

Australian protests against Gaza genocide: “I don’t think we can trust Labor ever again”

Our reporters
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Protests against the Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza were held in the major Australian cities last weekend, as they have throughout the more than five-month onslaught.

The demonstrations coincided with new war crimes, including repeated Israeli massacres of Palestinian civilians seeking food over the past weeks, as cases of starvation rise.

Despite the Australian government’s ongoing support for Israel, protest organisers continue to limit the rallies to plaintive appeals to Labor to change course.

In opposition to this, Socialist Equality Party (SEP) campaigners are insisting on the need to mobilise the working class against the government, and the capitalist system that is responsible for genocide, in Australia and internationally. As part of its fight to build a socialist leadership in the working class, the SEP is seeking electoral registration, so that it can stand in federal ballots under its party name.

Several thousand took part in the Sydney protest.

Athmane, who joined as an SEP electoral member, said the Labor government’s support of Israel’s genocide was “just disgusting. I’m really disappointed with the Labor party and I’m definitely not going to vote Labor again.

“Albanese talked about the rights of Aboriginal people, but when it came to Palestinians, the indigenous people of their land, he completely switched. I couldn’t believe the double standards.”

Originally from Algeria, Athmane said: “Growing up, we heard about ‘Western democracies,’ and ‘human rights.’ But then we saw the Iraq war and started to think ‘this is not right.’ The US talk about ‘freedom and liberty,’ but we’re all human beings.”

Likewise, in Gaza, “the US is fighting for its interests. They’re not fighting for human rights or

anything like that. It’s about money.

“I can’t watch Australian news anymore. With Gaza, the lies are insane.

“But people are starting to wake up, with social media and videos now. I think Gaza was the last straw. People can see it with their own eyes—it can’t be covered up.”

Asked whether he thought the Labor government could be pressured to change its position on Israel and Palestine, he said: “To be honest, no. In fact it’s been getting worse. I don’t think they will budge.

“With liberalism and capitalism, there’s always going to be wars, because of greed—the money is never enough. If these systems continue, the wars are going to continue. There’s no other outcome, unless people get together to fight for socialism.”

In Melbourne, where 5,000 participated despite heatwave conditions, **Uliana**, a retired disability worker, said she had been to the rallies every weekend.

On the Labor government’s dismissal of the protests, she responded: “It’s disgraceful, it makes me so incredibly angry and sad and helpless because I put my trust in my government to follow what people believe in, in what is right, and I think they are not doing it now. You’re going to kill a whole race of people because of Hamas? No, that’s not believable and the fact that they dodge the question all the time just is unbelievable. I have no faith in our governments. If there was an election now, I wouldn’t know who to vote for because I wouldn’t vote for Liberal or Labor. The Greens I don’t know, are they just an up and coming Labor Party? Traditionally I have voted Labor, at the last election I voted Greens and now, I don’t know.”

Nour raised: “I’ve been coming every Sunday almost since these protests started, because I don’t believe in

genocide, I think that Palestinians should be free and should be safe. I don't think there's any other message that I want to put out there."

Asked about Labor's steadfast support for the Zionist onslaught, she responded: "I've no idea why that is happening, because when we first started protesting I genuinely could not have imagined that it would be 22 weeks of protest, or 22 weeks of genocide. I could not have imagined that going into the New Year—it felt so foreign, it felt like surely everyone can see what is happening and surely everyone is against genocide? So I honestly have no idea, but it is really disturbing that we're still here after 22 weeks and that this is still happening."

Nour added: "I've been involved in a lot of the different forms of protest and I think that at the very least it shows that we're not going to forget, and we're not going to just get over it, which I think is maybe part of the reason that the government doesn't do anything."

Similar sentiments were expressed by Holly and Maddison, both hospitality workers. **Holly** said: "We are taught in society to learn from history, but we're still not."

Her friend **Maddison** told WSWS reporters that she had attended around ten of the Free Palestine rallies. On the Labor government's role, she said: "It disgusts me, I find it hard to put into words what I have to say about it; I don't understand how we can keep on doing things like this and not learn from the past at all and not learn about what has been done in history. We are still doing this today, it's just disgusting."

Asked about her understanding of the role of the US in the Middle East, Maddison replied: "It has been shown in history so many times that they want to take over everything and say that they are doing great things. But I don't understand how you can do bad things and then turn around and say, 'we are for human rights.' I just recently came across the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and I'm like, how do we have that and we're still doing things like this. You can't say you are for universal rights and then turn around and kill tens of thousands of people."

"I've had people ask me, why are you going to this rally, especially being my birthday soon, and I'm like, that's a great way to spend my birthday, fighting for the rights of other people. I don't even want to

celebrate my birthday now, because how can I stand here and celebrate my life and be happy about my life when people are dying and struggling to stay alive? That's horrible, of course I want to be here and be doing this instead."

Dean said: "I think the genocide is abhorrent. I want it to stop and I want all our society to be participating in stopping that. It's an indictment on the government here. I don't think we can trust Labor at all in conscience ever again."

Dean importantly raised the connection between the re-emergence of genocide as an instrument of state policy and the elimination of all COVID-19 public health measures.

"Yes, there is absolutely a link," he said. "COVID-19 is being used as a weapon of war against Palestinians right now in Palestine, and it is also being used as an attempted means to prevent mass movements from gathering momentum. Because if governments have convinced everybody that COVID is not an issue, and we should all just be going back to normal in our lives, then our comrades are going to get infected, reinfected and eventually disabled. My partner has been disabled and can't come to any of these protests because she has been in bed for six months with Long COVID."

"It's an absolute disgrace. I think we can very easily lay the blame for all the mass atrocities that are occurring, both on governments and the corporations who have captured them through the way that capitalism currently operates in the world."



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