

100,000 join Netherlands' largest anti-war protest in two decades against Gaza genocide

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On Sunday, May 18, 2025, The Hague witnessed the country's largest demonstration in two decades as over 100,000 people gathered—thrice the number anticipated—to protest the Israeli genocide in Gaza.

The mass protest followed countless events in Dutch cities and towns for this year's 80th anniversary of *Bevrijdingsdag* (Liberation Day) on May 5, commemorating the end of Nazi occupation and honouring the estimated 300,000 resistance fighters—with up to 1 million affiliated supporters—who safeguarded tens of thousands of Jewish people from deportation to concentration camps.

The demonstration last Sunday assembled at Malieveld, a prominent public park known for hosting political protests. From there, participants marched through the city to the Peace Palace, the seat of the International Court of Justice. The ICJ is currently hearing a case brought by South Africa accusing Israel of committing genocide. Last year, the ICJ ordered Israel to halt its military operations in the southern Gaza city of Rafah. Meanwhile, the United States and the European imperialist powers have shielded the Netanyahu government from any legal repercussions.

The protest came on the 77th anniversary of the Nakba, amidst Israel's announcement of a military occupation of Gaza, with mass internments in neighbouring Arab countries. US President Trump again declared his support for Israeli plans to annex the Gaza Strip.

Hours before the protest march, central stations with connecting trains to The Hague were reportedly congested with crowds dressed in red, with trains full to the brim and an influx of people that the city could barely handle. Protesters donned red clothing and carried red banners symbolizing a "red line" they believe Israel has crossed in Gaza.

The far-right Dutch government, led by neo-fascist Geert Wilders and unelected former intelligence chief Dick Schoof as prime minister, has already drawn its own

red line—threatening protesters with draconian legal sanctions and police repression.

Wilders, leader of the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV) and the largest party in the ruling four-party coalition government, wrote on X: "Today, a demonstration against Israel and for Hamas. Thousands of confused people are drawing a red line. I am also drawing a red line—against terror and the starvation of their own population by Hamas, and for maximum destruction of their murderous infrastructure. And for Israel."

In reality, the demonstration was not antisemitic, nor was it a political endorsement of Hamas. The protest in The Hague also featured members of the Dutch Jewish community, and a cross-section of working class families, university students and youth from across the country, alongside various human rights groups.

David Prins, a 64-year-old Dutch Jewish protester wearing a yarmulke adorned with a watermelon—a symbol of solidarity with Palestinians—told state media NOS.nl, "I oppose atrocities, not my own community. This is a human rights issue, transcending ethnicity and religion." Twenty-two-year-old Lina, alongside fellow protester Marga van der Schalie, aged 82, told *de Volkskrant*, "The Netanyahu government is a criminal gang—that's what it boils down to for me!"

According to the conservative estimates of the Gaza Ministry of Health, over 53,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 121,000 injured since October 2023. Relentless bombardments have devastated hospitals, schools, bakeries, farms and Gaza's entire civilian infrastructure. Moreover, the Israeli blockade, intensified since March 2025, has cut off access to essential resources, including fuel, food, water, and medical supplies, pushing the population of Gaza toward famine. The United Nations has warned that 14,000 babies in Gaza could die within days without immediate aid.

The political atmosphere at the demonstration was

highly charged, with explosive anger not only against the massacre of the Palestinian people, but also at the Dutch government's complicity. Homemade placards read: "Why do you keep supporting the Israeli government? Why do you keep buying weapons? Why not boycott?" and "Shame on you, Schoof!" According to an Ipsos poll last month, only 15 percent of the population support government policy on Israel.

Speaking to *Het Parool*, 85-year-old Joke Akkermans commented, "This is the least you can do for people who cannot defend themselves. Nice that so many demonstrators came to show our disgust. Whether it helps enormously, I don't know, but we have to do this."

Yvonne and Miklos from Zaanstad, who participated with their newborn baby and two-year-old son, said, "The eldest can already shout 'Free Gaza.' We are here especially for the child victims who are falling because of the genocide taking place in Gaza. We must continue to stand up for human rights and freedom for all. This must be instilled in our children so that they are not afraid to go to a demonstration in the future."

Protest participant and WSWS supporter Gijs reported that there were spontaneous discussions in the trains to and fro—on the nature of Zionism, its origins, the role of imperialist powers in the war, and impunity for war crimes—with a sense of observable relief at the size of the protest. Whereas at the site of protest, no political parties were visibly present, nor were any trade unions.

Staggered by the mass turnout, parliamentarians representing the official "left" blurted empty rhetoric. The ex-Maoist Socialist Party (SP) MP Renske Leijten tweeted: "The suffering in Gaza must end. The blockade and violence violate fundamental human rights. The Netherlands must take a stand for justice and peace." GroenLinks party leader Jesse Klaver tweeted: "Solidarity with the people of Gaza is essential. Dutch policy should reflect our commitment to human rights and push for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire."

The demonstration concluded at the Buitenhof, near the Dutch Parliament, where survivors from Gaza, connected via a live video link, shared harrowing testimonies of life under siege. One said, "Our homes have been destroyed, our children hungry and scared. We need the world to hear us and stop this nightmare." There followed a minute of silence for victims in Gaza.

The protest organisers concluded by announcing future plans, including for petitions, parliamentary lobbying, and solidarity events in Rotterdam, Utrecht and Amsterdam, continuing with fruitless and politically bankrupt attempts

to pressure the Dutch government.

The mass protests over Gaza, in the Netherlands and internationally, have exposed the class divide between the sentiments of hundreds of thousands and millions of protesters, and protest organisers making moral appeals to the ruling establishment complicit in the genocide. This false perspective has led mass protests worldwide into a dead end. Instead of turning protesters towards building a mass international movement in the working class to halt the genocide, it orients them instead to impotent appeals to the ruling class.

It later emerged that, as thousands marched against the war on Gaza, key members of the Dutch political elite, including Deputy Prime Minister Mona Keijzer and Prime Minister Dick Schoof, were at a closed-door celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Centrum Informatie en Documentatie Israel (CIDI), a pro-Israel lobby organisation. The event took place at the Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (KIT), a location that was kept undisclosed for fear of protesters.

Schoof delivered a congratulatory video message expressing his "great appreciation" for CIDI "on behalf of the Dutch government," alongside Israeli President Yitzhak Herzog's video message.

These two events underline the unbridgeable gulf separating the sentiments of working people from the ruling class that formulates government policy on genocide and war. A new mood of opposition is emerging in the working class against genocide, war and the capitalist oligarchy. The decisive task is arming workers and youth entering into struggle with a perspective to build an international movement in the working class for socialism against genocide, fascism, war and the capitalist system that gives rise to them.



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