

Liberal outrage won't stop Gaza massacre

Organise the anti-imperialist struggle!

Israel is raining death and fire on Gaza, murdering children and innocents by the thousands. In the Western world, individuals and groups who dare to stand up against this ethnic cleansing are being banned and arrested. Pro-Palestine demonstrations have been made illegal in France and Germany, in the latter with the support of the established left. While the world seems to be going mad, many feel powerless.

What to do? Those of us in imperialist countries who want to fight are told that the way to resist is to refuse to be silenced. To post on social media, to denounce, to be outraged. Many on the left have made it their main task to “speak up” about the oppression of Palestinians. Talk about the number of dead and the biases and hypocrisy of the media, remind people of the horrors of the Nakba, the deadly occupation of the West Bank and its illegal Israeli settlements. The more outrage, the better. And meanwhile, we are just supposed to continue watching news coverage of the horrors, with the hope that the world comes to its senses.

Let's get real for a second: liberal outrage, social media posts, calling out the BBC and writing long descriptions of the very real horrors suffered by Palestinians won't change a damn thing. Joe Biden, Rishi Sunak, Olaf Scholz, Emmanuel Macron and all the imperialist robbers of the “international community” lording over the world and helping Israel in its murderous enterprise will not suddenly come to reason because the “good people” showed that genocide is taking place.

The imperialist rulers know full well what is going on and have decided to draw a red line: anyone who refuses to fully support Israel's carpet-bombing of Gaza risks being branded as an anti-Semite or terrorist sympathiser. Those who want to fight for Palestine must drop all illusions in the imperialist governments and the UN, which have made clear where they stand. What is needed is not liberal outrage or keeping “our” governments accountable to “international law” (which they always violate anyway—remember Iraq). *What is needed is working-class actions against imperialism!*

The organised working class is the only force that can really defeat the murderous policy of the imperialists and take a real step towards stopping the current massacre. Trade unions must take concrete action to stop arms shipments to

Israel. Armaments are built by workers, they are transported by rail and truck and are loaded in ports on ships, all manned by workers. The unions must also take actions (not just offer words) against the repression of pro-Palestinian groups and demonstrations. Strikes must be prepared and launched against the endorsement of ethnic cleansing by “our” imperialist governments. One solid strike against the government would help Palestine a thousand times more than any liberal truth-seeker tweeting about the bias of the BBC.

But the trade union leaders have done *none of this*. In Britain, they have now started issuing tepid statements condemning violence and death on both sides. Some go further and condemn the occupation and bombing of Gaza. But what have they done to initiate *real* trade union action against this? You guessed it...nothing.

The reason is quite simple: it's because the workers movement is led by people who support imperialism. And since opposing Israel and supporting Palestine's liberation is a red line for the ruling class, they refuse to cross it. The task for socialists is to fight to win over the workers movement to the cause of Palestinian liberation, and for a *break* with all supporters of the Zionist state and imperialism. But to do this, one must understand how the labour movement works.

How the British labour movement supports Zionism

What we are witnessing is a perfect example of how British labour politics has worked since the Second World War. It all starts in the Oval Office in Washington, DC, which is where the British ruling class gets its instructions from. And on 7 October, they were clear: full support to Israel.

The Tories then forward the memo to the leadership of the Labour Party, which is told to toe the line. Upon receiving this, Labour Party leader Sir Keir Starmer has two things on his mind: the opinion of the City of London (which is really Washington's opinion) and avoiding at all costs the fate of the last party leader. Keir is determined not to slip up on this one: he declares his support to the “right” of Israel to starve 2.3 million Palestinians to death (11 October LBC interview).

The message is then received by the leaders of the trade

unions. They have poured millions into Labour’s coffers, and Starmer is their only hope to have a seat at the future government’s table. The last TUC Congress saw an outpouring of support for Starmer and it even endorsed NATO’s war in Ukraine as a bonus, thanks to the support of Sharon Graham’s Unite, among others.

So the union leaders respond to the instructions: they will keep their organisations on a tight leash. They cannot come out openly for Israel but they can bury the question, or maybe say a few empty words against civilian deaths on both sides. No more than that.

