

workers power

National march
for Palestine

28.10.23

STOP THE GAZA MASSACRE

End UK support for Israel's war! No co-operation with occupation!

Israel's bloody assault on Gaza has provoked the biggest antiwar protests since 2003. Hundreds of thousands marched in London and tens of thousands around the UK to condemn Israel's war and demand the government end its complicity in the war and occupation of Palestine.

The sympathy of the great majority of working class and young people with the Palestinians stands in marked contrast to the political representatives of the British establishment.

Rishi Sunak declared his 'unconditional support' for Israel, adding 'we want you to win'. When Keir Starmer was asked by LBC radio host Nick Ferrari whether Israel had the right to impose a siege and cut power and water, the Labour leader said 'I think Israel does have that right'.

The statements that Israel must 'uphold international law' only exposes the cynical disregard for human rights where these conflict with the objectives of the western imperialists and their Zionist ally.

Britain complicit in war crimes

UK politicians who defend Israel's 'right to self-defence' are complicit in Israel's collective punishment of Gaza's civilian population—a war crime under international law. The same politicians who sign off hundreds of millions of pounds worth of weapons exports to Israel every year are complicit in Israel's illegal settlement and occupation of

the West Bank and Golan Heights.

Israel's crimes against the Palestinians are committed in full view of the world. It is the last acceptable settler-colony. Since the end of WW2, it has been defended by the United States and the UK because it aids their control of the Middle East's trade routes and resources by acting as guarantor for its sponsors' 'order'.

That is why the British political class and media have supported Israel's attempt to brand the Palestine solidarity movement 'antisemitic' for criticising the crimes of Zionism. It's why home secretary Suella Braverman is urging the police to crack down on demonstrations against Israel's war. Our rulers aren't motivated by sympathy with Jewish people, but by the solidarity of imperialist thieves with their regional clients.

Britain is a junior but vital partner to US imperialism. The UK's role in facilitating the founding of the Zionist state, from the formulation of the policy by the notorious antisemite Lord Balfour in 1917 to the 1948 Nakba and beyond, is why British people have a special responsibility to act in

solidarity with the Palestinians' legitimate fight for liberation.

The long experience of the British working class in fighting the crimes of our imperialist rulers, from opposition to the occupation of the Six Counties and the struggle against South African apartheid, to the antiwar movement of 2001–3, explains why Palestine can draw on a deep reservoir of support here.

International solidarity

The demonstrations in the UK and the millions more around the world will serve to encourage fighters for Palestinian liberation everywhere, not least in the so-called democracies of France and Germany where demonstrations have been banned.

Demonstrations are a key first step, but with Israel still poised to invade, with the terror bombing intensifying, with the western powers standing by while Gaza is levelled, we need to step up the pressure. We need to pass onto action.

A key first step is to take up the appeal for solidarity by Palestinian trade unions which calls on the trade union movement to refuse to build or transport weapons to Israel, to act against companies complicit in the siege of Gaza, and pressure governments to cease military aid to Israel. Every trade union branch should pass resolutions demanding their leadership's back practical action in solidarity with Palestine.

Action committees that bring together the PSC groups with trade union and Labour party branches, students' groups, Muslim and black organisations, migrant and refugee campaigns, Jewish antizionist groups, can organise walkouts, demonstrations, and a workers' boycott of anything that aids the Israeli occupation.

Workers' action in the UK has a vital role to play in weakening the axis of imperialism that has partitioned and subjugated the Middle East for over a century. Faced with the horrific suffering in Gaza, the widespread calls for a ceasefire and a 'political solution' to the conflict by recognizing a Palestinian state are understandable but misguided. The call for a two state solution is in fact a call on the Palestinians to abandon their legitimate struggle against ethnic cleansing and for the right of refugees to return.

The need for a socialist solution

The Oslo Accords are dead. There can be no return to the status quo. The idea of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel was always a ploy designed to buy off parts of the Palestinian leadership while Israel blockaded Gaza and transformed the West Bank into an archipelago of enclaves under the guns of Israeli settlers.

