

Youth, students and workers in Australia and New Zealand support global IYSSE anti-war webinar

Our reporters
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IYSSE campaigns in Australia and New Zealand to build tomorrow's global online anti-war webinar have received support from students, youth and workers.

The IYSSE webinar, "For a mass movement of youth and students to stop the war in Ukraine!", will take place at 5 a.m. (AEDT) on Sunday, December 11. Socialists from around the world will present a revolutionary perspective to end imperialist war.

Campaigners discussed with workers and young people the IYSSE's statement, "A call to youth throughout the world: Build a mass movement to stop the Ukraine war!" It warns of the danger of a nuclear catastrophe driven by the breakdown of capitalism and led by US imperialism, if it is not halted by a socialist movement of the working class.

In Australia's second-largest city, Melbourne, IYSSE members met Brodie, a musician and retail worker. He said: "War in general is always useless. What does it solve? It's just senseless violence in the name of capitalism. It's useless to kill innocent civilians."

He noted that the US becoming more directly involved in the Ukraine war "will end badly. You've got to think about the US as having an agenda towards its own interests. They profit off the war. It's not about defending democracy, it's about making money."

Brodie agreed that capitalism is the cause of world war and is keen to learn about the IYSSE's Trotskyist perspective. "Absolutely. Personally, I'm interested in Trotsky and socialism. The capitalist system will always lead to war. It puts profit over people. It's ridiculous. Put people first!"

Panduka, a staff member at the University of Melbourne originally from Sri Lanka, said: "There needs to be a collective global effort to stop this war. If we leave it up to Russia and the US, you will see this war continue and grow."

The university worker said that "US involvement in the war is all about their own geopolitical stronghold they want

to keep. They put forward these reasons like human rights, but I think that's more of a guise."

On the IYSSE's fight to build an international anti-war movement of youth and students oriented to the working class, Panduka said: "Your initiative is great. Any collective movement will contribute in a positive way. The more people join this, the more we can make people aware. It will definitely help in the long run."

IYSSE members also spoke to students at La Trobe University in Melbourne's northern suburbs.

Osman, an international student originally from India studying business, said: "The economic ramifications of this war are hurting the poorest people on the planet, but NATO doesn't care about that."

"I don't like Putin, and I think most people in Russia agree with me. But NATO is not any better. In fact they have a far worse record of war crimes. The US government is selfish, it only gets involved when it suits them. For instance, they turn a blind eye to what's happening to Yemen and Palestine. They are not anti-war. We must start our own movement."

Friedrich, a PhD student from Germany, said "people, and not the ruling class, should get together and discuss and interact and speak to each other to solve the many crises that we have. War is one thing, but still we have other crises like the environmental crisis."

The student denounced the German Greens party which he noted "left behind" any pretension of being anti-war and is now part of Germany's militarist ruling coalition.

Ashlee, a psychology student and member of the IYSSE club executive at La Trobe, submitted a video statement calling on other youth and students to attend the upcoming webinar.

"I fully oppose war for many reasons," Ashlee said. "Not only does it have a negative impact on human lives as a whole, the main impact is on the working-class citizens."

Ashlee commented on the consequences of World War I

and II. “From what I have read, the consequences are absolutely sickening and horrendous, and if a war that size was proposed now, with the technology that is in existence, there would be billions of deaths.”

War, Ashlee said, is the stuff “of nightmares.” She added, “there can be no future when global destruction is on the horizon. I believe in the international movement against war and I will be present for the IYSSE international webinar.”

The IYSSE also campaigned at the JBS Swift meatworks plant in the western Melbourne suburb of Brooklyn. Many workers read the IYSSE statement, expressing support for the building of an anti-war movement.

A taxi driver there to transport workers also spoke with IYSSE campaigners. The driver, originally from Afghanistan, said: “I’m completely opposed to the war. Anyone who says the US and NATO are for ‘defending Ukraine’ is wrong. The war is for profits by the arms manufacturers, and we have to stop it. I will come to your meeting, and I’ll tell my son about it and he’ll come too.”

Lucas, a carpentry tutor in Wellington, New Zealand, said people should attend the meeting (Sunday, December 11 at 7:00 a.m. New Zealand time) to learn the truth about the war. The version presented in the mainstream media, he said, could not be trusted, and people need to understand that the US and its allies had provoked the war and “are escalating it,” using the Ukrainian people “for cannon fodder” against Russia.

“From 2014 until the war started the Ukrainian government was basically trying to ban the Russian language and push the Russians out of the eastern part of the country and ethnically cleanse the area, with artillery and munitions they were getting from NATO,” Lucas said.

He said young people should ask themselves: “Do you want to die in a nuclear war? Because otherwise you’d better start thinking about this more critically... Apart from being immoral, this could affect you personally and you do need to take an interest in it, because nuclear weapons are involved. You should especially be critical about how gung-ho governments are in considering nuclear weapons. My entire life, everyone was much more sensitive about nuclear weapons.”

Asked why New Zealand was backing the US and NATO against Russia, Lucas said: “People are paranoid about the Chinese infiltrating society. But America has so fully infiltrated all of our security services and military apparatus that it makes our foreign policy towards Ukraine basically, by default, American.”

He agreed with the WSWs that New Zealand had its own interests, as a minor imperialist country, in being allied to the United States. “I found out this year that Samoan language week coincides with Samoan independence day,

which was independence from us. So we have our own imperial ambitions, as Australia does in Papua New Guinea and East Timor.”

Lewis, a recent graduate from Victoria University of Wellington and a supporter of the Socialist Equality Group, said the US and European powers “are going to drive Russia to a radical response that would plunge the world into a great catastrophe, and the working class is going to bear the brunt on this.”

He said it was a “misconception that this is Russia, plain and simple, trying to take over Ukraine. That’s obviously not the case. NATO has been expanding that way for so long, and clearly this is a response from Russia. Of course its invasion is bad, but all states around the world would respond in a similar way.”

Rather than lining up with imperialism, young people and workers should “try and spread the message of working class unity. The working class in Ukraine and Russia need to come together to fight against the ruling class.” Lewis said appeals to the United Nations would not stop the war. “There’s all sorts of members on the Security Council who have their own interests. Look at the UN’s track record in Bosnia and Yugoslavia. Their interventions in the past have caused massive bloodshed.”

Lewis pointed out that the New Zealand Labour government has invited Ukraine’s president Zelensky to address parliament next week, “because they’re aligned with NATO’s mission, and with Ukrainian fascists and nationalists. That’s the only way I can interpret it. They wouldn’t be inviting him to say: ‘let’s broker a deal to stop this war.’”

Register here to attend the IYSSE webinar, “For a mass movement of youth and students to stop the war in Ukraine!”, on Sunday 11 December, 5:00 a.m. (AEDT).



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