Then there are the “lefts” in the trade unions, who can sometimes cause a bit of trouble. (As for the “lefts” in the Labour Party, they are now totally irrelevant, eg Zarah Sultana.) There are a few such types in unions like the RMT, the NEU, the UCU, etc. But as long as they bark but don’t bite—that is, as long as they keep this imperialist, pro-Israel edifice of class collaboration intact—they are completely harmless. In fact, they give a reddish colouration to the whole thing. And they all end up voting Labour anyway.

It is around those “lefts” that the so-called socialists and “revolutionary” groups gravitate. Their entire activity in the trade union movement consists in supporting—sometimes fully, sometimes critically—this or that militant who talks of class struggle but at the same time maintains unity with the open agents of Israel.

It is this unity, this political bloc, of socialists and working-class leaders with the ruling class itself which prevents any action against British imperialism and against Israel’s current onslaught.

The task for Marxists

Real socialists and those who want to fight for Palestinian liberation in Britain must reject liberal outrage and wage a ruthless struggle inside the workers movement. The task is to build an anti-imperialist pole against the current leaders. *No unity with the supporters of imperialism and the Zionist state!* Such unity means unity with the murderers of Palestinians.

It is precisely the support to Israel by union leaders that divides the working class. As does support to the Hamas butchers, anti-Jewish bigotry and the refusal to recognise the right of Israeli Jews to live as a nation. (See our full position on the current conflict: “Only Death and Defeat with Hamas—A Revolutionary Road for Palestinian Liberation”, *Spartacist* supplement, 10 October.)

Communist work in the trade unions must be directed at pushing forward working-class action against the support of “our own” imperialist government to Israel and in defence of Palestinians. And it must aim to expose the current leaders of the unions, particularly the “left” ones, and unveil how their political bloc with the ruling class makes them agents of the imperialists in the workers movement.

It must also be directed against the self-proclaimed communists who support people like Eddie Dempsey in the RMT, who supports Mick Lynch, who supports Keir Starmer. Against the “socialists” in the NEU (read: Socialist Workers Party) who lawyer for the NEU leadership, which lawyers for Starmer. And against those “socialists” who claim to be for Palestine and against imperialism but who campaign for pro-imperialist Unite leader Sharon Graham (read: *Socialist Appeal*, Socialist Party, Socialist Alternative), or give a platform to people like John McDonnell, left Labour MP who supports NATO and arms shipments to Ukraine.

Those who claim to be for Palestine and against arms shipments to Israel but refuse to denounce and break from the open social-chauvinists are duping the working class. *No unity with the conciliators!*

The task of building an anti-imperialist pole in the trade unions must also include unmasking those on the left who call for the imperialist powers to broker “peace” and a “cease-fire”. This is what Jeremy Corbyn has been promoting and, as events are unfolding, this is becoming a more popular position. Such a position gives the appearance of siding with Palestinians. But a ceasefire solves nothing: it means the continuation of Palestinian oppression and the conditions that led to this crisis in the first place.

There will be no just peace as long as Palestinians are oppressed. And Palestinians will remain oppressed as long as the Zionist state exists. Only a revolutionary solution, that is, the alliance of the Israeli Jewish working class with the Palestinian people against imperialism and their Zionist minions, can bring a lasting peace.

This is the position that socialists must fight for inside the workers movement, as well as inside the movement for Palestinian liberation. Socialists in other organisations must stop and think about the course of their group. If the intervention of socialists at this critical moment is not directed at making the trade union and Palestinian movement revolutionary, at combating and replacing the pro-imperialist and liberal leaders of such movements with Marxists, then it is not socialist!

Only Leninism can rebuild the British trade union movement. As VI Lenin wrote over a century ago:

“Unity with the social-chauvinists means unity with one’s ‘own’ national bourgeoisie, which exploits other nations; it means splitting the international proletariat. This does not mean that a break with the opportunists is immediately possible everywhere; it means only that historically this break is imminent; that it is necessary and inevitable for the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat; that history, which has led us from ‘peaceful’ capitalism to imperialist capitalism, has paved the way for this break.”

— “Opportunism and the collapse of the Second International” (January 1916)



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