

Demonstrations across Australia oppose attack on Gaza Hospital, demand release of health workers

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Last week, Australian health workers joined global demonstrations opposing Israel's destruction of Kamal Adwan Hospital, the last functioning medical facility in northern Gaza.

In a brutal raid, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) evicted 350 patients from the facility, depriving an estimated 75,000 in northern Gaza of their last possible source of healthcare. Some 240 hospital staff were arrested by the IDF, including hospital director Dr Hussam Abu Safiya, a paediatrician widely respected for his dedication to the health of children in Gaza.

Demonstrations were held in Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane. They called for an end to attacks on health workers, the release of Dr Safiya and his colleagues, and denounced Israel's efforts to destroy Gaza's civil infrastructure and prevent essential aid from entering.

In Brisbane, despite short notice, nearly 200 attended a protest vigil in King George Square in the city's CBD on 3 January. The vigil's speakers were introduced by Dr Yassmin Khadra, a Palestinian doctor, who denounced the complicity of Australian governments in the genocide, and the silence of official health bodies.

Dr Zewlan Moor, one of a group of Australia doctors who have been targeted by local Zionists, gave a speech which raised critical political issues.

Speaking as a "doctor, a mother, and a socialist," Moor condemned the genocide, and drew attention to Israel's atrocities in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria. These were part of a broader imperialist war drive globally, including US-led "threats escalating against Iran, the launching of long-range missiles into Russia and a continual propaganda campaign against China."

Moor said "all sides of the official political spectrum, because they are working in the capitalist framework,

support war and genocide. No matter who the individual leaders involved are, it will not make one iota of difference. This is why we can see that the imperialist war project intensifies and will do so further under Trump."

To applause from the audience, Moor declared, "The medical representative bodies, such as the AMA [Australian Medical Association], are useless. They won't even defend their own members... let alone call for the safety of humanitarian doctors volunteering in Gaza, against the deliberate targeting of Palestinian and Lebanese doctors and the collective punishment of innocent civilians of Gaza."

She continued, "What of the more powerful nurses and midwives unions around the country? What have they done to educate their members about their health care worker brothers and sisters in Gaza? From the recent strikes in NSW, it appears they are too busy suppressing their own members' struggles for improved working conditions."

Moor called on those in attendance to draw conclusions from the experiences of the past year. "We've been out protesting, weekly to fortnightly, all around Australia and the world, appealing to the existing political order. Every time we come, we ask for Albanese to change policies. But nothing happens. The entire political establishment, including the UN and international courts will not do a thing.

"There may be a warrant out for Netanyahu's arrest, but that will never be executed. And Biden, Sunak, Starmer, Albanese and Wong will not be brought to justice. How do we know that? Because Obama and Cheney are not behind bars."

The genocide was systemic, Moor said. "There's a

growing radicalisation in the community and I hear people saying that capitalism is the problem. But people seem to be stuck on seeking social-democratic reforms to capitalism, while still working within the capitalist system. Well I'm sorry, but that is how we got here today."

A unified movement of the working class had to be developed on a new basis. "We believe in the unity of the Muslim, Christian, Jewish and secular workers in Israel. Like everywhere else around the world, there are class divisions in Israeli society, and the working class are cannon fodder for US imperialism.

"Similarly in Ukraine, where the people are being used as cannon fodder for the US/NATO proxy war against Russia. We can't separate the horror of Gaza from Ukraine. Gaza is a warning of what Imperialism is willing to do to maintain its hegemony."

Other speakers at the vigil, including two medical doctors and a nurse spoke movingly of Dr Safiya's work in caring for the children of Gaza, having been born himself in Gaza's Jabalia refugee camp in 1973. They raised criticisms of the health unions, and medical specialist bodies for failing to defend doctors, nurses, and others from being attacked and killed, describing it as a betrayal of all health workers.

The nurse who spoke opposed the false conflation of antisemitism with opposition to the Israeli war crimes. As a Jewish health worker, she condemned the war crimes committed against Palestinians in Gaza and denounced any effort to present them as part of a defence of Jewish people.

After the vigil, WSWS reporters spoke with attendees.

Carl, an IT worker said that he had attended the vigil "because I felt I must do something... this is the least that I can do [to oppose the genocide]." He said that the genocide was, "about colonialist control of the Middle East... to expand the footprint of the US and rule over the Middle East by fear." He said that "change had to come from the bottom up" against war.

Sarah came to the vigil because, "as a nurse and a healthcare worker I am horrified and revolted at what I see happening." She appreciated Moor "calling out the nurses and midwives union for not doing anything to stop the genocide," and said that despite intimidation at work, more health workers "are seeing what's happening in Gaza and speaking out against it."

In Melbourne, a crowd of hundreds gathered at the Victoria State Library. In Sydney, about 60 health workers and their supporters demonstrated outside the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

The demonstrations, all arranged on short notice, took place under conditions where all the major capitalist parties and the corporate media in Australia are fully behind Israel in supporting the genocide. Nearly a week after the protests, they have barely been mentioned in major Australian newspapers.

The protests underscore the ongoing opposition of working people to the war crimes. This must be transformed into a socialist movement of the working class, directed against the entire eruption of imperialist militarism and its source, the capitalist system itself.



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