

Pseudo-left Socialist Alliance seeks to divert opposition to Gaza genocide behind Australian Labor government

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17 August 2025

As Israel's genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza enters a new stage, with the deliberate mass starvation of the entire population and plans for the occupation of the Strip, the question of how to end the atrocities is posed more sharply than ever before.

Among masses of people globally there is shock and deep opposition. That was expressed in Australia earlier this month with a march by up to 300,000 people across the Sydney Harbour Bridge in one of the country's largest demonstrations.

Under these conditions, pseudo-left organisations are intensifying their efforts to divert the popular hostility back behind the political establishment, which is complicit in the genocide, including the Labor government that has supported it politically, diplomatically and materially for close to two years.

Socialist Alliance has provided a particularly graphic example of this politically bankrupt perspective. Its coverage of the bridge march can only be described as a public relations exercise for Labor and the trade union bureaucracy.

Promoting a motley crew of Labor "dissidents"

Socialist Alliance centred its coverage of the Harbour Bridge march on the presence of a handful of dissident Labor MPs. For it, the attendance of a half dozen "prominent" individuals, themselves complicit in the crimes of Labor governments including against the Palestinians, was of more significance than the participation of hundreds of thousands of workers and young people.

On its YouTube account, Socialist Alliance's *Green Left* posted a video titled "Labor and Greens MPs and other prominent figures join March for Humanity to end Gaza genocide."

The video included short extracts of interviews that *Green Left* conducted at the march with some of these notables, all prominent Labor Party politicians. There was no commentary accompanying the video, with Socialist Alliance effectively providing free publicity for Labor. Their responses indicate that even slightly critical questions were not posed.

One of those featured, Ed Husic, is a member of the very federal Labor government that continues to export weapons components to Israel and to insist on the right of the Zionist state to "defend itself" by massacring Palestinians.

Husic was a senior minister in Labor's previous term of office, and voted for an October 2023 parliamentary motion committing the government to full support for the Israeli war effort. Earlier this year, he

voted in favour of Labor's "hate speech" legislation, which potentially criminalises denunciations of Zionism.

Husic only began making public denunciations of Israel and vague calls for Labor to take "stronger action" after being demoted to the backbench in a Cabinet reshuffle following the May federal election. Husic remains committed to party-room solidarity, meaning he backs all of Labor's substantive and legislative measures.

In the comments used by *Green Left*, Husic made not a word of criticism of the Labor government of which he is a member. He hailed the commitment of the UK, France and several other countries to "recognise" a Palestinian state. Husic was simply setting the stage for a similar announcement by his leader, Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, following the bridge march. "Recognition" is an utterly cynical diversion from governments that continue to aid the genocide.

Green Left also featured decades-long Labor politician Bob Carr, who bemoaned the "humanitarian crisis" in Gaza and said the aim of the protest was to place pressure on Israeli prime minister and arch-war criminal Benjamin Netanyahu.

Carr was foreign minister in the Gillard Labor government from 2012–13. The government was frothingly pro-Israeli, as part of its alignment with the US, including a massive expansion of American basing arrangements to prepare for war with China.

In the May federal election, Carr campaigned for senior Labor MPs, including Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke, who were facing challenges from pro-Palestinian independents who centrally raised the complicity of the Labor government in the genocide.

The final Laborite featured by *Green Left* was Anthony D'Adam, a member of the New South Wales (NSW) state Labor government. D'Adam has frequently attended pro-Palestinian protests. But he has stated that he is committed to party-room solidarity in the intensely pro-Israeli NSW government. That meant he supported NSW hate speech laws, earlier this year, also directed against pro-Palestinians, and anti-protest laws aimed at shutting down demonstrations.

The NSW government attempted to ban the Harbour Bridge protest, including through unsuccessful court action. That was a more significant expression of Labor's real attitude, than the presence of D'Adam and a contingent of "Labor for Palestine" members whose numbers at most protests can be counted on two hands.

A *Green Left* report on the Bridge march spelled out the orientation upon which the video was based. It declared: "The mass of humanity on that iconic bridge has federal and state Labor MPs worried that their own base is angry with Labor's shameful complicity in the genocide, particularly because Prime Minister Anthony Albanese used to champion justice for Palestine."

Almost every word of that sentence is a lie. Over the past four decades,

Labor, always pro-capitalist, has completed its transformation into a party indistinguishable from the conservatives, with no mass base in the working class. Labor's real "base" is in the corporate boardrooms, the intelligence agencies and the military.

Labor's support for the genocide is not a "shameful" aberration. It is entirely consistent with Labor's character as the preeminent party of Australian imperialism, including its central role in the preparations for war against China.

