

Australia: thousands march to stop Israel's attacks

Monday 14 August 2006, by [Green Left Weekly](#) (Date first published: 16 July 2006).

Thousands of people rallied and marched in cities around Australia on August 12, demanding an immediate end to Israel's wars on Lebanon and Palestine.

A diverse crowd of more than 5000 joined the rally **in Sydney**, organised by the Australian Arabic Committee in Solidarity with the People of Lebanon and Gaza, and the Stop the War Coalition. The main demand, "Israel out of Lebanon and Palestine!", was addressed by speakers from a range of organisations and communities, including Lebanese and Palestinian Australians, trade unionists, religious leaders and politicians.

A speech by Venezuela's charge d'affaires in Australia, Nelson Davila, prompted enthusiastic chants in support of President Hugo Chavez, who two weeks ago withdrew Venezuela's charge d'affaires in Israel to protest against the country's aggression.

In Brisbane, 300 people marched to the office of the foreign affairs department where they released hundreds of white balloons tied with red ribbons, each one representing a civilian killed by the Israeli military since it commenced its latest attacks on Lebanon and Palestine. The department was targeted to protest against the Australian government's refusal to demand that Israel immediately stop the bombing.

The rally, organised by a coalition of anti-war groups, was addressed by five speakers, including representatives of the Palestinian, Lebanese and Muslim communities. On the open microphone afterwards, an eight-year-old girl asked of PM John Howard: "What if it was your children being bombed?" People who migrated to Australia from Bosnia and El Salvador also spoke, underlining the need for international solidarity.

In Hobart, 200 people joined the rally, which was chaired by Lisa Singh from the United Nations Association. The speakers included Fatima Ali who spoke about the killing of one of her relatives in the recent bombing. Barrister Greg Barnes explained that if an Australian were to go to Lebanon and join Hezbollah, they would be committing a crime under Australian law, which classifies Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation. However, if they were to join the Israeli army and commit war crimes, they would not be considered a criminal.

Tim Matten-Johnson from the Council of Churches, Duncan Meerding from the Socialist Alliance and Imam Sabri Samson from the Hobart mosque also spoke, and a statement of support from ALP MP Duncan Kerr was read out.

In Canberra, 180 people joined a protest rally organised by Australians for Justice and Peace in Palestine, Campaign Against Israeli Aggression and Campaign for a Just Peace in the Middle East. The rally was addressed by a range of speakers, including representatives of the peace movement, churches, the Medical Association for the Prevention of War, the National Tertiary Education Union, the Greens and the Socialist Alliance.

P.S.

* From "Green Left Weekly", August 16, 2006.