

Special General Meeting at Western Sydney University supports a socialist strategy to fight genocide and war

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On Tuesday, a Special General Meeting (SGM) of students at Western Sydney University (WSU) voted in favour of a socialist strategy to fight the Israeli genocide in Gaza and imperialist war.

The SGM was initiated by the WSU club of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), which gained the signatures of almost 300 students, compelling the Student Representative Council (SRC) to convene the meeting.

It coincided almost exactly with the one-year anniversary of the Zionist-imperialist onslaught on Gaza. The meeting was held as the genocide is metastasising into a region-wide war, through the US-backed Israeli offensive on Lebanon and menacing threats against Iran.

More than 40 students and academics attended the SGM at the South Parramatta campus and online. WSU has a largely working-class student body, including many of Middle Eastern descent directly affected by the Gaza genocide and the broader war erupting in the region.

Although it did not reach the onerous and arbitrary quorum of 100 students required for an official SGM, the meeting proceeded with discussion of an IYSSE-drafted motion which was adopted by an overwhelming majority vote of those present.

Most critically, the meeting and motion drew the political lessons of the past year and outlined a perspective that students can fight for.

The motion forthrightly condemned Israel's war crimes and the support given to the Zionist state by the imperialist powers internationally, including the Australian Labor government of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

It noted: "Attempts to pressure these governments have proven futile. Not one union in this country has taken any measures to block the shipment of goods to Israel as called for by the Palestinian unions."

The motion outlined five proposed actions, stating:

• We call for an immediate end to the genocide in Gaza and

imperialist militarism and violence globally.

• We endorse the call of the Palestinian trade unions and urge that workers demand it be implemented by the MUA [Maritime Union of Australia] and other transport unions.

• But recognising that they have failed to do so after 10 months, we urge that workers immediately take matters into their own hands and undertake independent action and impose bans.

• Students and youth must mobilise and fight for this perspective among workers at the docks, factories, warehouses, hospitals, schools, in transport, logistics and other workplaces.

• Students must turn to the building of a socialist movement of the working class internationally, against the outmoded capitalist system, which offers only a future of barbarism and nuclear catastrophe.

The WSU meeting and the plan of action outlined in the IYSSE motion was diametrically opposed to the bankrupt perspective advanced at SGMs organised largely by the pseudo-left Socialist Alternative at other universities.

Hundreds of students have attended these meetings looking for a way forward against the barbarism being inflicted in the Middle East.

The fake-left organisers, however, have suppressed the critical issues and covered for those responsible. Some of the motions passed at those meetings have not even mentioned the Labor government. They have all focussed on feckless appeals to individual university managements to cut ties with Israel-linked weapons companies.

That is in line with the broader position of the pseudo-left, which has been to present the genocide as a single issue that can be ended through moral appeals to the powers that be.

In contrast, IYSSE speakers at WSU stressed that Israel's onslaught is part of the global war plans of the imperialist powers.

"Imperialism, led by Washington, is turning to war as the means to halt the global crisis of capitalism," Zach Diotte,

the IYSSE club's WSU president said. "Declining profits and a growing social and financial crisis are seeing Washington preparing to use its military strength to ensure that it has unhindered control over the resources, markets and profits of the globe. In the Middle East, this means targeting Iran."

Diotte warned that this is one front in a developing world war. NATO is already engaged in a de facto war with Russia in Ukraine which threatens the use of nuclear weapons. In the Indo-Pacific, the US is preparing for war with China, which is viewed as the chief threat to the hegemony of American capitalism. Labor's support for the genocide is inseparable from its militarisation of Australia to play a frontline role in a catastrophic conflict in the Indo-Pacific.

While the response of imperialism to the capitalist crisis is leading humanity to the brink of nuclear catastrophe, the IYSSE speakers raised that the same crisis is leading the working class to struggle. For this powerful social force to end the capitalist system which leads to war, it needs to be armed with a socialist and revolutionary perspective.

In seconding the motion, WSU IYSSE member Gabriel Pope highlighted that endless protest appealing to the same governments complicit in the genocide is a dead end.

"What has the attitude of the politicians and capitalist governments been? They continue their support as Israel deepens and broadens its assault. ... Meanwhile protesters are slandered as antisemitic and police-state measures are used to suppress anti-war sentiment," he said.

Pope reiterated that students must turn to the working class as the social force which can end war, not the government and university managements as is presented by the fake left and protest groups.

Max Boddy—Assistant National Secretary of the IYSSE's parent organisation the Socialist Equality Party—referred to the role of the unions in suppressing working-class opposition to the genocide. He noted that the Maritime Union of Australia has not organised a single strike by workers to stop loading ships sending provisions from Australia to the Israeli military.

Boddy called on students to explain to workers the need to break free of the corporatised union bureaucracy and form independent rank-and-file committees, through which they can develop an industrial and political fight against the genocide, war and the accompanying onslaught on jobs, wages and conditions.

Mike Head, a member of the Rank-and-File Committee at WSU and an academic with 25 years' standing at the university, also spoke in support of the IYSSE's motion.

Head began by saying: "I want to congratulate you all, first of all, for being here. This is one of the very few Student General Meetings ever held at this university, and

that's been thanks to the campaign conducted by the IYSSE."

He noted that the meeting was proceeding, despite anti-democratic requirements and the attempts by the SRC—dominated by supporters and members of the Labor Party—to ensure the SGM was unsuccessful. This included providing students with only seven business days' notice for the meeting when the SRC's regulations document states that a minimum of 10 business days' notice must be given.

Head stressed the importance of a unified struggle by academics and staff against the genocide, war and the deepening subordination of the universities to militarism.

After the successful vote on the motion, IYSSE speakers encouraged students to attend the club's Annual General Meeting (AGM) in order to ensure its ongoing presence as an affiliated student group—the only one with an anti-war and socialist perspective. Register for the AGM here.

The urgency of this struggle is highlighted by events that took place on the day after the IYSSE's SGM. A peaceful protest of WSU students against the genocide was brutally attacked by police with two students violently arrested. The police attack was in line with the attempts of Labor governments to outlaw all opposition to the genocide.

That again underscores the fact that the genocide, war and a related turn to authoritarianism can only be fought through a political struggle against Labor, the entire official set-up and the capitalist system itself. Join the IYSSE to take up this fight!

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