

Australian and New Zealand university students oppose US-Israeli war on Iran and Labor government complicity

Our reporters
10 March 2026

The criminal US-Israeli war on Iran is widely opposed internationally, including in Australia. The Albanese Labor government is one of its most explicit and rapid supporters, not only politically but directly.

Australian military personnel were aboard the US submarine that torpedoed and sank the unarmed IRIS Dena in international waters, killing 140 sailors in a war crime. Yesterday, Australia's participation became open, with Labor announcing the deployment of missiles, a warplane and personnel to join in a war aimed at regime-change and the annihilation of Iranian society.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) has been campaigning on university campuses against the war, exposing Labor's role, warning of the preparations for even greater crimes in the US-led confrontations with Russia and China and putting forward a socialist and revolutionary perspective to halt capitalism's descent into barbarism. The IYSSE is holding a series of meetings at university campuses opposing the war.

Adam, a law student at Western Sydney University, saw the war unfold live on television. "I wasn't too surprised because of the escalating tensions but I was also quite scared, not for myself but for those in the region. When wars happen between nations, the victims are never the nations, the victims are always the people."

Adam said the war benefitted the interests of "first and foremost the upper class that consists of that higher echelon of people in the US, Israel and allied countries." He also said that the war against Iran could spiral into a far broader war that impacts the entire world. "It's a real possibility and in the near future."

When asked if it was the working class who could stop war, Adam responded: "Of course, you can't see any other way it can happen. Who controls everything? It's the working class."

Maeve, a nursing student from the University of Queensland (UQ), opposed the lie that the war on Iran was to defend democracy.

"Thousands of Iranian civilians have died and thousands more will die," Maeve said. "US imperialism does not care about the people on the ground. If the US really cared about civilians, they wouldn't be sending billions of dollars to Israel that is carpet bombing Palestinian children and civilians."

On the history of US military interventions in the region and across the world, Maeve said: "The US has sabotaged civil rights in Iran, the Middle East, South America for decades."

Joey, a law and political science student at UQ, drew the connection between the war on Iran and the ongoing Gaza genocide. He said the Labor government "will recognise Palestine and continue to collaborate with the weapons programs that are used to genocide the Palestinians."

UQ pharmaceutical science masters student **Steven** said: "I read that many students and staff at a girl's school were bombed by an American airstrike. I totally disapprove of the war by Trump and Israel."

David, who is studying business and finance at UQ, said: "I think it's all illegal. It's all in the interests of the elites. No war will ever be for the people."

Sydney, a medical engineering student at the University of Newcastle, thought the war against Iran is "based on power and money because Iran's oil is huge. I know that when the UK and the US appointed the Shah as the leader, that allowed them to use their oil. I think now Trump's trying to get back to that. He's almost trying to—not appoint a Shah exactly, but it could get to that point."

Asked if the assault on Iran increases the danger of a Third World War, Sydney said: "Absolutely. I definitely think it does. It was a blatant attack. It happened so suddenly... The fact that the US and Israel are behind these attacks could start other countries getting involved because it broadens things. Trump started an attack in Venezuela and now we're in Iran, and it feels like he's going for very certain areas with very specific oil reserves. I could see it blowing up into other countries.

"[Australian Prime Minister Anthony] Albanese supported it right away. He was one of the first people to say he completely endorsed it. Other countries and European countries are endorsing this too—the UK, for example."

A computer science student in Newcastle, **Shayan**, rejected the lie that war against Iran had anything to do with responding to "antisemitism."

"I believe antisemitic rhetoric from Iran or some farce nuclear program is not the real reason why Israel has chosen to attack Iran," Shayan said.

The student opposed the antisemitism report card system recently imposed on universities, which threatens to punish institutions that don't adequately suppress opposition to Israel's war crimes: "Zionists love to throw around the word antisemitism. This is another blatant attack on the freedom to demonstrate by

forcing universities to control their students.”

Adam, an 18-year-old music student at Adelaide University denounced “Netanyahu and everything that has gone into the occupation of Palestine.”

Speaking on the need to unite the working class internationally against capitalism, Adam said: “There’s roughly 3,000 billionaires in the world and we’re 8 billion people so I’d say odds are in our favour. It’s more so about getting the people together... it’s important to get the message out there, especially younger voices in how they can take a step towards fighting corruption. We really need action. That’s something that’s desperately needed now.”

