

Iranian in New Zealand speaks out against pro-war propaganda and intimidation

Tom Peters
8 March 2026

The *World Socialist Web Site* recently spoke with Bahram, an Iranian who fled to Australia as a refugee in the 1980s and has lived in New Zealand for many years. He denounced the global propaganda campaign justifying the illegal US-Israeli war against Iran, including the way governments and corporate media are systematically promoting a narrow, right-wing layer of supporters of Reza Pahlavi—the son of the deposed Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi—as the supposed voice of “the Iranian community.”

Bahram explained that Pahlavi is backing the imperialist war in order to restore the hated US-backed monarchy that was overthrown in the 1979 revolution. He said Pahlavi’s supporters in Europe and in New Zealand are “using bullying tactics” and issuing outright threats in an effort to silence anti-war voices within the Iranian diaspora.

He strongly denounced the position taken by the New Zealand government, which is echoing Washington’s lies. Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and Foreign Minister Winston Peters declared that the war’s aim was “to prevent Iran from continuing to threaten international peace and security.” Luxon refused to criticise the criminal conduct of the war, including the bombing of a school which killed more than 160 children.

Bahram pointed out that Deputy Prime Minister David Seymour, from the far-right ACT Party, has embraced supporters of Pahlavi. Seymour posted on Facebook a picture of the Lion and Sun flag used by the US-backed dictatorship in Iran, which has become the logo of the pro-Pahlavi monarchists.

Seymour defended the unprovoked and criminal bombardment of Iran, declaring that “an axis of evil is falling. First in Venezuela, now in Iran, people right across the Middle East can look forward to a lot more freedom without this terrorist organisation and its proxies attacking and terrorising the region.”

This is said by a government that continues to support the genocidal actions of the Israeli military against Palestinians in Gaza—methods that are now being used against the population of Iran. New Zealand’s ruling elite is backing the

violent carve-up of the Middle East by US imperialism and its proxies, as part of an increasingly global war.

Bahram told the WSWWS that the National Party-led coalition government was “ignoring international law and they are ignoring that kids are dying, including 185 teachers and students at a girls school. [The US and Israel] are hitting maternity hospitals and our government’s silent about it.”

The official pretext for war was a sham, he said: “Iran was not ready to develop a nuclear weapon, there is no evidence of it.” Responding to the lie that the war is being waged to “liberate” the people of Iran, Bahram said, “We’ve seen the American ‘freedom’ in Iraq, we’ve seen it in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, women still have no rights, they are treated like animals, and that’s the legacy of America.”

He acknowledged that the conflict, much like the United States’ actions in Venezuela, was intrinsically linked to Washington’s broader strategic confrontation directed against China. China, as a major importer of oil and other critical resources from both regions, was simultaneously advancing its efforts to establish a trade corridor through Iran. This initiative aimed to further expand its economic engagement with Eastern European countries.

People in Iran had described to him the scale of devastation from the bombing: “They are targeting not only military bases, they are targeting police stations and they are targeting the individuals’ houses that they suspect are linked to the leadership.

“They are making another Gaza. They are hitting every city, they are hitting factories that have nothing to do with weaponry. They are obviously aiming to cripple the economy. They are hitting the food storage.”

Bahram made clear that he opposed Iran’s theocratic and dictatorial regime, which imprisoned and tortured him as a young activist following the 1979 revolution. He knew people killed during the state crackdown on mass protests in January this year, which were driven by social inequality, soaring inflation and demands for democratic rights. He warned that the regime in Iran would make use of the war, just as it had used the war with Iraq from 1980-1988, to

suppress internal opposition.

He believes supporters of Pahlavi were only a small minority of the protesters. Their role was “enormously” exaggerated by the international media. There is evidence of audio being added to videos of protests to make it appear that large numbers of people were calling for the restoration of the monarchy. Bahram said the violent actions of pro-Pahlavi groups had played into the hands of the Khamenei regime, providing it with a pretext for brutally repressing the protests. “I hold Pahlavi responsible. Thousands of people died; he has to answer for that.”

On January 16 a small group carrying Israeli and American flags and pictures of Pahlavi gathered outside the US embassy in Wellington to call for US intervention in Iran. Other rallies were held outside parliament to demand the expulsion of Iran’s ambassador.

After the bombing began, media outlets published headlines such as “Iranian NZers ‘incredibly hopeful’ attacks will lead to swift regime change” (Radio NZ) and “‘First step toward victory’: Iranians in NZ react to Khamenei’s death” (One News). On March 2, *Stuff* prominently published a letter from a Pahlavi supporter stating: “The community has a tremendous respect for the US and Israel for their brave and moral action.” Similar items appeared in the media in the US and across the world.

Bahram explained that “Pahlavi wants to ride on the blood of the Iranian people and get himself [into power].” He would then establish a ruthless imperialist-backed regime. “Pahlavi’s document about a temporary government clearly says: we will work with Israel to establish our security system. They want another SAVAK. They’re openly saying that.”

SAVAK was the brutal secret police that upheld the Shah’s dictatorship, with funding and training from the CIA. It was notorious for the torture and murder of thousands of political opponents.

In Telegram chat groups, Iranians who oppose the war are receiving abusive, often anonymous messages, including threats of violence from pro-Pahlavi individuals. “This bullying is happening not only to the Iranian community here [in New Zealand],” Bahram said. “It’s happening in Europe. I was made aware that the German police have been alerted to it. These people have been going to Iranian businesses and shops saying: ‘If you don’t put our posters up, we will deal with you.’ They haven’t gone to that extent here.

“There are videos from Europe saying: ‘we will identify you and we will get you if you are against Pahlavi.’ This is open.” In New Zealand, Bahram said, “They find people who are opposed to them, then they send private messages saying: ‘you are a bastard, I will get you.’ Not many

Iranians feel safe to speak out or to write to the media.

“I have been informed that a lot of students are being bullied, are getting abusive messages, they say that they don’t feel safe.”

Bahram said he believed most people “are intelligent enough to see that war is not the answer. We have an expression: ‘If the egg breaks from inside, a bird comes out. If the egg breaks from outside, it will be eaten.’ This is always the case.”

He was encouraged by the fact that the Trump administration is extremely unpopular and “a lot of Americans are standing up and questioning the war.” He pointed to the example of a Marine veteran who protested in a Senate hearing against the attack on Iran. “I respect the soldiers who stick with their values, not the orders of their superiors. There are a lot of good people in America, and the government doesn’t represent the people.”

There is also widespread opposition to the war, and the ongoing genocide in Gaza, among workers and young people in New Zealand, who are looking for a way to effectively fight against the government’s support for these atrocities.

One recent target of the pro-Pahlavi groups in New Zealand was the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), which held a public meeting at Victoria University of Wellington on March 4 opposing the war. A Telegram channel circulated the IYSSE’s poster with the message: “This notice is being circulated at the university. If you are a student/professor and would like to object to this, please let me know,” in an attempt to mobilise a campaign against the meeting.

In the event, the Pahlavi supporters were unable to organise any disruption. The meeting went ahead and advanced a socialist strategy to unite the working class internationally against the war and its source in the capitalist profit system, highlighting the alternative to both imperialist intervention and the reactionary Iranian regime. It also exposed the phoney anti-war posturing of the opposition Labour and the Green parties, which have criticised the war while still supporting New Zealand’s alliance with US imperialism.

Students, young people and workers who want to take up this fight should contact the Socialist Equality Group and the IYSSE, and join the fight to build a socialist, anti-war movement.



To contact the WSW and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact