

Greens leader refuses to condemn Australian Labor's complicity in Gaza genocide

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A media appearance by Greens leader Adam Bandt was highly revealing of the extent to which the minor party has dropped its oppositional posturing in the Australian federal election, as it appeals to Labor for a coalition government after polling day on May 3.

Bandt was interviewed on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's "Insiders" program on Sunday morning by its host David Speers.

Speers, a right-wing figure, approvingly noted the much more "fun" tone of the Greens' election campaign, as against its political activities last year. Whereas last year, the Greens were "going hard" against Labor over housing and its support for the Israeli genocide in Gaza, now they were engaged in the typical fluff of election gimmicks, such as Bandt carrying around a giant toothbrush to promote the party's dental policy and DJing at a Melbourne nightclub.

"We don't hear a lot from the Greens in this campaign about the Gaza issue, even though the war is ongoing. Why have you shifted gears?" Speers asked.

Bandt, speaking in a rapid-fire nervous tone, rambled on about the major parties neglecting the "big issues," such as housing. The Greens would make no apologies for seeking out disengaged voters, even if it meant carrying around a giant toothbrush, he stated.

"In terms of those other issues," Bandt started to say, before Speers interrupted him with the word "Gaza."

Compelled to respond, Bandt insisted that the Greens position was "very clear." He repeated the party's condemnation of the Palestinian military operation of October 7, before speaking about Israel's mass killing ever since. Bandt referenced international organisations branding the Zionist war crimes as a genocide. But the remarks had a definite "on the one hand, and on the other" character to them, under conditions of a one-sided mass murder perpetrated by the imperialist-backed Israeli state against an oppressed people.

Towards the end of the exchange, Speers asked whether the Greens position was still that the Labor government was "complicit in genocide." Like a typical hack politician, Bandt simply would not give a direct answer, including after Speers repeated the question several times. Bandt briefly referenced the two-way arms trade between Australia and Israel, but the most he would say is that "Australia should do something."

That is simply a cover-up for Labor's active support for the genocide. The Labor government has backed Israel politically, diplomatically and materially. That has included fulsome support for Israel's illegal bombardment and invasion of Gaza, and a massive assault against popular opposition in Australia, ranging from laws aimed at criminalising protests to witch hunts of academics, medical professions and activists.

Labor's position has not changed one iota from last year, when Bandt had no hesitancy in branding the government as complicit in genocide, a crime under international law.

What has changed is that the Greens are seeking to join a Labor government, which would continue that criminal complicity. Bandt has made crystal clear on several occasions that the Greens would advance no conditions and no red lines in their bid for a formal alliance with Labor.

The "Insiders" interview was not a one-off. As Speers alluded to, Bandt and other national Greens leaders have avoided the issue of Gaza at all costs. They simply do not mention it, unless they are forced by direct questioning. That was also the case in Bandt's address to the National Press Club earlier this month.

The silence of the Greens leadership is central to the concerted attempt to exclude the massive war crimes from the official election campaign altogether. Labor and the Liberal-Nationals obviously do not want to speak about their backing of a modern-day Holocaust. And the

Greens, which previously presented this as the moral issue of our time, are aiding them.

In the most cynical fashion, Greens candidates in a number of working-class electorates with large Middle Eastern and Islamic communities are raising the issue of Gaza. But that only underscores the fact that for this party, the mass slaughter of Palestinians is a transactional question to be raised when it will win some votes, and to be buried when it may obstruct overtures to Labor and the ruling elite.

Bandt, perhaps sensing that he was on thin ice, took to X after the interview, to declare: “No, it’s not ‘too far’ to say our government is complicit in the ongoing genocide in Gaza. International law is clear: when there’s genocide, nations must try to stop it, yet Labor continues two-way arms trade with Netanyahu & fails to act or impose sanctions. That’s complicity.”

But, if that’s the case, why did he refuse to state it before a vastly greater audience on national television? Such things as the X post are aimed at “pacifying the base,” including the many young people attracted to the Greens because of their previous posturing over the genocide.

That was underscored by what followed on Bandt’s X feed. Having dispensed with the issue of Gaza, he was back to touting the “once in a generation” prospect of a minority Labor government dependent on Greens support. Labor, he declared, had already adopted much of the Greens agenda, before referencing the pathetic and token cost-of-living policies outlined by Labor, which will do nothing whatsoever to address the worst social crisis in decades.

That was also the thrust of most of Bandt’s “Insiders” interview. He began by noting that the Greens had already written to the treasury department, asking that it begin costings on Labor-Greens policies immediately. These are opportunists in a hurry, already contemplating the trappings of governmental power before the election has been held!

While prattling on about the “big issues” and the prospects of vast “reforms” under a Labor-Greens administration, Bandt made plain that on social and economic questions, he was just as ready to drop ostensible Greens’ policies as on Gaza.

Asked what was to be done about the housing crisis, Bandt said that it was necessary to begin “winding back” the immense tax breaks and handouts to property developers and major investors “in a way that’s fair.” A phrase such as “winding back” is so indefinite, in terms of

time, that it could be used to justify anything, including maintaining the status quo throughout the next term of parliament.

The same was true of Bandt’s second policy, which was to “start to put caps on rent increases.” Rents are already at their highest recorded rate, forcing millions of workers and the poor into a miserable hand to mouth existence. Under these conditions, Bandt did not even countenance any measures to decrease existing rents.

Finally, the government needed to “get back in the market” by building homes. The words “public housing” did not pass Bandt’s lips. He made clear that the government-produced dwellings would be on the private market, as they would be available for people to “buy.” That is almost identical to the policy outlined a week before by Labor, which is transparently aimed at propping up the private market and maintaining the super-inflated housing bubble.

Definite lessons must be drawn. As the Socialist Equality Party has always insisted, the Greens are a capitalist party. Their posturing over social issues and such atrocities as the Gaza genocide are aimed at winning electoral support. Such posturing also functions as a safety valve for the entire political establishment, perpetrating the fraud that there is an alternative within the parliamentary set-up, when there is not.

Unlike Bandt’s weasel words, evasions and straight up lies, the SEP tells the truth. The election will solve nothing. The incoming government, whether Liberal-National or Labor-Greens, will enforce the dictates of the banks for massive austerity and will deepen militarism and war, including support for the Gaza genocide and Australia’s integration into the US-led plans for a catastrophic conflict with China.

Young people and workers who want to fight genocide, war and social devastation need to take up a revolutionary socialist perspective, which can only be advanced in direct opposition to the Greens.

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