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All Eyes on Rafah

Geelong Anarchist-Communists, Tommy Lawson

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The following article is a transcript of a speech given by Geelong Anarchist Communists member Tommy Lawson at an Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) 'Rally for Rafah' held on Saturday 11th of May. Its content is supported unanimously by Geelong Anarchist Communists. We have decided to publish it today, on the 76th anniversary of the Nakba ('catastrophe') to declare that we stand with those resisting genocide and colonisation.

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During al Nakba over 750,000 Palestinian people, from a total population of 1.9 million, were made refugees beyond the borders of their homeland. 530 villages and cities were raised and ethnically cleansed between 1947 and 1949, and roughly 15,000 Palestinians were murdered in more than 70 massacres and widespread indiscriminate killings. Today, the cycle repeats. More people have died at the hands of the IDF and the Israeli state in the last few months following October 7 than during the Nakba, and almost every safe dwelling and source of sustenance in Gaza has been either utterly destroyed or completely cut off from use. Just as we remember the Nakba today, so we will remember Gaza tomorrow.

Comrades, I do not need to tell you that things are terrible, that times are dark and that monsters stalk the world. Over the past seven months we have seen horrors that will never be forgotten. Today, in Rafah, we are witness to the culmination of Israel's imperialist, colonial war.

If, like me, you are in your thirties or younger, never has war been so vividly portrayed nor marked upon our imagination. We are witness to real time live streaming of genocide.

All the horrid specters of the past have come true. All the tragedies we were told would never be repeated. That humanity has learnt its lessons. Every school child learnt about genocide, of the holocaust. But what so many swore would never happen again, is indeed, happening again.

There are images forever seared into our memories. Blindfolded men chained together in stadiums, doctors murdered with their hands tied behind their backs, mass graves, families crushed beneath the rubble and so, so many innocent children.

When things are so dire, so desperate, it is easy to lose hope. Palestine stands alone on the world stage, while Israel receives the support of western governments. Palestine has been effectively abandoned by every state but Yemen. But, for all they have endured, the people of Palestine have not surrendered.

The battle rages on. While we do not agree with the politics or strategies of all factions of the Palestinian resistance, the heroism of those who today struggle against colonization and occupation should be applauded.

People who fight with homemade weapons against an internationally backed, technologically advanced military, who have given their lives defending refugee camps and hospitals against genocidal maniacs.

This is not terrorism, this is bravery and valor and sacrifice of the highest order. If Palestine continues the fight, so must we.

So what does it mean to fight in Australia today? It means recognising where our power lies. Not with the Labor Party or any politicians. There's only one force powerful enough to make change – the working class. Australian workers were once far more engaged in their unions and practiced in solidarity and struggle. We fought apartheid in South Africa. We fought Dutch colonialism in Indonesia and Japanese imperialism in China. We can do it again.

Today, by flexing our industrial muscle we can hurt Israel, the Zionists and their supporters.. Boycotts, pickets and strikes are all

weapons that can help to cripple Israel and the IDF. Economic isolation will do a thousand times the damage of another UN resolution.

The union movement is not as strong today as it was in the past, but reports from all across the country suggest organising around Palestine has been bringing people in! The fight against colonialism and the class struggle are part of the same struggle!

Things have taken an impressive turn in the last fortnight. Starting in the USA, the very heart of the empire, students at Columbia University began occupying their campuses, stating their intention to stay put until the university cut all ties with Israel.

Since Columbia began, occupations have spread all across the globe. They have fought police, Zionists and fascists. American students have risen in revolt in a way unseen for generations. People who were toddlers at the time we started reading books on imperialism are now fighting the system. They are, to use that radical 60s slogan, bringing the war home.

Now there are at least 7 occupied universities in Australia, one of them being Deakin! Geelong campus may be untouched yet. But we know this cities ties with genocide. Deakin works with multiple companies that supply the IDF, the deputy prime minister, Corio MP and minister for war, Richard Marles is an avid Zionist supporter.

Well, I don't know about you, but I will not be complicit in the massacre of children. I am not okay with Geelong becoming a base for imperialist war manufacturing!

You know, during the Spanish Revolution a journalist interviewed a mechanic named Buenaventura Durruti, who was also a fighter in the militias. Reflecting on the destruction of the civil war he said a most remarkable thing. I quote,

‘The bourgeoisie may blast and burn the earth before the leave the stage of history. But we are not afraid of ruins. We built this world and we can build it again. Better this time. We carry a new world in our hearts’.

He was right. The Zionists and their capitalist allies may destroy Gaza, but the whole world will carry her in their hearts forever more. We will avenge Gaza by making the revolution, by cleansing the world of imperialism and colonialism and making the world anew. We will demolish their factories of war and pour all the resources into ensuring all those children's lives were not in vain, that others may grow to live in peace and know justice and freedom.

One last thing comrades. Our prime minister, Anthony Albanese once purported to be a student progressive. He even led rallies fighting for the rights of Palestinians. Now, he has given in to Zionism and is repeating that common, wretched argument that 'from the river to the sea' is an anti-Semitic slogan. It does not even need repeating why that is complete bullshit, or what it says about the integrity of the Labor government.

So to Anthony, I say;
From the river, to the sea.
From Palestine, to West Papua
From Beirut to Yemen
From Columbia to Deakin University
From Geelong, to Gaza.
All power to the resistance!