

Western Sydney University students and staff protest police crackdown against anti-genocide demonstrators

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On Friday, about 60 students and academics attended a rally at Western Sydney University (WSU) called to oppose the violent arrest by heavily-armed police officers of two students, who were peacefully protesting on Wednesday against the ongoing Israeli-US genocide against the Palestinian people.

Wednesday's arrests have been met with horror and disgust by students, university workers and others around the country. Mobile phone footage shows police dragging students out, and throwing them to the ground and against a wall.

Yesterday's protest was again surrounded by dozens of police and campus security. One student estimated that 30 police cars were parked outside the campus. University security locked buildings and ordered students to present their IDs in order to be let into their classes.

The clear aim was to create an atmosphere of intimidation against students and staff protesting against the Gaza genocide and the police-state measures being used against demonstrators.

Members of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE)—the socialist, anti-war club at WSU—interviewed students about the police assault. [Click here to read the interviews.](#)

Speakers at the rally confirmed that a third student had been arrested that morning. The student was taken by police to Auburn police station. The process recalls the anti-democratic “anti-terror” raids and heightened police powers in the wake of 9/11 and the illegal wars led by US imperialism in the Middle East.

The demonstration included chants of “Free Palestine!” and “Cops off campus!”

Several academics spoke out, condemning the attack

on campus protests and activism and defending their students.

Lana Tatour, a lecturer at the nearby University of New South Wales and a Palestinian, noted that many of the students at WSU are of Middle Eastern descent. “This is a campus where many of the students are directly affected by this genocide. This is a campus that has Palestinian students, Lebanese students, students of Muslim and Arab background, students of other marginalised communities—students that know all too well what racism, genocide and colonialism is.”

The main speeches, however, did not present a viable perspective to fight the police attacks or the genocide itself. They included appeals to management to shift course and to divest from companies with ties to Israel, which have simply been ignored.

Among the speakers were supporters of the pseudo-left group Solidarity. It has played a key role in seeking to subordinate opposition to the genocide to the very Labor government that has supported the mass murder.

One of them, teacher Chris Breen, simply called for more and larger protests. He did not attempt to explain why that perspective had failed over the previous 12 months.

Another Solidarity supporter, Nick Riemer, who is president of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) branch at the University of Sydney, sought to present the trade unions as a way forward to end the slaughter. The unions, however, have not called a single industrial action against the genocide, and have maintained their alignment with the Labor government that is actively facilitating it.

The issues of political perspective and the way

forward for students were raised by the final speaker at the rally, Zacharie Diotte, the president of the IYSSE's club at WSU.

He referenced comments published in the Murdoch-owned *Australian* newspaper the night before by WSU Chancellor Jennifer Westacott. She had implied that anti-genocide protesters were guilty of antisemitism, and associated them with “hate speech” and “intimidation” without citing a single example of such conduct.

“We will not tolerate these behaviours on our campuses,” she continued. “This is now a police matter and we are fully cooperating with the police investigation.”

Those remarks underscored the bankruptcy of any perspective of appealing to university management, which had demonstrated and articulated its full support for the police crackdown on democratic rights.

Diotte said that the response of WSU management was fully in line with the position of the state and federal Labor governments, which had vilified opposition to the genocide over the previous year and threatened to ban protests near the recently passed October 7 anniversary.

“The genocide in Gaza is not an isolated event,” he said. “It is the sharpest expression of a turn to imperialist militarism, amid a crisis of the whole global capitalist system. That has been shown over recent weeks by the extension of the genocide into the Israeli attacks on Lebanon and the threats of a war against Iran.”

The developing global war included the US-NATO confrontation with Russia in Ukraine and Washington's preparations for a catastrophic conflict with China in the Indo-Pacific. Labor's support for the genocide was inseparable from its alignment with this broader war drive.

This demonstrated the need for a “political struggle against Labor, the whole political establishment and the capitalist system they defend. Like in the 1930s, the fight against war, dictatorship and fascism is a revolutionary question.”

These issues had been elaborated at a Special General Meeting (SGM) of students at WSU initiated by the IYSSE on Tuesday—the day before the first violent police arrests of anti-genocide protesters on campus.

In opposition to the bankrupt perspective of protest

politics, the SGM had adopted a motion calling for the mobilisation of the working class. It stated:

“... 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 urgency of this program is made all the more clear by the events at WSU this week, which are part of a crackdown on anti-war opposition globally.

Join the IYSSE to take up this fight! Come to the club's Annual General Meeting (AGM) 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.

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