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Corporate media censors mass protests against Israeli genocide in Gaza



Some of the protesters at the 20,000 strong protest in Manchester, against Israel's war on Gaza, October 28, 2023

The escalating genocidal war in Gaza, which entered a new and bloodier stage this weekend, has provoked mass outrage throughout the world. Millions have taken to the streets to voice their anger and horror over the thousands already slaughtered in the Israeli air bombardment of Gaza, the siege that is creating mass starvation, and the impending invasion that threatens outright destruction and dispersal of the entire population of the besieged territory.

These protests are delivering a popular verdict against the war crimes being carried out by Israel, with the full backing and participation of the major imperialist powers. A vast chasm has opened up between the capitalist governments, which unanimously support the state of Israel, and the masses of working people.

The world's population are seeing atrocities of staggering dimensions: buildings pulverized by bombs and missiles; hospitals and apartment blocks leveled; children covered in blood, pulled screaming from the rubble; bodies everywhere. These images of genocidal war have a profound effect on consciousness, which cannot be undone by media lies or government propaganda.

This weekend, half a million people took part in a protest in London. Tens of thousands demonstrated in other cities in Europe, with hundreds of thousands in the Arab and other majority-Muslim countries. In the United States, tens of thousands have marched in New York City, Washington, Detroit, Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles, with significant turnouts in hundreds of other cities, both large and small.

One of the most significant aspects of these protests has been the participation of thousands of Jews, particularly Jewish youth. This was seen most dramatically in the takeover of Grand Central Station in Manhattan Friday night, in a sit-in by several thousand called by Jewish Voice for Peace, under the slogan "Not in Our Name."

The outpouring of popular anger in response to the war crimes in Gaza has shaken both the ruling classes and their media servants. They are so frightened that they've decided that the only way to respond is to ignore it and create a counter-reality, manufactured by the media, in which the public supports Israel and its genocidal war on Gaza, and the expressions of mass horror and revulsion simply are not taking place.

The news outlets that set the pace for the American media have imposed a virtual blackout on the protests, limiting their reporting to a handful of online references that are drowned out by the deluge of pro-war coverage, which occupies pages and pages of newsprint and endless hours of television time. There is no reference to the millions who have declared their opposition to the war on Gaza, while there has been non-stop coverage of the October 7 Hamas raid on Israel, the Israeli preparations for war, the bombing campaign,

and the visits by top Western leaders—Biden, Sunak, Scholz, Macron and others—to Jerusalem to declare their unbreakable solidarity with Netanyahu and Israel.

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This weekend, for example, the *New York Times* did not even report on the worldwide anti-war protests in its print editions, limiting its coverage to a small article in its online edition about a pro-Palestinian march across the Brooklyn Bridge. This was relegated to the “New York” section of the online edition, which contains news items of only local interest.

The *Washington Post* adopted a similar policy. It published one roundup of the global protests, in an online opinion column that did not appear in the print edition. CNN published a single item of less than 600 words on its website, compared to endless hours of broadcast time devoted to the Israeli military operations and the Hamas raid.

Twenty years ago, millions around the world marched in protest against the impending US invasion of Iraq, which was widely—and correctly—seen as a brazen war crime. The Bush administration used the 9/11 terror attacks to provide a bogus justification for long-prepared plans to seize Baghdad and loot the country’s vast oil resources.

At that time, the *New York Times* noted, with considerable astonishment: “The fracturing of the Western alliance over Iraq and the huge antiwar demonstrations around the world this weekend are reminders that there may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion.” Translated into class terms, this was a recognition that American imperialism faced a more powerful opponent than any state: the masses of working people all over the world who hate war and oppression in all its forms.

Today, however, the *Times* and its media followers dare not even refer to the burgeoning opposition to the war plans of American imperialism and its Zionist accomplices. This is

not because the position of Washington is stronger, but just the opposite: it is a demonstration of weakness and extreme crisis.

This weakness and crisis are also manifested in the outright criminalization of protests against the Gaza war. It is not enough to suppress the news of protests: the protests themselves must be suppressed. In Western Europe, there have already been widespread efforts to restrict the voicing of pro-Palestinian slogans, or to ban displays of the Palestinian flag, or even to outlaw protests altogether.

Similar measures are under way in the United States. This was prefigured in a resolution adopted by the US Senate, drafted and introduced by the fascist Republican Josh Hawley, condemning the student protests at Harvard and several other schools, claiming they were pro-Hamas and pro-terrorist. It was passed by unanimous consent on Thursday, as no Democrat, nor even the self-styled “socialist” Senator Bernie Sanders, made any objection.

The resolution itself is only a statement of opinion without legal force. But Hawley accompanied it with a letter to the Department of Justice demanding an FBI investigation of the groups and individuals involved in such protests. “Given the potential scale of this threat, I urge you to immediately deploy DOJ resources to investigate these organizations’ funding sources,” he wrote. “The First Amendment protects the right to protest. But it does not protect the provision of material support to terrorist organizations.”

Despite media censorship and government lies, however, the mass deaths in Gaza are real, and so is the popular revulsion against them. The imperialist media doesn’t create reality, it can only distort it and cover it up.

The ruling class is terrified because the spontaneous character of these protests shows that they are products of an underlying process of radicalization of great masses of people which they cannot control. Nor do they control the social media reporting which has provided the world with an uninterrupted stream of images and on-the-spot reports from Gaza. They can engage in censorship and repression, but they are not omnipotent.

The support for the Palestinians shows the extent to which the imperialist propaganda narrative is eroding. But the mass protests still lack a clear political program.

The decisive question is to bring into this movement a broader political understanding that places the war in Gaza in its global context, as one front in a deepening imperialist drive to World War III, in which war in Ukraine is linked to war in the Middle East and the build-up to war against China, in a single global front.

In its statement published Saturday, the *World Socialist Web Site* International Editorial Board called for expanding and developing the movement against the war in Gaza, calling for: “strikes and other protest actions by the working class in every country. We urge the organization of mass demonstrations in every city and emergency solidarity protests by college and high school students...”

“The strength and success of the anti-war movement,” the WSWS explained, “depends upon its development throughout the world as a working class and socialist movement.”

The blackout of the mass demonstrations in the corporate media expresses the fear and hostility of the ruling class to the opposition of workers and youth throughout the world to Israel’s genocide. The development of these protests into a movement that can put an end to imperialist war requires the building of a socialist leadership. This is the essential task.

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