

IYSSE club at University of Melbourne holds well-attended meeting on the fight against fascism and war

Our reporters
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Last week, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) club at Australia's University of Melbourne held its Annual General Meeting (AGM), allowing the club to remain affiliated and continue its activity on campus next year.

The meeting was one of a series being held by the IYSSE, including a successful AGM at the University of Newcastle, in New South Wales.

The Melbourne meeting, titled "Charlie Kirk and the promotion of the far right," drew over 50 students, in person and online, surpassing the 20 required to reach quorum. Many students were attending their first IYSSE meeting and signed up to become members. The meeting was an indication of the growing interest among students in a socialist and anti-war perspective.

IYSSE campaigners spoke with hundreds of students in the weeks leading up to the AGM, handing out over 5,000 copies of *World Socialist Web Site* articles on the Israeli genocide in Gaza, the drive by the imperialist powers towards a third world war, and Trump's accelerating efforts to establish dictatorship in the United States.

In particular, the IYSSE won support for its call to halt fascism and war through the mobilisation of the working class against capitalism, in opposition to the bankrupt protest politics advanced by pseudo-left groups on campus such as Socialist Alternative.

Weeks before the AGM, Socialist Alternative and the University of Melbourne Student Union held a Special General Meeting for Palestine, as part of a national series of student meetings. The organisers promoted the dead-end line of pressuring the Australian Labor government and university management to end their complicity in the Gaza genocide.

The IYSSE had planned to speak at the meeting, attended by over 600 students, against the notion of moral appeals to pro-genocide forces, and present an alternative motion calling on students to build an anti-war movement in the working class and halt weapons shipments to Israel. However, the organisers blocked the IYSSE from speaking.

At the AGM, Morgan Peach, who was re-elected club president, delivered a report on the Trump administration's glorification of Charlie Kirk, a fascist agitator, as part of its efforts to establish dictatorial rule in the United States.

He said, "Kirk's funeral in Arizona, which was transformed into a fascist rally, was an unprecedented event in American history: the mobilisation of the far right by the highest levels of the White House itself. The beatification of Kirk is being used to galvanise the most reactionary forces in the country and prepare a massive

counterrevolutionary assault on the working class, its democratic rights and social conditions."

Peach pointed out that "Trump's drive to create fascist rule in the US is not a question of Trump as a deranged individual, although he certainly is that, nor is it a question of specific American conditions. The accelerating lurch to the right by governments is a global process, arising from the historic crisis of world capitalism."

He explained that the Albanese Labor government is part of that process, as it cracks down on mass opposition to the ethnic cleansing in Gaza and aligns itself with the Trump regime. "The fight against fascism will not be taken up by any of the official parties of capitalist rule, such as the Democrats in the US, or Labor here—all institutions that exist to protect the privileges of the financial oligarchy."

Instead, Peach emphasised that the struggle against dictatorship, genocide, and war can only be taken forward by the international working class—the revolutionary force in modern society—based on a socialist strategy. "That means students who want a future free of nuclear war and fascism must turn their attention towards workers in the factories, in logistics, in the universities, and build a political movement against capitalism."

The report provoked a lengthy discussion with numerous questions from students. These centred on the issues of how socialism will be established, whether it is possible to enact socialist measures within capitalism, why international revolution is necessary, and how the working class can be unified internationally and mobilised.

After the meeting, reporters from the WSWS spoke with students.

Saad, a first-year commerce student who was elected the club's secretary, first met the IYSSE through the Socialist Equality Party's (SEP) campaign in the Australian federal election in May. He voted for Peach, who ran as the SEP candidate in the working-class electorate of Calwell.

"This was a great introduction for anyone who wants to get into socialism," he said. "What we're seeing now around the world is capitalism in decline. This kind of crisis naturally happens over and over again under this system. For example, you had the 2008 economic crisis, and then again in 2020 when the COVID pandemic started."

On the glorification of Charlie Kirk, Saad said, "He was someone who was responsible for much of the right-wing discourse that targeted minorities. It was telling that all these governments and the media denounced the killing. I don't support him being killed, but it's being framed in a way to give power to political forces, to Trump, to take action against minorities and what he calls the 'left.'"

