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Palestine

# Building international solidarity with the Palestinians

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**Israel's offensive against Gaza has sparked a worldwide revolt unlike any other issue. After a period of paralysis following the events of 7 October, mobilizations have been organized in many countries, depending on the particular context in each. These demonstrations have often been characterized by the large number of young participants including many young women taking a leadership role. In some countries, particularly the USA and Britain, there have been significant Jewish contingents under banners such as "Never again – for anyone." And there has also been growing LGBT+ visibility in many countries.**

Between the rejection of the war action of 7 October by a large part of public opinion and the political offensive carried out in its wake by the major ruling classes, it took several days, even weeks, to build up a mobilization, while bombs were falling on the population. Astonishment gradually turned into militant indignation in many countries, albeit at very different rates and in very different ways.

## Mobilization at the heart of imperialism

In Israel, for a start, mobilizations have been very limited. While several hundred people have been able to take part in a few demonstrations, it is fear that dominates because of the considerable political pressure exerted on activists: political demonstrations are generally banned as long as Israel is at war. On 18 October, five demonstrators were arrested in Haifa even before the start of a "solidarity vigil" for Gaza, while 12 were arrested during a similar demonstration in the northern Arab town of Umm Al-Fahm". [1] Hundreds of Palestinian citizens of Israel have been arrested and left-wing activists have received death threats and are victims of harassment, particularly on social networks.

Most of the demonstrations focused on the demand for the release of the hostages, a slogan which, even if it is not spontaneously progressive, encourages negotiations rather than indiscriminate massacres and, in the context of Israel, exerts pressure in the right direction. [2] The other demands, made by more progressive fringes but in a very small minority, concern the call for a ceasefire and the condemnation of all war crimes, including those committed by Israel. An urgent appeal to the international community to "stop the forced transfer to the West Bank" was published by B'Teslem and signed by around thirty organizations. [3]

In the United States, there has been considerable pressure to defend Israel's "right to defend itself". In mid-October, only 18% of the population considered Israel's attack to be excessive. But little by little, with the images of dead children, hospitals and refugees, solidarity began to be expressed. By mid-November the majority supported a ceasefire [4] All the more so as Joe Biden, for his part, provided Netanyahu with funds and unfailing political support. Important mobilizations by organizations such as [Jewish Voices for Peace](#), for example an occupation of Congress and several of Grand Central station in New York gave courage and illustrated that neither the Israeli state nor Biden can rely on unanimous support from Jews in the US. An increasing number of US trade unions have signed calls for a ceasefire including the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE), the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), and the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) and most significantly the United Auto Workers [5] , tens of thousands of people demonstrated, notably on 4 November in Washington.

In Canada, meanwhile, the demonstrations were proportionately larger, with a march on Ottawa on 26 November attended by around 25,000 people, while hundreds of people [blocked the Jacques Cartier bridge in Montreal on 16 November.](#) [6]

In Britain, hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated. Despite the position of the authorities, including the Labour Party leadership, which supports Israel's "right" to deprive Gaza and the Gaza Strip of electricity, prohibits elected representatives from taking part in demonstrations and forbids local sections of the party from carrying banners, 76% of the population supports an immediate ceasefire. Demonstrations are being organized in many towns and cities, students and school students are walking out of classes to protest. Over the last three years a campaign of direct action against arms sales to Israel has been growing particularly targeting Elbit systems, Israel's largest arms producer, providing at least 85% of drones used by the Israeli military and its subsidiary Instro Precision Ltd. [7] The current massacre in Gaza has led to a mushrooming of these actions some under the banner of Workers for a Free Palestine as well as appeals to workers in some arms firms exporting to Israel to take solidarity action. [8]

## Links with the fight against racism

In a number of countries, although not as massive as in Great Britain, mobilizations are important and racialized people are making a link with anti-racist mobilizations. This is the case in Italy, for example, where mobilizations have brought together several thousand people and young people have been able to make the link with demands for full citizenship. This was also the case in Chile, which has a large Palestinian community of 700,000 people, linked to the country's history of immigration. The reactions of labour movement organizations were generally supportive of the Palestinian people, with 20,000 people marching on 4 November in Santiago, even though the government remains fully supportive of Israel. Since then there have been cultural events, statements by members of parliament and rallies in several towns. The government has recalled its ambassador to Israel, and the Coordinadora por Palestina, a coalition of social movements and political organizations, continues to organize the struggle.

