

Australian protests against Gaza genocide continue as Labor governments step up police repression

Our reporters
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For the 24th consecutive week, mass rallies were held in Australia's major cities over the weekend, with thousands demonstrating against Israel's ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in Gaza.

As well as voicing their opposition to the actions of the Zionist Netanyahu regime, protesters have specifically called out Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and the federal Labor government for its full-throated backing of Israel.

The weekend's demonstrations followed reports that the Albanese government had suddenly cancelled the visas of Palestinians fleeing the genocide in Gaza, resulting, in some cases, in families being trapped in foreign airports with nowhere to go.

Protest organisers have promoted illusions that petitions and protests alone would force the pro-war, pro-Zionist, Labor government to demand a permanent ceasefire. This has resulted in gradually declining participation in the weekly rallies, not because workers and young people are any less committed to the struggle against war and genocide, but because they see no way forward under this bankrupt perspective.

State Labor governments have seized upon the smaller size of the weekly protests to ramp up police state measures designed to shut down opposition to Israel's war crimes and the Australian government's support for them.

Three protesters were arrested at the Sydney mass rally on Saturday, solely for putting red dye on themselves symbolising the deaths of Palestinians. The violent police suppression of a "community protest" against Israeli shipping line Zim at Port Botany on Sunday led to 19 arrests. On Friday night, Melbourne's Webb Dock resembled a war zone, as police reportedly

fired rubber bullets and deployed flash-bang grenades against protesters attempting to block the port.

A Labor-controlled council in south-western Sydney attempted to enforce a ban on discussion of the genocide at the popular Ramadan Nights street food market in Lakemba. This included preventing Socialist Equality Party campaigners from handing out leaflets raising the need to build a socialist and revolutionary movement of the working class to end genocide and war. After the *World Socialist Web Site* exposed this attack on free speech, the council was compelled to back down, at least temporarily and unofficially.

Published below are comments from workers and young people at some of the recent protests against the Gaza genocide.

Mohammad, a Melbourne IT worker, said: "The protests signify that the people are not in line with the politicians in the parliament and the government. They have a very different position than the public, they are not listening to them; they still align with the Zionists' agenda."

He raised the "economic and political interests" of the US behind its support for the genocide: "For US imperialism, after the British and the French left, Israel is their agent in the region."

Of the US resolution at the UN, Mohammad said: "I don't think it's a real ceasefire; they just want to help Israel get the hostages, invade Gaza and invade Rafah. The ultimate goal is to kick the Palestinians out of Gaza, as many thousands as they can, and they can expand the Zionist project more."

Originally from Egypt, he described the country's president Abdel Fattah El-Sisi as "the biggest Zionist

agent in the region.

“The majority of Egyptians of course stand with Palestine and Palestinians and would like to support them with anything we can. The problem is the government has closed the gate and doesn’t allow much aid to go through. There are hundreds and hundreds of trucks at the Egyptian border and they have not allowed them to go in and give the necessary aid to the people in Gaza.”

Ken, an arts student at Flinders University, said Albanese was “completely spineless” and denounced the Labor government for cancelling the visas of Palestinian refugees: “To then only reinstate one in three of those visas, and then act like he’s the patron saint of Palestine—it shows how completely performative he is as a politician.”

On the role of the Labor Party, Ken said: “A month ago, I would have said they’re pathetic. But now I would say they’re just predatorily evil. Penny Wong keeps on calling us ‘friends of Israel,’ it just makes me want to scream. We are not their friends. They are one of the most evil regimes in history, do not associate us with them.

“They always fall back on, ‘Oh, we’re not the Liberal Party,’ so therefore, anything we do is fine. They think that being the lesser of two evils means they are not evil. That’s just demonstrably false.”

When asked about Labor’s election promise of a “better future for all,” Ken said “right now things are not good. They need to start listening to the people and stop pretending everything is fine and burying their heads in the sand because people are going to start saying ‘no.’

“I know people on campus who are struggling. They have to decide between car registration and bills, rent, the basic necessities. And they have no time or money for anything they want, for leisure, for fun, it’s incredibly depressing.”

The WSWS reporter raised that, while the cost-of-living soars, the government is spending billions on the military.

“It supports their interests,” Ken responded. “They have a vested interest in the colonial project of Israel; and they want to make sure they stay in their good favours. It’s completely transparent how integrated they are into the military industrial complex.”

Ken also raised his opposition to the US-NATO war

in Ukraine against Russia and the preparations for war with China.

“I don’t support war with China. I have my issues with the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] but war with them will not fix that. It’s very disingenuous to say, ‘If you don’t support the war against these people you support everything that they do.’”



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