

Workers and young people in Sheffield and Leeds, UK demand an end to Israel's genocide in Gaza

Our reporters

12 November 2023

Members of the Socialist Equality Party attended demonstrations against Israel's genocide in Gaza held Saturday in Sheffield and Leeds, interviewing workers and young people for the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS).

Sheffield

Jenny, an unemployed worker, told the WSWS, "The current bombardment isn't the first they've committed against Gaza. It's a gross overreaction and involves inflicting an unjustifiable level of violence. For comparison, imagine if a mass shooting in the USA was responded to by deciding to destroy the city where it happened and kill everyone in it.

"It's part of a broader, long-term plan. The Israelis want the Palestinians gone. They're an inconvenience to them and the governments that back them, including ours. They'd prefer them not to exist. If they can be killed or evicted, then it's all good as far as they're concerned.

"Figures from the Israeli government have called for the wiping out of the people in Gaza. They don't realise how it appears outside their circle of supporters and in other countries.

"The home secretary [Suella Braverman] wants to ban these protests because she knows the government is unpopular. This is part of their recent strategy because so much of what they do solicits such a bad reaction from the people they rule. Their only way to deal with that is to make it illegal. They know they've lost the argument on so many issues, including Palestine, the environment, etc."

Bob, a student, said Israel was committing "multiple atrocities a day, war crimes, massacring civilians and using phosphorus on them ...that's just not right and I really want it to stop."

In response to the Socialist Equality Party's call for the international working class to be mobilised to stop the war in Gaza, Bob replied, "I think that would be a really good idea. That's something I'd like to see happen. I agree with that. I think the people on the top make all the decisions. We don't really have a say at the end of the day. We claim to be a democracy but we're not, I don't think."

Mahsood explained, "This is my first protest. One of the reasons I'm participating is that the government wants to ban these demonstration. This is a democracy and we have the right to do this. I want to play a small part in opposing this.

"It's disgusting that Labor Party leader Keir Starmer has a law background, but even he's not asking for a ceasefire. He hasn't really backed down from this stance.

"Any kind of mass movement to stop the atrocities is welcome. The governments aren't doing anything. They're trying to keep everything quiet for as long as possible. The workers have to do something.

"If dock workers in Spain and Belgium are taking action to oppose this, then it certainly should be done here, too. People should be raising their voices. Those in power can't remain in place."

Ayan, a secondary school teacher, said she would "never vote for Labour again because of Starmer's support for collective punishment.

She added that it was "really important for workers to come together and stop arming Israel. Working-class people need to come together, striking would make a difference. The taxpayers' money is going to the

government and that is supporting the weapons going to Israel used against the Palestinians in Gaza.”

Ryan described how “We’re seeing people dying before our very eyes. It’s difficult to know what to do. And if all we can do is make our voices heard and make the government listen to us, then that is what we need to do.”

Responding to the call for a socialist solution to the war based on the international working class, he told the WSWS, “I was speaking to someone earlier about this. I think the game is rigged. We’re all told that the way to progress is to work hard and do what the system tells us and everything will be fine. But I think we’re seeing more and more that it’s a lie. And actually, it is us, the people working on the ground, who are making the money for other people.

“The cost-of-living crisis, recession, genocide. The game is to divide us all. So if we can unify we’re going to be much stronger together than we are as individuals.

Nasser attended with his friend Basel. He urged, “We have to stop this now otherwise it will accelerate and get worse. Killing kids, killing women, and killing older people. Destroying churches, mosques, hospitals, schools, and everything in the Gaza Strip. Why? Because they are resisting the occupation. We’re going to resist as much as we can.

“All my family are in Gaza; my wife’s family are there. Most of them have been killed inside their houses. The Israeli minister said we are animal people. We are not. We are equal, like English people. We’re not looking for war, we are not looking for blood. We want peace and freedom. We are very, very proud of all the people who have come out to the protests.

“We do not like the action of the government; all their actions support Israel. We ask all working people in the world to stop manufacturing and supplying Israel with weapons.

“[Prime Minister] Rishi Sunak and the home secretary don’t listen, they have their own agenda. It’s double standards. In Ukraine, they supported them immediately and sent them plenty of weapons, while they treat the Palestinians the opposite way.”

and to say we are against the war in Gaza and call for a ceasefire.

“I am a mum, I have kids and it kills me and makes me really sad to see innocent kids, innocent babies dying—the worst death you can think of. They are either going to be crushed under the buildings or die of hunger and thirst. I heard today that electricity had been cut at a hospital and that some babies were dying because of the lack of electricity.

“It is really strange seeing all the people, the majority of people, are out asking for a ceasefire and our governments are still against a ceasefire. We shouldn’t be supporting weapons for this war.”

“People should go and read history and the cause of the Palestinians. Be open-minded, don’t be taken in by what is being said in the media.”

Scarlet, a student, explained, “I am studying a module on genocide and what we can see when we look at genocide in the past, whether it’s the Holocaust or Rwanda or Cambodia, we can see there is a direct parallel with what is happening in Israel right now. Dehumanization has already happened; it is getting to the mass killing. They are killing journalists, they’re killing children, they’re killing civilians. They are keeping people in prisons without fair trial.

“I think it is important to look at the past so that we can stop such things going on in the future. It is important for people to know that this isn’t a one-off thing. It has been happening for 75 years and it is going to continue to happen if the West funds Israel’s genocide.

“The working class are the backbone of the country; they have always been the backbone of the country. So, when the working class gets engaged in politics like this, that is when the Tories are going get scared, when the working class all unite in one front then they know that they will never be in power again. But until the working class unites it will stay the same way.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

Leeds

Alaa told the WSWS, “We come to express our opinion