

Nearly a year of the Gaza genocide: The way forward in the fight against war

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (UK)
18 September 2024

As millions of students are re-entering their classrooms in schools, colleges and university campuses across the UK, a blunt warning must be issued: The threat of world war and fascism is greater today than at any point since the 1930s.

In the Middle East, the genocide in Gaza is intensifying, as Israel and its imperialist allies continue to provoke a broader war with Iran. In Europe, the proxy war by US and European imperialism against Russia in Ukraine has cost the lives of an estimated half a million Ukrainians and tens of thousands of Russians. The recent invasion of Russian territory by NATO-armed Ukrainian troops raises more directly than ever the prospect of a direct clash between NATO and Russia, which threatens a nuclear war.

The Conservative government of Rishi Sunak has been replaced by the Labour government of Keir Starmer without any change in policy. Starmer was already deeply implicated in the Gaza genocide in opposition, endorsing Israel's right to the collective punishment of the Palestinians and denouncing protesters as extremists. He has given full-throated support to the war in Ukraine. And he is just as committed as his Tory predecessors to the policies of austerity and "Forever COVID".

These political shocks have already begun to radicalize a new generation of youth and workers. Since the beginning of the genocide in Gaza, millions of people around the world and hundreds of thousands in the UK have demonstrated against this historic crime.

Campuses have been a centre of protests since the genocide began. The government and university administrations have responded with a campaign aimed at eliminating free speech on campuses and completely subordinating academia to the interests of British imperialism.

Based on the slanderous lie that opposition to war and genocide is "antisemitism," they have redoubled the witch-hunt of opponents of Zionism begun during Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party. Academics have been threatened with suspension for speaking in defence of the Palestinians. Student activists have been suspended and arrested. Encampments have been harassed by right-wing provocateurs, university security and the police, and issued with legal orders to disband.

The coming academic year is set to see renewed and larger protests. But this raises the critical question: What way forward?

The protests of the past 11 months have failed to bring about either an end to the genocide or the attack on democratic rights. This is because, so far, they have been dominated by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and the Stop the War Coalition. While appealing to the anti-imperialist sentiments of youth with radical rhetoric, they have advanced a perspective that threatens to derail and demoralize the protests.

First, they have limited the protests to attempts to pressure the Labour Party, now the principal enabler of the genocide, and university administrations, which are tied by a thousand threads to finance capital and the war machine.

Second, they have attempted to separate the genocide in Gaza from the war in Ukraine and the history of decades of wars by British imperialism, above all in alliance with the United States. This has served to undermine

any understanding that the root cause of the Gaza genocide lies not in the choice of individual governments or politicians, but in the objective crisis of world capitalism and the emergence of an imperialist redivision of the world.

Third, they have sought to pre-empt students and youth from directing their protests not toward the ruling class but toward the principal revolutionary force in society that can stop the genocide: the international working class.

The tasks and the dangers facing young people and workers are immense. The genocide in Gaza is part of a far broader normalization of mass death by the ruling class, which began with the pandemic and the normalization of a potential nuclear war against Russia.

Far-right riots this summer showed that the UK is not exempt from the rising threat of fascism across the world. In the US, Trump is threatening mass deportations of immigrants and the arrest of political opponents, emulating the rhetoric of fascist regimes. The National Rally in France and AfD in Germany have recorded their highest-ever vote hauls in the last year.

The way has been opened to these reactionary forces by the lurch to the right in "mainstream" politics and the bankrupt perspective of the left, from the New Popular Front in France and the Left Party in Germany, to Corbyn in the UK.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the student and youth organization of the International Committee of the Fourth International, therefore calls upon youth and students to take up the fight to build a socialist, anti-war movement that is rooted in an entirely different social and political force: the working class. We propose the following principles as the basis of this fight:

- The struggle against war must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society. The union bureaucracies and the Labour Party have worked feverishly to pre-empt any independent expression of working-class interests and struggle. This must be challenged by a rank-and-file rebellion of workers, who are suffering an unprecedented attack on their living standards. Moreover, their struggle must be linked directly to the fight against war.

- The ruling class cannot wage war abroad without waging a war on the democratic and social rights of the working class at home. This is why opposition to war is being criminalized everywhere. In Ukraine, Trotskyist youth leader Bogdan Syrotiuk was arrested because he fought to unify workers in Russia and Ukraine against the war. This underscores that the fight against war is inseparable from the fight to defend the social and democratic rights of the working class.

- The fight against war is a fight against capitalism and for socialism. There can be no serious struggle against war and the attack on democratic rights without a struggle to put an end to the dictatorship of finance capital and the economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war.

