

New Zealand protests continue against Gaza genocide

Tom Peters

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Thousands of people across New Zealand (NZ) took part in protests on September 6 against the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza and the NZ government's complicity in it.

According to Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa, 30 towns and cities held demonstrations, which were part of a global day of action. As has often been the case, the corporate media ignored the events.

In Auckland, hundreds of people gathered on the waterfront and promoted a mass rally called for September 13, which will march across the Auckland Harbour Bridge.

In recent weeks the National Party-led government has made hypocritical statements calling for a ceasefire and expressing concern about the people of Gaza. It is "considering" whether to join other countries in officially recognising Palestinian statehood at the United Nations General Assembly this week—a gesture that is intended to distract attention from the imperialist powers' ongoing support for Israel.

The government has refused to condemn the criminal plan developed by the Trump administration with Israel to ethnically cleanse and take over the Gaza Strip. New Zealand has also sent military personnel to the Middle East to assist in the US bombing of Yemen to keep supply lines open for the Israeli war machine.

With the opposition Labour Party's full support, the government plans to double New Zealand's military budget in order to integrate more closely with US-led plans for war, particularly against China.

Labour is supporting a Green Party bill to impose sanctions against Israel, but the Labour-Greens government, in office from 2017-2023, strengthened ties with Washington, which is a full partner in the Gaza genocide. Labour supported Israel's bombardment of Gaza until late November 2023,

falsely calling it "self-defence."

The World Socialist Web Site spoke with several people at last Saturday's rally of about 150 people in Porirua, north of the capital, Wellington.

Hibilo, who fled war in Somalia during the 1990s and spent 10 years as a refugee before moving to New Zealand, said the situation facing people in Gaza was worse than what she had experienced. "I know war—this is not a war. Israel is not fighting Hamas, they are killing children, bombing hospitals. Israel wants to take over the land.

"I don't understand how the prime minister of Israel can sleep at night. They don't care about human rights. There's a reason Israel is killing journalists: they are the ones showing the reality, telling the whole world. I want the New Zealand government to stop business with Israel." She added that "Israel is the child of America" and could not do anything without US support.

Hashem attended with his wife **Sundus**, both Palestinians born in Jordan, with family still living in the West Bank and in Israel. "My grandparents were forced out of Palestine in 1947-48," Hashem explained.

Hashem denounced Israel for "deliberately targeting journalists, doctors, hospitals and aid trucks." Asked what he thought about the New Zealand government's statements, he said recognising Palestinian statehood was "a little bit too late: at this stage they're just going with the trend."

He called for sanctions and divestment from Israel. "They very easily do it to other countries, like Syria. Stop supporting companies that are supplying arms to Israel, stop investing in companies that are related to arms dealing."

Sundus said there were products sold in New Zealand

from Israel, and being sent to Israel from NZ. “Is our economy really worth the lives of innocent Palestinians? That’s something we have to ask ourselves. Every country that has a colonial history that does not take a stand against what’s happening in Gaza is complicit.”

She agreed that workers should take action to stop supplies going to Israel, and pointed out that Italian dock workers were “threatening to shut down the ports if Israel doesn’t let the aid flotillas into Gaza.”

Irene, originally from the UK, said her late brother-in-law, who was born in 1930, was conscripted into the army and sent to Palestine in 1948, when Zionists were ethnically cleansing the territory to create the state of Israel.

“He told me everything about what the Zionists were doing, not only to the Palestinians but they had bombed the King David Hotel [where British people were housed in Jerusalem] and started hanging British soldiers from trees. A young friend of his, another British soldier, who was only 18, was killed by an Israeli tank.”

She added that “Britain is entirely to blame” for the ethnic cleansing of Palestine over the past 100 years or more. This continues today, with the British air force flying planes over Gaza to provide intelligence to Israel. “[Prime Minister] Starmer is a war criminal,” Irene said.

She described the Trump administration’s plans for forcing Palestinians out of Gaza as “beyond horrific, beyond everything that human beings should stand for. But Joe Biden started it, he sent bombs too.

“The United Nations are letting them get away with everything: Trump vetoes everything, Biden vetoed everything. As far as I’m concerned, Israel and the US should be kicked out of the United Nations.” Irene also called for New Zealand to leave the US-led Five Eyes intelligence alliance.

Jess said she has been raising money for a mother living in Gaza, who she speaks with regularly on social media. “She’s got two sons and it’s just her—she lost her husband. They’re in a tent and they’re really scared for winter that’s coming. Last year the water came into the tent, because they’re by the sea. And she’s got COVID at the moment as well, and is really struggling.”

She said Israel was trying to “get rid of people” in

Gaza. “You see videos of people rescuing people who’ve been bombed, and then getting bombed themselves. It’s not soldiers fighting soldiers, it’s Israel fighting civilians, children, and starving them.”

Jess did not think recognising the state of Palestine, in itself, would make any difference. “[Prime Minister] Christopher Luxon recently talked about humanity and values and things like that, but he’s not willing to make an actual stand. They don’t have a spine. It’s really disappointing to see the government not stepping up.

“They don’t want to stand up and say something because they don’t want to rock the boat with America. [Luxon] is just so worried about how he could look to the Americans.”



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