

SEP holds meeting in Adelaide, South Australia on the Iran war and the fight for socialism

Our reporters
23 April 2026

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) held an important public meeting last Sunday in the South Australian city of Adelaide to discuss the illegal US war against Iran and the need for a socialist perspective. The meeting advanced the fight to build an Adelaide branch of the SEP as a component of the broader struggle to build a global movement of the working class against the threat of world war.

The meeting was held in the aftermath of the March 21 state election, which marked a deepening crisis of the two-party system in Australia and a further shift to the right by all the major parties. While the pro-business Labor government of Peter Malinauskas was returned to office, there were sharp swings against Labor in key working-class areas. The Liberals, the traditional conservative party, were reduced to a rump, as part of the party's collapse nationally. Meanwhile, the far-right One Nation received the second-highest vote, exploiting the growing discontent with the major capitalist parties and the mounting social crisis.

Before Sunday's meeting, the SEP campaigned in the working-class suburbs of Adelaide, including going to polling booths on election day at Salisbury and Elizabeth in the city's north. This area, the former centre of auto production, has been decimated by the closure of the car industry and resulting job losses and impoverished conditions, enforced by Labor and the corporatised trade unions.

In speaking with workers and young people, the SEP revealed widespread hostility to the war on Iran, the Australian government's involvement in it, and the broader militarisation of the country in preparation for a US-led war with China. Workers were concerned about the cost-of-living crisis, growing inequality, the deterioration of social services, and were interested in a socialist alternative to the main parties.

Longstanding SEP member Peter Byrne chaired the meeting. In opening, Byrne argued that the official South Australian election campaign blacked out all the major issues confronting the working class, including the war on Iran and its impact on workers here. None of the major parties contesting the election—Labor, Liberals, One Nation, the Greens—even raised it during the campaign.

That was because, as Byrne explained, “they all defend the same fundamental program: the subordination of every social need to the demands of Australian capitalism, its corporations, its banks and its military alliances.” The entire political establishment is united in supporting the program of war, austerity and repression.

Byrne detailed that the Albanese Labor government's active support for the US-Israeli destruction of Iran was connected to its broader integration into US-led war plans, particularly aimed at China in this region. He explained that the military build-up in Australia, including the AUKUS pact and hundreds of billions devoted to nuclear submarines, has been accelerated by Labor, including the Malinauskas government in South Australia, a state which is viewed as a central “construction and basing hub for the US war machine in the Indo-Pacific.”

This militarist agenda is producing a rapidly developing social crisis for workers. Byrne listed the skyrocketing figures for the cost of living, fuel prices, median home prices, poverty and unemployment, which stands at roughly 20 percent in working-class areas like Elizabeth.

Byrne stated that the SEP was the only party telling workers that none of the issues facing them would be resolved by the election. Whatever the election's outcome, the SEP had warned that the new government would be tasked with intensifying the assault on workers' living standards and basic rights amid the development of war globally and the breakdown of world capitalism. Although not standing in the election, the SEP was alone in raising the issue of war.

The main report was delivered by SEP and IYSSE member Morgan Peach. He explained that the war on Iran “marked a major turning point in world politics,” as the sharpest expression of a historic crisis wracking the whole capitalist system, threatening to drag humanity into a disastrous third world war.

Peach explained that the war was launched by the aspiring fascist dictator Trump with the aim of securing dominance over the Middle East, through regime change in Iran and the broader reshaping of the region to meet the needs of American capitalism. This was “part of a plan for the redivision of the

globe to meet the interests of imperialism—and for the US, that means confronting its major rivals, Russia and above all China, its main economic threat.”

Trump’s genocidal threats against Iran, that he would bomb the country “back to the stone ages” and wipe out “an entire civilisation,” signalled that we are living in a period similar to the 1930s, as capitalism resorted to fascism, world war, and the most barbaric violence. Peach said: “This is the kind of language most associated with Hitler and the Nazi regime, but even Hitler felt compelled to utter such words behind closed doors, whereas Trump makes no secret of the real character of the war.”

Peach said that Trump’s flagrant contempt for international law signifies that “the post-war period of international democratic norms is definitively over.” But that does not stem from Trump the deranged individual—his actions are only the most grotesque expression of the trajectory of world capitalism, with all the major imperialist powers, including Australia, aligning with the plunge towards world war.

Peach said Labor’s alignment with the war was “not a mistaken policy” but was because Labor is “a party of imperialist war that has played a key role historically in the defence of the Australian capitalist class and its interests.”

He said that the deterioration of social conditions in Australia will produce major struggles by the working class in the near future. But the key question is how those struggles will be directed and on what political perspective. “The chief conception animating these struggles,” he said, “must be complete independence from the major political parties, which all defend the capitalist system that is hurtling humanity towards disaster.”

The South Australian election result revealed that such a break from the whole establishment is beginning to take place and that workers are looking for a political alternative. The far-right One Nation party, backed by billionaires such as Gina Rinehart, is trying to divert this anger into the reactionary channels of anti-immigrant xenophobia.

Therefore, the critical issue, Peach said, is building a socialist movement against the entire parliamentary set-up. “But the question emerges, who is the genuine socialist tendency fighting to build such a movement? On that basis, it is important to clarify the role played by such organisations as Socialist Alternative, which stood in the election as the SA Socialists.”

He outlined the pseudo-left’s “parochialism and parliamentarism” in the South Australian election, promoting the fraud that “reformist election campaigns, aimed at electing its candidates, will compel the political establishment, above all Labor, to shift to the left and implement limited reforms.” This chloroforms workers as to the international breakdown of capitalism and ties them to the two-party system.

He also explained Socialist Alternative’s position on the Iran war, which is to downplay its significance and “peddle the

nationalist line that Australia must break its alliance with US imperialism, a line that does nothing to resolve the danger of world war or advance a struggle against imperialism.”

Peach elaborated a genuine socialist program. “The only way the war in Iran can be stopped, and the disaster of world war be averted, is through the ending of the capitalist profit system by the international working class on a socialist program to seize power out of the hands of the warmongering capitalist oligarchy. And the only party advancing this perspective is the SEP, the Australian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement.”

The reports prompted a wide-ranging discussion by participants, most of whom had never attended an SEP meeting. Questions that were raised included the history of the Iran war and how it was connected to the decades of US aggression in the Middle East under the banner of a “war on terror.” Another question was how a workers’ revolution could develop. One attendee asked how people who are drawn to left-wing politics can be won to the SEP and a genuine socialist perspective.

Most of those attending stayed behind to have further discussion with the SEP, browse the literature table, and find out how they could become more involved.

Those who live in South Australia and want to help build the SEP there should contact us via the information below.

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