In France, although mobilization was fairly low, participation by racialized people was very strong and the political links between the movement and anti-racist struggles are important. This is all the more the case given that the government is advancing a repressive policy in line with the racist offensive it waged against the revolt in working-class neighbourhoods in the face of police and racist violence, followed by the campaign against the veil and Darmanin's asylum-immigration law. In the face of Macron's policy of solidarity with Israel and criminalization of the working classes, the identification with the struggle of the Palestinian people is quite obvious.

In Germany, the political pressure against the solidarity movement is very strong, with support for Israel masked behind a discourse that very quickly equates any criticism with antisemitism. The ISO comrades denounced the attacks by those in power, explaining the ideological proximity between Israel's racism and Germany's policies on the expulsion of foreigners, repression in the workplace and against demonstrations and associations, and Islamophobia. Fifteen hundred people demonstrated in Berlin, and 7,500 in Düsseldorf. [9]

## Worldwide mobilization

In Japan, there have been major mobilizations. On 11 October, [4,000 people marched in Shibuya \(Tokyo district\)](#) A week later, on 18 October, 350 people took part in an action in front of the US embassy, and on 20 October, [2,000 people demonstrated in front of the Israeli embassy](#). The comrades were very enthusiastic about these actions, which brought together "many families, including young children. [...] It was an action full of enthusiasm and anger".

In Puerto Rico, several thousand people demonstrated on 19 November, and a network of solidarity with Palestine was set up. The demonstrators took up the slogan "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free", understood as a "call for equality and liberation". [10]

In Cyprus, demonstrations take place every week in the capital, Nicosia, as well as in Limassol. The next demonstration will be called more widely, by left-wing political organizations, trade unions, anti-racist and feminist associations and peace organizations. Meetings are taking place, in particular with Palestinian women. We need to bear in mind that Gaza is less than 300 km from Cyprus, which means that, despite the government's support for Israel, there is a great deal of solidarity.

Pakistan has seen a number of huge mobilizations in solidarity with Palestine in all the major cities: Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi and beyond. [\[11\]](#)

## Let's continue to build this mobilization

The most notable exception to this picture is the relative absence of mass mobilization in the Arab countries. There have been protests organized by opposition parties in [Jordan](#), in [Lebanon by pro-Hamas forces](#) and [\[https://www.lemonde.fr/en/tunisia/article/2023/10/18/thousands-in-tunisia-protest-against-israel-outside-french-embassy\\_6184670\\_232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/tunisia/article/2023/10/18/thousands-in-tunisia-protest-against-israel-outside-french-embassy_6184670_232.html) class="spip\_out" rel="external">Egypt, in [Algeria](#) and in [Morocco](#).

But these protests have been rather limited for a combination of reasons. The first, and most important, is the “normalization” of relations between the countries of the Middle East, in particular Egypt, and Israel, as part of an agreement with the Western imperialist powers, in particular the United States, with this “normalization” taking place at the expense of the Palestinians. The second is the systematic repression of protests in these countries, which fear that the rise of the working classes will destabilize the regimes in power by reviving the Arab Spring. And the second, which links the first two, is the fear of a general conflagration in the region, challenging the imperialist presence, upsetting the global balance of power... and opening up real prospects for a socialist solution to the struggle in Palestine.

The struggle of the Palestinian people is a long-term one. The recent truce in no way resolved the situation, since the Palestinian people remain in a critical situation, with the destruction of infrastructure and the economy, not to mention human lives, while the Israeli government claims to want to eradicate Hamas, which can only be achieved by ethnic cleansing involving the displacement or murder of hundreds of thousands of people. The struggle will therefore continue, even if the forms it takes may change.

The role of revolutionaries is to help build mass resistance, in the Arab countries of course, but just as much, because it is easier from a democratic point of view, in the other countries of the world. The working classes are the most likely to get involved because of the possible connections in their consciousness between the different histories of colonialism and the question of racism.

However, these classes have few tools at their disposal to mobilize, as the traditional organizations of the workers' movement are not very accessible to them and are themselves not very active on the issue of international solidarity. In this context, the construction of local mobilization collectives seems to be a relevant tool, combined with a classic united front policy of agreements between organizations, to enable solidarity to be self-organized, a means which seems necessary to move from spontaneous reactions to a mass movement building a balance of power enabling imperialist forces to be pushed back.

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Source: [fourth.international](#).

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