.



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