The reality is there is already only one state between the Jordan and the Mediterranean. It is the apartheid Zionist settler state, which oppresses the Palestinian people and denies millions of refugees the right to return.

Israel is not defending the democratic rights of its population. It is defending its 'right' to dispossess and expel the Palestinians from Israel and exploit the West Bank and Gaza as internal colonies within an Apartheid state.

The Palestinians have every right to resist this fate by any means necessary. As long as the Zionist state exists as a settler colony, there can be no justice and no peace in Israel-Palestine. That is why we say—from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!

The only progressive solution is the fight to overthrow that state and replace it one that guarantees the democratic, national, and religious rights of all its residents. The right of return, democratic control of the land, and no privileges for any people demands the end of Zionist apartheid, private ownership, and imperialism.

That is why the Zionist state must be smashed, and capitalism overthrown and replaced with a socialist workers' Palestine.

FOR WORKERS' SANCTIONS AGAINST ISRAEL'S WAR

Cut the supply chains, stop the factories and boats, cut the funding!

Palestinian trade unions have issued a call for solidarity from the international labour movement, calling on workers to refuse to build or transport weapons to Israel, to break links with companies complicit in the occupation, and pressure their governments to end military trade and funding to Israel.

Israel carries out the colonisation of Palestine and the collective punishment of those who resist under the cover of unconditional military, financial and diplomatic support from the western powers.

The huge demonstrations against Israel's war demonstrate the gulf that separates the mass of ordinary workers and young people from our rulers' 'unconditional support' for Israel's crimes.

Faced with the UK's complicity with Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza, it is the duty of the British labour movement to act on the appeal for solidarity from our Palestinian sisters and brothers.

This takes on even more importance faced with the Labour party leadership's attempt to silence internal criticism of its pro-Zionist policy and ban public expressions of solidarity with Palestine.

A workers' embargo

Last Friday, the RMT union's National Executive Committee voted to support moves by railway workers to block arms shipments to Israel. All transport workers, including those in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, should refuse to handle goods or perform duties that could aid the Israeli war effort.

A first step has been taken by young trade unionists who blockaded a subsidiary of Israeli arms company Elbit in Kent on Thursday morning. Elbit has been the target

of a long running campaign by direct action group Palestine Action in Leicester, Bristol and elsewhere.

The value of UK military exports to Israel is low compared to other countries. But the UK hosts an arms industry of world importance, providing access to skilled workers, a chain of production, and research, exchange and collaboration with Israel's two most important security partners, the US and UK. This gives the UK importance to the Israeli war machine well beyond the monetary value of exports.

All Israel-UK trade contributes to supporting or legitimising Israel's occupation. But Israel is now a developed capitalist country, exporting pharmaceuticals, luxury goods and industrial products. Consumer boycotts are ineffective because they can't really dent the bosses' pockets, and, more importantly, they limit solidarity to the sphere of individual acts of conscience, instead of opening the road of struggle for workers' control in the workplace.

What we need is a campaign of workers' sanctions to boycott the production, transport and sale of all trade with the Apartheid state. Transport, logistics and distribution workers and their unions have the power to exercise supervision and control over goods bound for and from Israel. No worker should have to take responsibility for propping up an Israeli economy based on the expropriation, exploitation and plunder of the Palestinians.

The anti-union laws make such 'secondary action' illegal. They are designed to prevent workers taking effective solidarity action, not just within Britain, but internationally. But mass action can render the laws unenforceable. Trade union leaders should support all unofficial action and call on the TUC to back workers' sanctions against the apartheid state. At a minimum, Labour affiliated unions should speak out and demand Keir Starmer retract his shameful support for Israel's genocidal war. If he doesn't, unions should withhold funds and support.

The fight for effective solidarity with Palestine shows how workers can make the idea that 'their struggle is our struggle' reality, not just a slogan. Effective action means defying an unjust law, but it also means breaking with the trade union leaders who, when the time comes for action not words, put legality, and loyalty to capitalism and the British state before international solidarity. To fight for workers' control over production and transport means fighting for workers' control over our unions.

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