“What Trump is doing is completely awful on many levels. Whether it’s the tariff war he’s waging, or attacks on social equality, the villainisation of DEI, or political suppression, this is the start of dictatorship. Anyone who plants themselves in opposition to Trump is attacked, including students protesting the massacres happening in Gaza, like the two were deported from the US. And his policies are having an overall effect on the world, since the far right in other countries see a figure like him come to power and think, ‘Maybe it’s our turn too.’

When asked about the growing threats of fascist dictatorship and world war, Saad said, “They go hand in hand. And that’s because of the concentration of power in the hands of a few capitalists, and the impoverishment of the working class, but also of sections of the middle class.

“We need to spread our analysis. Class consciousness is obviously on the rise, and that’s important for building a coalition of the working class across nations. That means building new organisations and a working-class party, not to work within this system, but to build a sort of workers’ authority. And the main goal has to be a revolution to oust the capitalist system as a whole.

Jack, a science student, said that he found “the analysis and critique of the far-right exploitation of Kirk’s assassination very engaging. Moreover, I shared the outrage in the Australian Labor government’s deceptive gesture in its ‘recognition’ of the state [Palestine] when it actively contributes to its extinction.”

Stella, a biomedicine student who grew up in the US, said, “The rise of fascism internationally, the fact there are right-wing governments everywhere is so crazy. We’re taught growing up that we should read history and learn from it so we don’t repeat it. But today we’re seeing the build-up towards World War II being repeated.”

She spoke about how the experiences of the past two years of the Gaza genocide had radicalised her: “I didn’t know much about the struggle in Israel and Gaza before the October 7 events. But the general lack of an international response when Israel’s war crimes started immediately was shocking to me.

“Being from the United States, to see the US deliberately block so many attempts in the UN to get aid to Gaza... It’s just shocking it’s gone on for so long, the very publicised genocide of a whole people. This will be judged very heavily in the future, like how we judge those who did nothing during the Holocaust.”

When it was explained that the genocide was one expression of American capitalism’s drive to dominate the world economy through war, Stella raised, “War is a money-maker for a lot of companies, Lockheed Martin for one. They absolutely want to be at war. Trump just renamed the Department of Defense the Department of War. What bigger statement could they make about their real intentions? It makes them money, it keeps them in control of certain areas.

“I’ve read about all the shady things that have happened with America destabilising governments in the Middle East, in order to gain better access to natural resources, oil especially. So I have no problem believing that it’s all a money and power grab for them. They don’t actually care about the people.”

In response to the IYSSE’s call for students to turn to the working class, Stella said: “There’s a history of workers and students getting together and fighting for change against governments. We’ve been trying to put pressure on the government for two years now, and unfortunately there’s been no change. Politicians come out and make pretty statements, such as how we ‘recognise’ Palestine, but have done nothing for two years and are continuing to support Israel. So I

do think there needs to be a change in attitude in what the protests are trying to do. I absolutely think we should try building a movement of workers.”

Agus, an international student from Indonesia, said, “The meeting was really insightful, it dealt with the major issues today like the rise of fascism, dictatorship and war. Capitalism is the cause of these problems: war, poverty, inequality. A socialist movement is so important and necessary.”

“Donald Trump is clearly preparing for fascism in the United States,” Agus said. “It’s almost like we are living in a dystopian world. The US, a Western democratic country, is transforming into an autocratic state. Trump is using his executive powers to do this, and he is encouraging his supporters to follow this agenda.

“The Trump government is capitalising on the assassination of Kirk, a far-rightist, to wage a war against the civilian population, particularly against progressive movements. And what Trump does in the US influences world leaders to follow his agenda. This will make the world even more chaotic than it already is.

“The far-right is coming to power everywhere, and I think this is a consequence of capitalism. It enables the wealthiest 1 percent to control the rest of the population, which is crazy. In a democratic society, a government should reflect what the majority wants, the working-class people.

“For that reason, I really resonated with what the IYSSE was saying, to establish a socialist society founded on genuine equality. This is something we should fight for, especially young people. We should unite and cede control to the working class. The elites do not think about the general population, they want to remain in control and push an agenda that benefits themselves, and not the working class. This is crazy, and we obviously need big changes in society.

“I encourage young people to have more discussions about this topic, how capitalism has failed the world and is leading to a disaster. They need to join this club and the IYSSE movement around the world.”



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