

Australian workers and youth denounce Israel's genocide in Gaza at mass protests

Our reporters
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On Sunday, hundreds of thousands of workers and young people took part in dozens of protest marches across Australia against Israel's genocide in Gaza. Demonstrators expressed their hostility not just to the Zionist regime of Benjamin Netanyahu, but to all its imperialist backers worldwide, including the Australian Labor government. A full report on the rallies is published here.

World Socialist Web Site (WSWS) reporters spoke with protesters at several of the marches.

Joey, a student at Griffith University, who has been reading the WSWS for some time, said he had come to the Brisbane rally "to articulate my want for the genocide to end in Palestine.

"I think it's obscene and I don't approve of the support that the Labor government is showing to our so-called allies in Israel. I think we should cut ties, sanction, do everything in our power to discourage the Israeli genocide and further the cause of Palestinian liberation from the Israeli oppressors."

Asked why the Labor government was so committed to the Zionists and support for the broader US military war plans, Joey commented: "I think it's the all the same big club. They're all in it together because they're all driven by the same colonial dispossessive kind of drive..."

"I think that Labor see themselves as benefitting from that... That's why the AUKUS Treaty, which came out at the end of the Liberal government, has been upheld by the Labor government."

Asked about the need for a global anti-war movement of the working class, Joey replied:

"Yes, I'd certainly agree. That's why I'm interested in the Socialist Equality Party... because anyone who can articulate the shared interests of the working classes is on the right track for understanding the world and how we could walk into such a tragedy as this genocide..."

"I know about Marxism and Trotskyism. I know about its steadfast record in opposing capitalism and fighting for socialism. I know that socialists have supported Palestinians and their liberation basically from the beginning of the Palestinian oppression by Israel."

Joey condemned the ban by the police and the courts on the planned march over Brisbane's landmark Story Bridge, under

the false pretext of ensuring people's safety. He said the police had caused the safety dangers at the huge August 3 march over the Sydney Harbour Bridge by their "ridiculous mid-crossing demands that 'you have to turn back.' That seemed to me like the police trying to cause a crowd crush..."

"People should be free to organise and associate however they please. Safety is a concern, but the people at these protests are capable enough to consider safety."

At the Melbourne rally, **Nicola**, who is originally from New Zealand, explained: "I'm joining today to show solidarity and support, and it's kind of great to be amongst other people with the same feeling. To get as many people out you know, to show that the world and the people don't want genocide.

"Every day we see something that's worse than the last day, when we thought it couldn't get worse."

On the role of the Albanese Labor government, Nicola responded: "I don't know how these people sleep at night. I don't know how people can put power and money over humanity. It is basically a war against people, and Donald Trump is the sharpest expression of that."

A **TAFE student** attending his first Free Palestine rally said: "I felt like I needed to do something and this is my small way of participating and contributing to do something about the Palestinians' plight."

"There needs to be a cease to trade with Israel. There also needs to be more movement of the workers' unions. People need to take a stance, especially when their work or business propagates the genocide. It's so much easier said than done, as people are just trying to make an honest living and it takes a lot to stand up against corruption."

Liliana, a performer, said: "I'm here because I stand with Palestine and I'm against the genocide, and also the complicity of the Australian government, especially what's come out recently about the weapons manufacturing that's going on. I really hope that a lot more action is coming."

On the Labor government's diplomatic recognition, she replied: "I was happy to hear that, but it was sort of coming a little too late. They still need to do a lot more and come with a lot stronger stance against Israel."

Liliana continued: "I think that it's pretty shocking to see how peaceful protesters have been portrayed in the media and

by the government. I think that it's not showing the true story here, that people are coming peacefully to say that they oppose the genocide."

Mabel, an academic, spoke of the assault on those speaking out against the genocide within the universities: "Our speech is more and more stifled in the university space. Staff are being targeted for having pro-Palestinian views," which are "being conflated with anti-semitism."

She continued: "Staff, including myself, have had their social media tracked and monitored, and have been contacted by our own leadership as to why we're speaking out about these issues. There is a feeling that we possibly can't speak out about these issues because of a lot of philanthropists that are linked to Zionists."

Nero, who works in cybersecurity, said: "The reason that Gaza is starving is because they have been kept on a starvation diet long before this attack on them began. Governments like to suggest that it is some sort of accident but it isn't. It is totally conscious."

Nero continued: "I'm here today because it's powerful to be here. But I know the protests are not working. In my opinion we need to take concrete actions, we need to be doing something else. Nothing has happened though, I'm aware of that. People who go to the ports to stop the shipping get bashed by the cops. We need to re-strategise."

"In a fundamental way it's the forces of capitalism at work. There is an enormous amount of wealth in Palestine—there is a straightforward economic interest. But more than that they want total control of the Middle East and they want it all."

At The Entrance, a coastal town north of Sydney, **Lachlan**, a retail worker, said: "The Albanese government said they will support recognition of a Palestinian state, but Australia has imperial interests and supports sending military equipment to Israel to continue the genocide in Gaza."

"The trade unions are allowing the military equipment to be shipped to Israel. I think they have their own nationalist agenda and are not uniting workers internationally. I think workers internationally should support each other in their fight. They need a vanguard party to organise."

In Newcastle, healthcare worker **Kerry** attended her first protest against the genocide. She said: "Watching what we can on the internet and other sources, not mainstream news, people's accounts of what's actually happening over there, it's devastating. This could happen anywhere in the world. It's people like us. I've got children, grandchildren. I would hate to see them in that situation."

Asked about the Labor government's recent pledge to "recognise" Palestine, Kerry said: "I don't think it's going to do anything. I think it's all good to say things but they need to take action. They need to stop supporting Israel, they need to stop sending weapons over there."

In Sydney, **Marie**, a public service worker, said: "This is my second protest. The first one was at the [Sydney Harbour]

Bridge. I don't agree with the violence. I don't agree with them targeting children and families."

"It seems like powerful people, rich people, are controlling the dynamic.... We need the common person to stand up and have a voice. Together, we are powerful. But the government does not act in our interests."

Mark, a Sydney chemist, said: "I don't like seeing people being killed under occupation. I have been to many of these rallies, maybe 30."

"There isn't a point trying to pressure [the Labor government], but if you stop trying then you are giving up."

Mark recalled the protests against the Iraq war in 2003: "How many people were on that protest? Half a million? And what did the rulers say? No, we are going ahead."

SEP campaigners raised the need for a revolutionary perspective—workers that produce the wealth in society need to be in control. Mark said: "I agree. But the problem is the media is so propagandised. They have us fighting against our own interests. Yes, we have the *World Socialist Web Site*, but we need critical mass."

Referring to the unions, Mark asked: "Why aren't they stopping the ports and closing down the shipping to Israel? They should be doing that. It would be unreal if workers had their own organisations."

Petra, who came to the protest with her mother, said: "No matter how many lines [the government] give about the fighter jet parts, we know we are still providing them and they're still killing people with them. If you can't put a bullet in a gun, what's the point of a gun? If there's no bullets, it can't shoot. If a jet can't fly, it can't fly and drop bombs. If it doesn't have the trap door parts to drop the bombs, it can't drop bombs."

Asked what she thought about workers taking matters into their own hands to stop shipments and weapons going to Israel, Petra said, "I'm a hundred percent on board with that." Her mother added: "They should strike. I grew up in the eighties when there were heaps of strikes—it works."



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