

Hundreds of Australian students attend meetings opposing Israeli onslaught

The fight against genocide means building a socialist anti-war movement

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Australia)
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At universities across Australia, Special General Meetings (SGMs) of the student unions and representative bodies are being convened in opposition to Israel's genocide in Gaza. Under restrictive requirements, at most campuses hundreds of signatures must be gathered for such a meeting to occur.

At the University of Sydney, an SGM was held last week, only the fifth since 1971. As many as 700 students participated. Similar events have been held at the University of Queensland in Brisbane and RMIT University in Melbourne, while SGMs will take place at the University of Melbourne and Queensland University of Technology on Thursday. Petitioning is underway at other campuses.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth and student wing of the Socialist Equality Party, supports the convening of such meetings. The response they have evoked shows that students are determined to fight the genocide despite venomous attacks from the Labor government and the entire political establishment.

The attendance at the meetings highlights a developing politicisation amid an eruption of militarism, the growth of fascist movements internationally and dire social conditions.

The significance of the meetings, however, will be determined by what they decide. Students know that meetings of themselves will not end the genocide. The task of such gatherings is to formulate a course of action, a path of future struggle, which must be based on a worked out political perspective and the lessons of the past period.

Critical issues are posed. How can the genocide be fought and ended after ten months where everything that has been tried, all protests and appeals to governments, have manifestly failed?

What is the relationship between the imperialist-sponsored and supported war crimes in Gaza and the broader state of the world—above all, the growth of militarism globally,

which threatens a new world war?

The IYSSE states bluntly that there are no simple answers to these questions. They will not be solved by endless chanting, or by yet more appeals to governments and university administrations.

By now, everyone knows that the Labor government will ignore such appeals while it sends weapons to murder Palestinian children and insists on Israel's "right to defend itself" through ethnic-cleansing. The military-aligned university managements will throw your resolutions in the bin as they proceed with disciplinary measures against students who have opposed the genocide.

What we are witnessing in Gaza is the true face of a capitalist system that is in its deepest crisis since the 1930s. Governments around the world are once again taking the path of war to offset their own crisis at the expense of their rivals. That means a revival of the worst barbarism of the 20th century, a war against the social conditions of the working class and a turn to authoritarianism and dictatorship. Unless halted, it means a nuclear world war that would obliterate humanity.

Governments are supporting the horrors inflicted on the people of Gaza because it is part of this broader war drive.

The solution to the "Palestinian problem," through murder and displacement, is viewed by the strategists of American imperialism, who are funding and overseeing the genocide, as a stepping stone to war against Lebanon, Syria and, above all, Iran. Such a region-wide conflagration is now developing with the provocative assassinations of Palestinian leader Ismail Haniyeh and Hezbollah leader Fuad Shukr in Israeli strikes in Lebanon and Tehran and the dispatch of additional US warships to the region.

That, in turn, is a component of a global strategy centering on confrontation with Russia and China aimed at maintaining the hegemony of American capitalism in

decline. Already, the US is in a proxy war with Russia in Ukraine, the largest war on the European landmass since the end of WW2, which has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and risks nuclear disaster. In this region, the entire Indo-Pacific is being transformed into a potential battlefield in a US-led militarisation for war with China that in Australia is being implemented by the Labor government.

This essential context shows that the fight against the Gaza genocide can only go forward as part of a fight against imperialist war worldwide. That means not appeals to governments but a political struggle against them. And it raises the need for a socialist perspective directed against the capitalist system whose inherent drive for resources, markets and profits is the root cause of war.

None of these political questions is raised in the resolution to be presented at the University of Melbourne meeting. The first part of the resolution simply states that the student union “supports an immediate and just end to Israel’s genocide in Gaza,” including an end to the bombing and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.

But how is that going to occur? Who is going to establish this peace? The resolution says nothing. It does not even condemn the Labor government, likely for fear of alienating Laborites in the student union and on its periphery who pretend to oppose the genocide while supporting Albanese.

The implication, though, remains that appeals to the government will rectify the situation. But that has been the perspective of protests held every weekend for the past ten months. It was part of the aim of student encampments earlier this year. Albanese responded by branding them as “divisive” displays of “hatred” that “do not have a place” in society and helped to shut them down in league with Zionist attacks and crackdowns by the university administrations.

The second component of the resolution is an appeal for the university to divest from Israel. That too was a central plank of the program advanced by the encampments. The university managements responded with mass suspensions and even expulsions.

The fight against the genocide is a political question. It means drawing lessons about the role played by definite political forces. Those lessons include:

- The Labor government supports the genocide because it is a party of imperialist war. While backing the mass murder of Palestinians, it is completing Australia’s transformation into a frontline state for war against China and is inflicting the biggest reversal in social conditions of the past half century on workers.

- The Greens posture as opponents of the genocide, but they have no answer other than to appeal to the Labor government to “do the right thing.” This is a trap and a dead-end. At the same time, the Greens continue to collaborate

with Labor on other issues. Their main aspiration is to strike a power sharing deal with Labor after the next election which the genocide in Gaza will not be an obstacle to.

- The corporatised trade unions are complicit. In practice, they rejected a desperate appeal from Palestinian trade unions last October for action to halt the genocide. The Australian unions have not called a single strike against the mass murder and not one shipment to Israel has been so much as delayed, let alone stopped.

- Groups such as Socialist Alternative that peddle “pressure politics” oriented to appealing to the government are engaged in a conscious and deliberate deception of students. They are part of a fake-left that represents the interests of affluent layers of the middle-class in academia and the trade union bureaucracy. Socialist Alternative has a long record of supporting imperialist war, including the CIA regime-change operations in Libya and Syria and the US-NATO war against Russia.

- To defeat imperialism, an even more powerful force must be mobilised. That force is the working class.

The working class is an international class which can end the division of the world into antagonistic capitalist nation-states, the root cause of war. It is a propertyless class, whose struggles are objectively directed against the private ownership of society’s resources and the domination of a tiny layer of billionaires.

The same contradictions of capitalism that propel the capitalist class onto the path of war give the impetus for mass struggles by the working class which are already beginning. The task is to fuse those struggles for jobs, wages and living conditions, with the fight against imperialist war. That means a rebellion against the corporatised unions and a political struggle against the Labor government. This is an international struggle, posing the need for a unified anti-war movement on a global scale, based on a socialist program.

Take up the fight for this socialist perspective! Join the IYSSE!



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