

Holocaust survivor and other protesters speak at London Gaza demonstration

Our reporters
8 September 2024

Over 120,000 people marched again in London on Saturday against the genocide in Gaza.

World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke with Hungarian Holocaust survivor **Stephen Kapos**, who attended the protest with various members of his family.

“I am here for several reasons. First of all, to express solidarity with the people of Palestine, and Gaza particularly, who are suffering so much. Secondly, to protest against an ongoing genocide which should be an impossibility in the twenty-first century.

“Also against the continued supply of armaments given by the current Labour government. The small reduction that was announced, the 8 percent reduction, does not answer the problem, which is: if we go on supplying arms of any amount we are assisting genocide—as well as the use of the air base in Cyprus.

“Also to show that Jews are not in support of the actions of the leaders of Israel; we are protesting against it. There are many left-leaning and left-wing Jews protesting against the genocide and the policies of Israel.

“Finally, as a Holocaust survivor, I am protesting against the use of the memory of the Holocaust as some kind of cover against the ongoing genocide, which is a kind of latter-day Holocaust. We are saying, ‘Not in our name.’”

It is, said Stephen, “completely outrageous” that the Netanyahu government, and also “the right-wing Jewish leadership in this country” are “pretending to speak in the name of all Jews. They are neither democratic nor truthful in representing what Jews feel.

“The Board of Deputies is basically a right-wing, pro-Tory organisation that pretends to speak for some kind of homogeneous unified Jewish community which does not exist.”

Asked about his attitude towards Zionism, Stephen replied, “I usually quote my late cousin; he was a metallurgist, a Jew and a very intelligent man. He said, ‘If there is a people who are often subject to abuse all over the world, the last thing you want to do is collect them together and put them in one place for a target.’ So I was never, and most people I know

have not been, in support of the Zionist project.

“The Zionist project from the outset was completely flawed because it was not an empty place they were occupying; they were arriving at the homes of another nation, another people and that was a fundamentally irreconcilable problem that they started with. I agree, unfortunately, that the Zionist project has been a racist project from the outset, a settler colonial project which has no place in the twenty-first century, not even the twentieth century, let alone the twenty-first century.”

Speaking about his personal experience of the Second World War and Stalinism, he explained, “I am a child survivor of the Holocaust. I was seven years old at the time when it reached my hometown Budapest. I had to wear a yellow star, I had to be in hiding on false papers to survive the period when the outright fascist youth—the so-called Arrow Cross party and their militias—took over and went on a killing spree.

“That was going on for a number of months until January/February 1945 and the Soviet troops liberated Budapest. That was a couple of years of genuine democracy then there was a Communist takeover and the whole question of antisemitism and history of the Holocaust was swept under the carpet, was not confronted, was not discussed, was not taught about.”

Stephen also described his experience of the 1956 Hungarian uprising and noted, “Western complicity with what happened” when a Soviet “force led by Soviet Marshall Konev, who smashed the Germans in the Kursk,” put down the workers’ revolt. Shortly afterwards, Stephen “walked over illegally to Austria.”

His son, **Peter**, spoke to stress the “imperialist character” of the ongoing war and genocide, noting that it was influence in the region that “motivates the continued support of Europe and America and is currently enabling a genocide.”

He added, “Protest is the only thing that can stop it. Because politics has become so completely bankrupt now, completely barren, fascistic actually.”

Sahr Fasuluku, who works in international development, said he was not surprised by the actions of the Conservative and Labour governments in supporting Israel's genocide. "Both parties, the two main parties, that's what they're there for. They're not there to serve us. I think the role comes to the people; it's their job not to allow this to happen."

Describing the role of the corporate media in "keeping the message sanitised for the public," he added, "In the age of the Internet, I think there's no excuse: you can go and find your information. Young people are doing it, older people are doing it. The information is there, despite all the censorship."

The marches of the last year had been "A huge step. First of all, it's about sustaining the noise, keeping it loud, keeping it in people's conversations. It's about keeping it alive, but also stopping it from being a background fact of life, something you just accept."

"My concern is what happens when these people over there [the government of Israel] stop being so bloodthirsty and start being 'decent' again and playing the violin and polishing themselves up and looking better—people get less outraged. But [the Israeli leaders] are all symptoms; they're just doing something they were always going to do."

On the way forward for Palestine, Sahr said, "One state, non-apartheid. Similar situation to South Africa. And getting ordinary Israelis who don't perhaps think of themselves as Zionists to believe that they can actually exist and co-exist with the Palestinian people without dominating them. But it should be more egalitarian than what's happening in South Africa, because the redistribution of wealth and power hasn't happened in the way it should have done. So in a sense it [Apartheid] is carrying on."

Asked about the role of the Palestinian Authority and the Arab governments, he responded, "What can I say about the Palestinian Authority? That's my statement."

"Their [the surrounding Arab governments'] role ought to be solidarity, the whole region should be in solidarity. But that goes against what they've set themselves up as. They are collaborating with America, with the Western power blocs; that's just going to carry on."

"Their role is meant to be solidarity, but I don't think that's what they're about. You're asking the leadership to do things that go against their interests. I've often said that the leaders between different countries have more in common with each other than they do with their people. And that seems to be the case."

Angela, from Harlow, Greater London, was attracted by the heading on the Socialist Equality Party leaflet, "Protests and general strike in Israel pose the need to break with Zionism."

She told our reporter: "Both sides, Labour and Conservatives—or whether it be America, Democrats or Republican—they both support Zionism, so essentially there is no democracy. We can have all these protests and spread the message but in terms of the political system it's a real struggle to have a party that really represents the people." She added it was "the first year I did not vote Labour."

Asking "Where is the law?", she answered, "It is there to protect criminals, essentially."

"The most terrible atrocities are going on; the media are complicit in essentially supporting genocide because they are not exposing this, which is part of the charter of the BBC to show neutrality. Yet they turned up at Al-Shifa hospital with the IDF because they are 'reliable' sources, not people on the ground in Palestine."

Angela continued, "Our economy is built on death and the Palestinians are the most obvious example of that and the most graphic. I have always been aware that if we do not heal Palestine then Palestine will become the way of the world, because our governments view us as just collateral, people to be manipulated."

"There needs to be an antiwar movement because they are escalating war. On both sides in Europe it is being escalated and in the Middle East. We do need to unite, and it is only by uniting you can take on what are a few people really compared to ourselves."

Shortly after speaking with the WSWs, Angela was arrested by police, with the only possible pretext being her placard. A statement from the Metropolitan Police after the demonstration noted six people had been arrested, including for claimed "Racially aggravated Public Order offences in relation to signs and a gesture."

The WSWs has reported on many similar flagrant abuses of freedom of speech at previous protests.



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