

# New Zealand protests against war on Iran, Lebanon and Gaza

Tom Peters  
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Thousands of people joined demonstrations across New Zealand on April 11 to oppose the US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran and Lebanon, and the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

In Auckland, hundreds marched from Aotea Square to the US consulate, while in Wellington about 400 people marched to parliament. Rallies were also held in Christchurch, Dunedin and the regional centres of Blenheim and New Plymouth.

The corporate media blacked out the protests. Since the US-Israeli bombing campaign began, NZ media outlets have highlighted small pro-war demonstrations by far-right Iranian supporters of Reza Pahlavi, the son of the former US-backed Shah whose brutal regime was overthrown by the 1979 Iranian revolution.

Protesters condemned the National Party-led government's alliance with Washington and its silence on US and Israeli war crimes. Last week, Foreign Minister Winston Peters travelled to Washington to meet Secretary of State Marco Rubio—a visit which coincided with President Donald Trump's threat that “a whole civilisation will die” unless Iran surrendered.

Asked by Radio NZ to respond to Trump's genocidal statement on April 8, Peters said “I'm not going to comment.” He also falsely claimed that the NZ government had “never expressed support for the war.” In fact, on March 1, Peters and Prime Minister Christopher Luxon issued a statement that endorsed the US-Israeli bombing of Iran and condemned Iran's retaliation.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with several people taking part in the Wellington demonstration.

**Niamh** called the government's position “spineless. They don't really take a stance, and in not taking a stance they become complicit in what's happening.” She added, “We can be in opposition to the US-Israeli

war and also oppose the authoritarian regime in Iran, and be in solidarity with the people who are affected.”

**Hamed**, a student from Iran, told the WSW: “America and Israel bombed my cousin's house in the west of Tehran. They are all living with my aunt now. Everyone knows why America and Israel attack countries like Iran, Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq, or Venezuela. They just attack them for money, they want the oil.”

**Alison** said she did not think the ceasefire deal announced by Trump on April 7 would hold. “It's not even really a ceasefire, because the first thing that happened is Israel bombed Lebanon: 100 bombs in 10 minutes.” Pointing to the danger of further escalation, she said “I certainly wouldn't put it past Israel to drop a nuclear bomb,” adding that Trump was also capable of doing so.

“People are becoming more aware of how horrific the foreign policy of most Western governments is. It's all tied in with capitalism and, for the last 40 years, neoliberalism. It is becoming clear that they're just out to grab the oil. Not just that, they want to destroy and pulverise any other civilisations.”

Asked whether she thought workers should strike to stop the production and shipment of weapons for the war, Alison noted that this had only happened on a few occasions, including a strike by Italian dock workers against the Gaza genocide. She said: “I think in New Zealand the unions are very conservative, they're not doing their jobs.”

The unions have not organised any industrial action against the government's support for Israeli and US wars.

**Joshua**, a US citizen, condemned the US support for Israel as it brazenly violated the so-called ceasefire. “If any other country were to do what Israel's doing,

attacking their neighbours all the time, they would be condemned.”

He said the US Democrats were no alternative: “No matter who wins the election, US imperialism wins. In any of these wars, the average person I don’t think is in favour. Of course they’re the people who actually bear the cost. The people in power, they’re not sending their sons and daughters to go fight, they’re not losing their livelihood.”

**Sara** said, “As an American and a New Zealand citizen I feel particularly disgusted about what the US has done over recent years, and especially since February 28. I would like our [NZ] government to make a more vocal stand against the war. I would like the ceasefire to turn into something a lot more lasting. I don’t know how hopeful I am right now.”

She described the condemnation of Iran’s missile strikes by the Luxon government as “one-sided,” adding that the bombing of Iran was likely to strengthen its theocratic and repressive regime.

“I’m so appalled and sick of everything coming out of the White House,” Sara said, including the “blatant lies” used to justify the war. She said the war was being driven by “greed” on the part of Trump and his allies, and was also “an exercise to keep [Israeli PM Benjamin] Netanyahu out of prison.”

Sara drew a connection between the wars abroad and rising domestic repression in the US, including the “massive, obviously fascist funding and expansion of supposed immigration policing, which is inflicting massive suffering on immigrants.”

Several people told the WSWS that they hoped after the November election a new government led by Labour and the Greens would distance NZ from the US and Israel. The Wellington rally organisers, including Peace Action, the union bureaucracy, and various middle class activist groups, focused on denouncing the government and said little about the opposition parties.

At the Auckland protest, the pseudo-left Socialist Aotearoa leader Joe Carolan said: “If we want to get rid of this right-wing government, we’re going to need Labour. That’s why it’s good to see them as part of this movement.”

After this warm welcome, Labour MP Phil Twyford told the crowd, “The US-Israel war against Iran is an illegal war of aggression.” Green Party MP Ricardo Menéndez March said: “You simply cannot achieve

freedom, peace or justice by committing genocide.” He said the Greens would push for NZ “to leave the Five Eyes,” the US-led intelligence-sharing alliance, “to hold the United States to account and to sanction Israel for its war crimes.”

The WSWS warns that these capitalist parties do not represent any alternative to militarism and war. The 2017-2023 Labour-led coalition government—which included the Greens and, in its first three years, the right-wing NZ First Party led by Winston Peters—strengthened ties with US imperialism. It sent troops to the UK to train Ukrainian conscripts for the US-NATO proxy war against Russia. In October and November 2023, the Labour government defended Israel’s genocidal assault on Gaza.

Labour and the union bureaucracy support the current government’s plan to double military spending, which is aimed at integrating NZ into US-led war preparations, particularly against China.

If it was in office now, NZ Labour would behave similarly to the Labour governments in Britain and Australia, which are providing diplomatic backing and military-intelligence support for US imperialism in the Middle East and around the world.



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