Albanese was never a "champion" of "justice" for Palestinians. He has been a careerist politician his entire adult life for Labor that has aggressively supported Israel since its foundation through ethnic-cleansing in 1948. Albanese's participation in and leadership of five Labor governments complicit in Israeli oppression is surely more significant than a handful of mealy-mouthed statements he made decades ago, criticising the most blatant aspects of that oppression.

The entirely false depiction was aimed at promoting the illusion that Labor is, or can be receptive to a purported "mass base." Under conditions where Albanese's government is insistent that it will continue to support Israel, state Labor governments are trying to ban anti-genocide protests, and the Palestinians are facing extermination, the *Green Left* article adopted an almost jubilant tone. Despite all evidence to the contrary and all past experience, Labor was facing an almost irresistible tide of pressure "to act," it claimed.

Another pseudo-left group Solidarity advanced the same line in relation to the Bridge protest. The way forward for the anti-genocide movement, Solidarity declared, was to "build on efforts to amplify dissent within the Labor Party, including by putting Labor speakers on protest platforms."

Solidarity has previously clashed with other pro-Palestinian activists over that demand. Some Palestinian nationalists, for instance, have denounced Solidarity's insistence that representatives of governments aiding the genocide and seeking to outlaw opposition be given a platform to fraudulently posture as defenders of the Palestinians.

Solidarity's insistence on turning over anti-genocide protests to Labor MPs underscores the fact that the pseudo-left, whatever its rhetoric, functions as an agency of the political establishment, to which it seeks to subordinate popular opposition.

Hailing a union bureaucracy that has facilitated the genocide

The *Green Left* article expressed this function of the pseudo-left with remarkable candour. Dispensing with its usual references to "grass roots" activism, it declared that defenders of the Palestinians had to orient themselves to "major institutions" and to seek "institutional support."

It declared: "Now, there's a greater willingness of major progressive institutions (unions and others) to support the movement, and this needs to be an immediate focus."

The claim that the Harbour Bridge march showed the unions' support for the Palestinians is a conscious fraud. Anyone who was there knows there was no substantial organised contingent of the trade unions. As previously, the pseudo-left claims that a handful of union flags, many of them held by pseudo-left members themselves, constitutes some sort of mobilisation.

The pathetic character of the pseudo-left's promotion of the unions was summed up by *Green Left*'s reference to the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). The national union umbrella organisation claims millions of members. It is a key backer of and de facto participant in the Labor government.

"The ACTU is under pressure to issue a more up-to-date statement in support of Palestine," *Green Left* declared, its union executives last having

issued a few mealy-mouthed words of concern about Gaza in May.

Green Left has presented what is evidence of the unions' complete corporatisation—their lockstep alliance with a pro-business and pro-war Labor Party—as a positive. In other words, the pseudo-left will pressure the union bureaucrats, who will in turn pressure the Labor Party.

In reality, Socialist Alliance provides political cover for the bureaucracy, which protects the pro-genocide Labor government. That has been evident over the past two years, as the unions have not held a single industrial action opposing the genocide. Instead, they have actively blocked calls from workers for such action to be held and have defended the Labor government.

Conclusion

Definite lessons need to be drawn by workers and young people seeking to fight the genocide. The positions of the pseudo-left are not a mistake. That is demonstrated by the fact that the more their bankrupt protest politics are exposed by objective reality, the more aggressively they promote that very same line.

The pseudo-left groups are effectively a faction of the political establishment. Through their use of left-populist and even occasionally socialist rhetoric, they serve to subordinate growing opposition to the very political establishment, that amid a breakdown of capitalism is turning to genocide, authoritarianism, social austerity and ultimately to world war.

These pseudo-left organisations speak, not for the working class, but for an affluent layer of the upper middle-class which is the milieu of the Labor-aligned trade union bureaucracy, the Greens and various pro-capitalist human rights and non-government organisations.

Their promotion of illusions in Labor is directed against the socialist and revolutionary perspective advanced by the Socialist Equality Party (SEP). The SEP, together with our world movement the International Committee of the Fourth International, has explained throughout the genocide that the imperialist-backed atrocities are a crime of capitalism.

The Gaza genocide is inseparable from a broader eruption of imperialist militarism, including a US-led war drive throughout the Middle East, above all targeting Iran, as well as the de facto US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine. In this region, the US and its allies including Australia are conducting a massive military build-up in preparation for war against China, which is viewed as the chief threat to the hegemony of American capitalism.

This context underscores the reality that fighting the genocide means a political struggle against the capitalist governments, including Labor, not moral appeals to them. And it requires the mobilisation of the working class, including through strikes and industrial action aimed at crippling the Israeli war machine. That will only take place through a rebellion against the union leaderships.

These tasks must form part of a broader fight to build a unified, international and socialist anti-war movement of the working class, directed against the source of war, capitalism and its reactionary division of the world into rival nation states.



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