

Mobilise the working class to end the Gaza genocide! Take up the fight for socialism against war!

A socialist perspective for mass student meetings in Australia against the Gaza genocide

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Australia)

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A “National Student Referendum on Palestine” will be held at universities across Australia between August 20 and 28. The events have been called by the National Union of Students (NUS) and Students for Palestine, which have presented them as an opportunity for students to register their opposition to the genocide in Gaza and the complicity of the Australian Labor government.

There is no question that such mass opposition exists. As the genocide approaches a horrific conclusion, with Israel’s mass starvation of the Palestinians and plans for their complete displacement from Gaza, protracted hostility has erupted.

A protest earlier this month across Sydney Harbour Bridge was attended by as many as 300,000 people. It was one of the largest anti-war demonstrations in Australian history and per capita one of the biggest anywhere in the world against the genocide.

Over the past two years, the cumulative total of people who have taken part in demonstrations in Australia, as part of the global movement, would be in the hundreds of thousands or the millions.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth wing of the Socialist Equality Party, supports the convening of the university meetings. To proceed as official Special General Meetings, recognised by the university authorities, hundreds of signatures have had to be collected at the various campuses.

But that, together with the mass protests, shows that the issue is not gauging or registering opposition. The issue is how to take that opposition forward, in a political movement and political actions that will halt the genocide.

The draft NUS resolution, to be voted on at the meetings, simply evades that decisive issue.

It states: “1. Students censure the Australian government for its complicity in the genocide in Gaza. We demand an end to all weapons sales to Israel by Australia and Australian companies,

and call for sanctions on Israel.”

The time has long passed for general condemnations and censures. The Labor government’s involvement in the genocide is undeniable and known to millions. And over the course of two years, there has been no shortage of demands that Labor end its complicity.

Labor’s crocodile tears over mass starvation and its pledge to vote in favour of Palestinian “recognition” do not mark a shift in the slightest. They are a cynical and desperate attempt to head off popular anger. Labor is promising to “recognise” a pile of rubble and corpses as Israel moves to complete the ethnic-cleansing of all Palestine.

Labor’s real response, at every point, including now, has been to insist on Israel’s “right to defend itself” through the mass slaughter of Palestinians. Labor has declared that it will continue to send weapons components to Israel and is brutally suppressing mass opposition, which it slanders as antisemitic.

The second part of the resolution states: “Students call on all Australian universities to end their complicity with Israel’s genocide by ceasing all partnerships with weapons companies.”

Everything said above about the government applies equally to the university managements. Completely corporatised and integrated into the military-intelligence establishment, they have functioned as key instruments of the governments’ repression, including through the forced dispersal of student protests, the suspension and even expulsion of pro-Palestinian students and a nationally-coordinated crackdown on free speech.

In other words, the resolution will achieve nothing, other than to direct students, who want to fight, to instead make impotent appeals to the very forces responsible for a modern-day Holocaust and for police-state measures directed against those who oppose it.

The IYSSE calls on students to put forward and to take up an alternative motion, aimed at mobilising the immense social and

political power of the working class to halt the genocide. We propose the following:

- **This meeting condemns the Labor government's complicity in the Gaza genocide.** Through its support for the atrocities against the Palestinians, Labor has again revealed itself to be a blood-soaked party of imperialist war. The experiences of the past two years have demonstrated that the task is not to appeal to this government, but to organise the most determined political fight against it.

- **Urgent action must be taken to halt the genocide,** including through the blocking of all weapons shipments and trade with Israel to cripple the Zionist war machine. That will come from below, not above.

- **Students should initiate a campaign in the working class for industrial action, including strikes, at the ports, the logistics hubs, the universities and more broadly, to make that a reality.** Given that the unions have blocked such action and have not held up so much as one shipment to Israel, students must join with workers to establish rank-and-file committees against the corporatised, Labor-aligned and pro-war union bureaucracies.

Anyone who claims that such a perspective is “unrealistic” either doesn’t grasp the potential within the situation, or is consciously covering it up. Among the 300,000 people who marched across the bridge there were tens of thousands of workers in key industries. They were mobilised, not by the union leaders, who have taken no action whatsoever against the genocide, but by themselves.

Mass hostility in the working class to the genocide and to war intersects with seething anger over the cost-of-living and social crisis and the gutting of public services, including healthcare and education. There is a growing determination among workers to fight, which at every instance comes up against a union bureaucracy that functions as a police force of the government and the corporations.

The time is, in other words, ripe for precisely such a campaign for a rank-and-file rebellion and industrial action to halt the genocide.

The opposition of the NUS to such a perspective is not based on political confusion. Those in the student union who are members of the Labor Party are politically affiliated to the very government that is carrying out the atrocities.

Socialist Alternative, which has played a central role in organising the meetings, notwithstanding its name, has opposed the fight for a socialist perspective and the mobilisation of the working class in the struggle against the genocide. Together with other organisations, such as Socialist Alliance, as well as the Greens, it has insisted that opposition must be limited to appeals to the pro-genocide government to change course.

The fact that Socialist Alternative continues to advance that line, even as it has been exposed as a complete dead-end, shows that here too we are not dealing with confusion or mistakes. Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance are part of a pseudo-

left, tied to the union bureaucracy, and through it to the Labor government itself.

Speaking for an affluent layer of the upper middle-class, these parties are hostile to the fight to mobilise the power of the working class, instead seeking to advance their own privileges within the framework of the profit system.

All of them have presented the genocide as a single issue. But as the IYSSE, the Socialist Equality Party and the world Trotskyist movement have insisted, the genocide is a barbarous expression of the breakdown of the entire global capitalist system.

It is a component of a war that increasingly has a global character. The US and NATO have been in a de facto war against Russia in Ukraine that has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. Washington is preparing for conflict with China, which is viewed as the chief threat to the economic dominance of American capitalism. The genocide is a component of this international eruption of militarism, which has included US-Israeli strikes on Iran and a rampage by the Zionist regime against countries throughout the Middle East.

Labor’s support for the genocide is inseparable from its involvement in this broader war drive, particularly the transformation of Australia into a frontline state for war against China.

And its crackdown on mass opposition is part of a lurch to authoritarianism by capitalist governments internationally, epitomised by the attempts of the fascistic administration of President Donald Trump to overturn the US Constitution.

Everywhere, workers and young people are confronted with the spectre of fascism, dictatorship, massive attacks on social conditions and the danger of a nuclear world war. The fight against the genocide is inseparable from the fight against all of these manifestations of the crisis, and their source in the outmoded capitalist system itself.

That is why the IYSSE urges students to break out of the shackles of limited protest politics, oriented to governments that are hurtling to the right and are spewing up all of the filth of the 1930s.

Students and youth who want to end the genocide and fight for a future should instead dedicate themselves to building a mass socialist movement of the working class, the revolutionary force in society. Organised and mobilised on the basis of a socialist and revolutionary program, it can not only halt the genocide, but can reorganise society on a global scale to put an end to war, inequality and oppression. Join the IYSSE to take up this struggle!



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