

Thousands protest in New Zealand on third anniversary of Gaza genocide

Tom Peters
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Thousands of people joined marches across New Zealand on October 10 as part of global demonstrations against the Gaza genocide. More than 23 protests were organised across the country, with thousands attending in the main centres of Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

The event marked three years since Israel launched its genocidal war against the Palestinian people, with the full support of the United States and its allies. The Gaza Strip has been reduced to rubble, with 70 percent of its territory now occupied by the Israeli military. More than 74,300 Palestinians have been confirmed dead and the real toll is likely in the hundreds of thousands, including tens of thousands of children.

Israel has expanded its war into southern Lebanon and is killing and terrorising Palestinians across the West Bank. It has also joined the US imperialist war of aggression against Iran, which has killed thousands and devastated the global economy.

The ongoing global protests show the widespread and undiminished anger and opposition to the genocide and the expanding Middle East war. The events were completely blacked out by New Zealand's corporate and state-run media, which has reported as little as possible on the mass protests over the last three years.

The organisers, including Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa and Justice for Palestine, sought to turn the protests into campaign rallies for the Labour Party and the Greens ahead of the November 7 election.

Addressing the crowd in Auckland, the pseudo-left Socialist Aotearoa leader Joe Carolan said: "Change the government and vote them [the National Party and its allies] out—like they did in New York with Mamdani, the first Muslim socialist [mayor] of New York!"

Zohran Mamdani, a leading member of the

Democratic Socialists of America, has in fact capitulated to Zionist forces in the city. He backtracked on his election promise to arrest the war criminal Benjamin Netanyahu, who was able to deliver a genocidal tirade at the UN General Assembly in New York while police arrested hundreds of protesters outside.

On October 7 Mamdani attended a pro-Zionist rally and was denounced as a "traitor" by hundreds of pro-Palestinian counter-demonstrators. The fake socialist mayor has allocated millions of dollars in public funds to Zionist groups and has repeatedly met with Donald Trump to whitewash the president's fascist agenda.

Socialist Aotearoa's promotion of Labour and the Greens as a "humane" alternative to the current government is equally fraudulent. The middle-class group aims to prevent the building of a socialist movement against imperialist war by channelling all opposition into support for pro-imperialist parties.

The Auckland rally was addressed by Labour's foreign affairs spokesperson Vanushi Walters, who wrote on social media that "Labour will recognise Palestine. We will place economic sanctions on Israel" and support South Africa's case in the International Court of Justice that Israel has committed genocide.

This is sheer hypocrisy. The Labour Party led the government when Israel began its carpet-bombing of Gaza, and its then Prime Minister Chris Hipkins endorsed the genocidal war as "self-defence." If elected, Labour will continue to strengthen New Zealand's alliance with the US, which is an equal partner in the genocide. Washington is unleashing war across the Middle East, Latin America, against Russia, and is preparing for war against China with the support of allies including NZ.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with several

people attending the protest in Wellington, where about 4,000 people marched from parliament to Civic Square.

Matt said the scale and duration of the genocide had been “even worse than our worst fears. My wife is from Gaza, a lot of her family still live there. Some of them have been killed in airstrikes, a lot of them had to leave Gaza as refugees. It’s been absolutely shattering for her family.

“One of the biggest criticisms we’ve had of our government is that it hasn’t enabled refugees to come to New Zealand, even when they have connections like my wife.”

Matt denounced the National-led government for refusing to even call Israel’s actions a genocide, saying it showed “a lack of spine.” He added, “There’s a lot of vested interests in terms of foreign policy. They want to maintain their relationship with the US.” New Zealand’s delegation to the UN was not among the dozens that walked out during Netanyahu’s speech.

He agreed that Labour “did nothing” when it was in government and said its current position was “too late.”

Shaimaa said when the genocide began she did not expect it would last this long. “There is no accountability because the US government is backing Israel. Netanyahu is a war criminal, but lots of war criminals are presidents,” she said.

Shaimaa noted that in October 2023, “both Labour and National said, ‘Yes, Israel has the right to defend itself.’ Then Labour changed its position after some time,” when it was no longer the government. “I don’t know if they have the spine” to sanction Israel, she said, adding that she did not expect “drastic changes” from the election but hoped that Labour’s allies in parliament (the Greens and Te Pahi Mori) would pressure it to act.

She pointed out that Israel was “not shy about saying the main goal” of the genocide and many soldiers wore a patch on their uniforms showing an expanded “greater Israel.”

Shaimaa denounced the dictatorships throughout the Middle East, including Egypt, for enabling Israel. “I cannot hold a flag like this in the Middle East, otherwise I can disappear. Arab governments detain people who support Palestine.”

Keiko, a student at Victoria University of Wellington, said Israel had only been able to continue its genocide for three years because “America is

funding so much of their weapons. If America wasn’t giving them so much money, maybe they wouldn’t be doing this on such a huge scale.”

She added that “the Israeli government realises they can get away with anything” and said it was “terrible” that Netanyahu was able to attend the UN: “that guy should be arrested.” Asked whether she agreed that workers should strike to stop the supply of weapons to Israel’s war machine, Keiko said this was “a great idea.”

On the New Zealand government, Keiko said: “They’re supporting the genocide, they’re complicit in it. They’re trying to suck up to Trump.” She said sanctioning Israel is the “bare minimum” that should be done. She was not optimistic that Labour would change anything if elected.

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