

Workers and students in UK continue to protest Gaza genocide

Our reporters
5 May 2024

Thousands of people turned out across the UK to demonstrate against the Gaza genocide again this weekend. Socialist Equality Party members attended the rallies and spoke with some of those taking part.

Inverness

At the rally in Inverness, Socialist Equality Party member Darren gave a speech advertising the international May Day rally organised by the *World Socialist Web Site* for that evening and drawing the connection with the fight to stop the genocide in Gaza.

Student and artist **Jessica** delivered a speech at the rally. After the rally she told the WSWs, “It’s so necessary for students to respond to the genocide.

“Look at the treatment of students in the US. They’ve been assaulted by US police officers who work with and are trained by Israel. I think the lesson to learn from this is that the students in the US and around the world will be treated the same way as the Palestinians. It’s only been a month of the encampments and students have been beaten, tear-gassed, assaulted. We’ve seen women with their clothes ripped off, with their hijabs ripped off.

“It just proves that the deeper we sink into the crisis of capitalism, the more danger we are all in. None of us are safe from this. Capitalism is like a disease; its crisis doesn’t stay isolated to one part of the body, this won’t stay isolated in the Middle East.

She said, “If the resistance to Israeli colonisation is crushed and they establish Israel all over the land they won’t just stop there; they’ve already started striking Lebanon, Syria and Iran. The question is where does it end? With capitalism it (the drive to war) doesn’t end. The end starts with us.”

Jessica described Zionism as “a modern expression of fascism and the love child of US imperialism and the British Empire,” adding, “They are weaponizing antisemitism. They are taking something that has so much historical pain attached to it that you can’t argue with it and twisting its meaning for

their own benefit.

She noted that “The people this hurts the most aren’t just the Palestinians but Jews too. Since October 7th they’ve used the term antisemitism so much that they are determined for the word to lose all meaning.”

Asked by Socialist Equality Party members if the conclusion to be drawn from her comments was that it was necessary for workers and students to struggle for socialism, Jessica replied, “Yes, one hundred percent! And if it’s an issue that you don’t think affects you, that it’s just a question for the Middle East, then have a look how much your food shop has gone up this week. How much have your bills risen? It all ties in.”

Manchester

Around 1,000 pro-Palestinian demonstrators marched from St Peter’s Square in Manchester down Oxford Road to join a student encampment in Brunswick Park, in the grounds of the University of Manchester.

Stewards joined hands to protect the demonstrators from a handful of Zionist supporters, who shouted abuse as the disciplined marchers, many with young children and babies in buggies, passed by.

The encampment was set up on Wednesday despite intimidation from the University authorities, who declared it “wholly unauthorised”.

Each student taking part received a letter May 3 which said, “We have received a number of reports and complaints from people around the encampment and via social media regarding chanting at the protest that has caused much distress, specifically the phrase ‘from Manchester to Gaza, globalise the intifada’ which is regarded as discriminatory.

“It is important for you to know that such chanting has been reported to Manchester police.”

Speaking about the violence and intimidation meted out to students who have set up protest camps across the US, law student **Nasreem** said, “The violence of the police when it comes to acting against the students who are protesting and at

the guys at the encampment just shows that the whole thing of freedom of speech and political dissent is non-existent really; if you don't stand with the US and their geopolitical interests, they'll treat you as disposable, they'll treat you as not worth protecting."

Isma, a student at Salford University who was attending her first demonstration, said, "The Israelis and the police say they want peace but are demonstrating the opposite. Everything they say they are standing for is completely contradictory. They promote free speech, but they are not allowing free speech—they are promoting abuse to Palestinian supporters. They are very violent."

Her friend **Hina** said the conflict in Gaza was not "Jews versus Muslims. There are Jewish people suffering in Palestine. It's wrong to say that opposing genocide in Gaza is antisemitic, it doesn't make sense.

"Labour supports Israel. Whoever supports genocide, we shouldn't be supporting. If they carry on they'll drag us into another world war."

Another student, **Brian**, who said he was going to join the protest camp, commented regarding the authoritarian methods to clear camps in the US: "It seems a very coordinated attempt to dismiss the movement. It's Islamophobic. The most maddening thing is it's Orwellian—to call [Israel] apartheid is not antisemitic.

"We need to bring together forces that can actually oppose this and that has to be the working class. We need a mass movement from below."

Several protesters gave video interviews, including an organiser of the Palestine Action group leading the encampment:

Another organiser was so enthused by the leaflet "Release Bogdan Syrotiuk, socialist opponent of NATO's proxy war from Ukrainian prison" he asked to shake the hands of Socialist Equality Party members distributing it and offered to help with its distribution.

He said, "It's very nice, it's very refreshing to see an organization that finally is willing to stick its neck out and tell the truth about issues that seem to only have one major storyline. It's nice to see an organization that's telling the truth and exposing the Russia-Ukraine conflict. We're [the West] not always the good guys and the East is not always the bad guys."

Haider argued, "There is no difference between the main parties":

Another student explained, "All forms of injustice and oppression are completely interlinked, and without one being free, we'll all never be free":

In Leeds, artist **Sunny** said, "You have got Leeds University that has been investing in BAE Systems. I think they had someone high up working for the chancellor who had been working closely with students who had quite clear Islamophobic, anti-Palestinian ideas; they should not have been in that role.

"Leeds students have occupied the Parkinson building for quite a while now, they have been having dinners there, learn-ins. For years now there has been a push to get universities to divest [from Israel]."

Sunny continued, "In the UK, since October, millions of people have marched against this. There are a lot of Jews in that community and yet it keeps being labelled as antisemitic behaviour, which has been really damaging for people; some have lost their jobs because of it."

She added that "If there is a war it will be the working class who will be sent out there."

Fria, from University College London, explained, "What is happening in Gaza is genocide, thousands are being killed—more than 12,000 children. More are being killed through starvation—no food, no medicines. And the world is watching, everybody can clearly see. It's not like the First World War or the Second World War: everyone can see it on TV.

He argued, "The Palestinian people have a right to resist. They have a right to stay in their own country." The Israeli government "with all the powers that they have, they are using them to kill innocent people—those who do that are the terrorists."

Fria continued, "Workers need to become more powerful; they need to grow in strength to stop the genocide," adding, "I am sure that if we do not stop it, it will spread to the entire Middle East and then to Africa as well... The workers need to get together. Until we get together, we can't do anything. Once we get together, we can push them [the governments] to stop the genocide."

Adam spoke about how the most vulnerable would be made to pay the costs of Britain's increasing military budget:



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

Leeds