Liam, who is completing a Master of Teaching at Macquarie University in Sydney, said: “It goes all the way back to the end of the First World War where all the lines in the new countries in the Middle East were partitioned... The US is not interested in freeing the people of Iran, they’re interested in the resources in the region and destabilising the area so they can control them.

“It is important to separate governments from the people,” he continued. “There is a lot of resistance in America to what Trump is doing.”

Another student from Macquarie said: “Trump is bombing Iran for control and power. Following decades of sanctions, Iran has gotten weaker. What you are saying about the economic bankruptcy of the US and its determination to stop China overtaking it is probably true. I also agree that we are facing World War III... If the US and China go to war, other countries will join in. It’s going to affect everyone on the planet.”

Cameron, who attended an IYSSE meeting at Victoria University Wellington (VUW) in New Zealand, said: “I think a lot of the conflicts that the US have decided to involve themselves in, or to start, could all have the potential to upscale. But I think this, the most recent Israeli-US aggression towards Iran, has the specific motivation to destabilise the Chinese economy and energy sector.” This raised “the potential of becoming World War III.”

He said he had followed “the resistance of the working class” in the US to the Trump administration’s brutal attacks on immigrants. “The size of the turnout at the protests is certainly heartening.”

Mohamed, who also attended the VUW meeting, said he was pleased that the IYSSE opposed the “reactionary liberal talking points” from commentators who were hypocritically claiming to oppose the war against Iran while celebrating the murder of Ayatollah Khamenei and other leaders.

He denounced the New Zealand government’s support for the war, including Prime Minister Christopher Luxon’s response when asked “about the bombing of a school that killed 150 schoolgirls. His response was: ‘well, I’m not in a position to comment about international law.’ Excuse me? The slaughter of 150 girls, is that not the most disgusting war crime?”

Mohamed noted that the United States and Israel were “targeting cultural and historical sites to diminish the morale of the Iranian people. That is exactly what the Nazis did during the Blitz: they bombed British historical sites to diminish morale.”

He said the government’s stance was bound up with NZ’s membership in the Five Eyes—the US-led intelligence-gathering alliance—and “right now, to be an ally of the US, you need to also

be an ally of the state of Israel, you need to be blind and silent to the crimes of Israel.”

Mohamed said Trump “has no thought whatsoever for the United States constitution, for what Congress says—he doesn’t care. And when he makes it so clear that he has no concern, why should we still appeal to him? Why should we still appeal to a man who has no concern for any sort of law but the one that comes from himself and his criminal, fascistic thugs and warmongers?”

Mohamed pointed out that oppressed people in places like the Congo did not achieve independence by begging the colonial powers, but through “militant actions” including strikes. “That’s what workers today need to recognise: the power they hold to strike the assets that matter to the political ruling elites. We need revolution.”

Ishika, a first-year arts student at Melbourne’s La Trobe University, said: “I don’t support any interference by the major Western powers in other countries. This war is very similar to the genocide in Gaza or the invasion of Venezuela. There are similar excuses given as to why it’s being done. This is all for resources and power. But there’s always some individual figure like Khamenei or Maduro, or some label like terrorism, that’s put at the forefront of the discourse to negate any mass casualties.

“The timeline of it, how things have gone this year, and how there are all these Western countries supporting the bombing of Iran and other wars—this is a lead up to world war.

“I never think it’s single figures that drive wars. And capitalist nations seek to expand, especially the most powerful like the US, which now has this very nationalist thinking under Trump. You get this recipe of expansion and violence, taking over countries and killing innocent people.

“Labor depends on the alliance with the US. On the one hand, Australian capitalism is intimidated and dependent on Trump, but on the other, they are driven by greed to want to expand for themselves.”

In response to IYSSE members insisting on the need for a revolutionary movement against capitalism to stop war, Ishika replied, “I completely agree, and I think a revolutionary perspective is important. Working within the system, to reform it, doesn’t do anything. You can see so many instances in history of attempts at reforming capitalism, where figures or parties attempt to fit in to parliament, betray their own values, and make a bad name for themselves. Not only that, but they prevent any changes from happening. So I agree we need to overthrow capitalism and not reform it.”



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