- This struggle must therefore be conducted in complete independence

from all bourgeois parties. In the UK, this includes, above all, the Labour Party, which has supported imperialist violence throughout its more than a century of existence.

• The fight against war and the threat of fascism can only succeed as an international struggle. As the International Committee stated in 2016, “The permanent war of the bourgeoisie must be answered with the perspective of permanent revolution by the working class, the strategic goal of which is the abolition of the nation-state system and the establishment of a world socialist federation. This will make possible the rational, planned development of global resources and, on this basis, the eradication of poverty and the raising of human culture to new heights.”

Youth and students cannot wage such a struggle without taking up a serious study of history and Trotskyism, the Marxism of the 21st century. In the coming weeks and months, the IYSSE will be organizing public meetings on the fight against war and fascism and the perspective of Trotskyism on campuses throughout the country.

Join the International Youth and Students for Social Equality!

The IYSSE is the student and youth organization of the world Trotskyist movement, the International Committee of the Fourth International, and its national sections, the Socialist Equality Parties.

The Trotskyist movement emerged out of the struggle led by Leon Trotsky against the Stalinist betrayal of the October 1917 Russian Revolution. For over a century, it has fought for the program of world socialist revolution and against all forms of national opportunism. Trotskyism represents the continuity of Marxism and the path forward for workers and young people who are entering into struggle against capitalist exploitation and imperialist war.

For a global socialist anti-war movement of youth and workers!

In November 2022, the IYSSE issued a call to youth throughout the world to build a global socialist anti-war movement to end the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine. We warned that this war threatens to spiral into a Third World War and a nuclear catastrophe. Eleven months later, Israel began the genocide in Gaza, with the full backing of the NATO imperialist powers. At the same time, US imperialism and its allies are preparing for war against China.

All of these conflicts are part of one emerging global war. Their origins lie in the crisis of the world capitalist system. They can only be fought through the mobilization of the principal revolutionary force in society: the international working class. We oppose the politics of reformism, nationalism, and issuing appeals to capitalist governments. We fight for the independent organization of workers and young people in a globally coordinated fight for socialism.

Defend democratic rights! No to fascism! For social equality!

War abroad means war at home. Both parties of the British ruling class, Labour and the Conservatives, are enemies of democratic rights and have used the genocide in Gaza to escalate the attack on free speech at home. The IYSSE opposes the criminalization of opposition to war, in the UK and internationally. In Ukraine, our comrade, Bogdan Syrotiuk, was arrested by the NATO-backed Zelensky government because he fought to unify Russian and Ukrainian workers against the war.

Underlying the eruption of war, genocide and fascism are unsustainable levels of social inequality. The past thirty years of unending war have also been thirty years of unending attacks on the living standards of the masses of workers. These conditions are incompatible with democracy. This is why billionaires like Elon Musk are backing the fascist Trump. Youth must respond by turning to the working class and taking up a fight against the root cause of fascism, war, and inequality: capitalism.

To fight for the future, turn to history!

When we grew up, we were told that the “end of history” had come and democracy would flourish under capitalist prosperity. This was a lie. We are now confronted with genocide, war, the unending COVID-19 pandemic, mass poverty, the resurgence of fascism and a climate crisis.

We were also told another lie: that there is no alternative to capitalism. History proves otherwise. The working class has fought for socialism for over a century. We oppose the pessimists and cynics of the official “left” that write off the working class as “non-revolutionary”. The working class has suffered defeats in the 20th century, not for a lack of struggle or revolutionary capacity, but because of the betrayals of its leadership.

The lessons of this struggle must be learned. They are distilled in the history and program of the Trotskyist movement, which must be assimilated by revolutionary workers, youth and students today.

We therefore urge young people: Take up a study of Trotskyism, the Marxism of the 21st century! Turn to the working class! Fight for socialism!

The IYSSE is hosting a series of meetings across the UK to discuss these issues with students:

CARDFIFF

Sunday October 6th, 1:30pm
Cathays Community Centre
36-38 Cathays Terrace, CF24 4HX
Register here.

MANCHESTER

Monday October 7th, 7pm
Friends' Meeting House,
6 Mount St, M2 5NS
Register here.

SHEFFIELD

Tuesday 8th Oct, 7pm
Showroom Workstation Cafe Meeting Room
15 Paternoster Row, S1 2BX
Register here.

LONDON

Friday October 11, 7pm
Marchmont Community Centre
62 Marchmont Street, WC1N 1AB
Register here.

SCOTLAND

Saturday October 19, 2pm
Online
Register here.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact