

# Large protests in Australia against oppression of Aboriginal people, Gaza genocide

Eric Ludlow  
30 January 2025

Tens of thousands of protesters joined rallies across Australia on Sunday against the oppression of the country's indigenous population and the imperialist-backed Israeli genocide against the Palestinians.

The annual events have over the years become known as "Invasion Day" rallies, held in opposition to the official "Australia Day" celebrations. Australia Day marks the British colonisation of the continent on January 26, 1788 and is used to celebrate nationalism and militarism.

Protesters of all cultural backgrounds gathered, reflecting broad hostility to the brutal social conditions inflicted on Aboriginal people in Australia. Demonstrations were held in all the major capital cities as well as regional centres. In Melbourne, more than 30,000 protested, while about 10,000 gathered in Sydney and 5,000 in Brisbane.

As at last year's Invasion Day rallies, many attendees expressed their hostility to the oppression of both Aboriginal people in Australia and the Palestinians. Among the handmade banners were those that included both Aboriginal and Palestinian flags as well as those that read "Genocide here, genocide there," "Stop celebrating genocide" and "No pride in genocide."

Other protesters held homemade signs which read "Build schools not prisons" and "Stop black deaths in custody."

Small hordes of neo-Nazis attempted to disrupt the demonstrations with vile, racist counter-protests. In Adelaide, the capital of South Australia, at least 16 fascists were arrested for various offences including loitering and resisting arrest.

The fact that such counter-protests emerged at all is a reflection of the rightward shift in official politics and the conscious turn by the ruling elite internationally to authoritarian and dictatorial forms of rule amid an

escalating social crisis and growing working-class opposition to the political status quo.

While the attendance at the Invasion Day protests revealed a yearning for a unified struggle against all forms of racism and oppression, the leaders of the marches and speakers subjected the demonstrators to divisive racialist politics.

Speakers promoted black nationalism and blamed "whites" for the dispossession of the indigenous population. That is a cover for the responsibility of capitalism, which the black nationalists themselves defend and support.

The reactionary character of the racial line was highlighted by the promotion of anti-immigrant xenophobia, which dovetails with the positions of the major capitalist parties and the far right. One speaker in Brisbane even denounced the Queensland state Liberal National Party premier, David Crisafulli, on the basis that he was a "first-generation" immigrant. Another declared that only an indigenous prime minister could rectify social injustice.

The rallies took place more than a year after the debacle of the Labor government's Voice to parliament referendum. Many protesters, particularly middle-class layers, had voted in favour of the Voice in the false belief that the proposal would go some way to improving conditions for Aboriginal people.

The true aim of the Voice was to divide workers along racial lines, further entrench the position of a privileged indigenous elite and put a false "progressive" gloss on a government committed to war and austerity.

The Voice was overwhelmingly voted against by the population. The "No" vote does not, as is claimed by the racialist leaderships of the "Invasion Day" protests, represent a mass racist sentiment in Australia. It

reflected a sharp class divide and correct scepticism that the Voice would do anything to ameliorate the worsening social conditions of working-class people of all ethnicities and backgrounds.

Several speakers promoted the black nationalist demand for a “treaty” with Aboriginal people and for “restitution” and “reparations” to be paid by ordinary non-Aboriginal Australians through taxes.

In Sydney, Adrian Burragubba said: “It’s time now for this government, and any progressive government, to start thinking about paying restitution... it’s time to pay up now.”

Both a treaty and restitution would be an anti-democratic deal between the indigenous elite and the capitalist state, which is responsible for the continued oppression of the Aboriginal people.

A treaty would leave intact the profit system and the state’s institutions of repression. In countries, like New Zealand, where treaties were enacted, inequality has soared within indigenous communities and the fundamental social issues remain unresolved.

Restitution would constitute the handing over of unfettered land rights to the Aboriginal leadership, enabling them to strike lucrative deals with corporations including mining companies. Where land rights exist, the indigenous elites collaborate with the mining barons, as well as defence, enriching themselves while the vast mass remain in dire poverty.

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) alone raised the fundamental class questions at the rallies on Sunday. SEP members exposed the bankruptcy of appealing to the Labor government. They drew attention to the fawning embrace by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Foreign Minister Penny Wong of the fascistic Trump administration, which is implementing sweeping attacks on the basic rights of US workers, including targeted attacks against immigrants and mass deportations.

Similarly, they pointed out that the Gaza genocide—aided and abetted by the Albanese Labor government—is a crime of capitalism and a warning that the imperialist powers have no “red lines” as they advance their interests on the whole world’s population.

The alternatives confronting ordinary people were socialism or barbarism, the SEP campaigners stressed.

**Nik**, who is 50 years old and works in the arts

industry, attended the Melbourne rally after being politicised by the genocide in Gaza.

She told an SEP campaigner she joined the rally because “it would be hypocritical of me to just be narrow minded about Palestine when the whole world is going through the same thing with colonisation.”

Asked about US imperialism’s support for the genocide, she said: “Americans are starving. There’s the rich, and there’s the very poor. It’s hard to wonder why they donate so much to Israel. It’s all about power. It’s all about controlling the Middle East.”

Pointing to the agenda behind the media’s constant claims that opposition to the genocide constitutes antisemitism, she said: “They’re trying to condition the masses to be scared of people who are protesting.

“I don’t think you can reform the capitalists. I think there needs to be a big overthrow.”



To contact the WSW and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**