



[Protests Indicate Wide Discontent with US Policies Towards War in Gaza](#)

By Colin Bailey

This Saturday hundreds of thousands across the globe took part in protests supporting Palestinians, one of the largest mass protests in recent memory. Participants demanded a ceasefire in Gaza where civilian deaths have surpassed 10,000, over 60% of whom were reportedly women and children. Washington D.C. saw the largest gathering of campaigners who began their march near Capitol Hill, a rally that some pundits indicate was the largest pro-Palestinian protest in United States history.

Over 300,000 activists attended the National March on Washington for Palestine as the war entered its fifth week. The demonstration was organized by several activist groups including the Palestinian Youth Movement, National Students for Justice in Palestine, and The People's Forum among others. Organizers went on record saying that the march was "the culmination of weeks of protests in cities across the country."

Steve Strauss, a Jewish 73-year-old Baltimore resident attended the event as a show of support and to denounce the continued bombardment of Gaza. "They are trying to kill as many Palestinians as they can get away with," Strauss said. "I am here to stand up and be a voice for the people who are oppressed." Strauss went on to assert that many in the American Jewish community do not support Israeli actions.

The nation's capital was not the only U.S. city to experience widespread protests on Saturday. Major population centers across the country similarly saw thousands participate in marches, including New York City, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Boston, Miami, and others. Despite the diverse make up of each city's populations, those participating in the protests were consistent in the demand for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and for the United States to cease sending military aid to the Israeli state. The demonstrations represent a stark contrast to the actions of the government which has thus far given unrestrained support to the country's longtime ally.

President Biden has pledged over \$14 billion in aid to the Israelis, in addition to the \$3.8 billion in military aid disbursed annually. Since the fighting began, the United States has sent two aircraft carriers alongside other navy vessels in addition to shipping additional weapons and munitions as well as military advisers. The House has approved the standalone aid figure; however, observers expect it to fail in the Senate. Even if passed, President Biden has said he will veto the bill as he had initially put forward a larger bill that included aid for Ukraine as well as the apportionment for the Israelis.

Governments in Europe have also leaned overwhelmingly towards the Netanyahu government while public sentiment has criticized the constant bombardment of civilian areas. Thousands took to the streets in Paris and Milan voicing similar cries for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. Germany has seen the harshest suppression of Palestinian advocacy. Over a thousand police officers were deployed to end pro-Palestinian protests in Berlin while the government has made several attempts to silence pro-Palestinian expression, even going so far as to accuse the events of being pro-Hamas hence likely to promote violence. In fact, the German police called off the October 27th "Berlin's Children for Gaza's Children" protest a mere five hours before it was set to begin. While most of the

would-be protestors complied and did not attend, the gathering amassed a little over 100 participants outside Berlin's Reichstag. Police confronted protestors aggressively, using pepper spray and detaining 74 peaceful protestors.

Government opposition to pro-Palestine movements has become widespread; yet the decisions to stifle protests represent an alarming development particularly in democracies that claim to protect free speech. Over the past month hundreds of activities have been blocked. The French police cancelled over 20 protests since Saturday; and in the US, over a hundred have been either been stopped or diminished due to police intervention.

Conversely, the Israeli government is in no position to suppress the demonstrations it faces. Protestors have come out in their thousands calling for a ceasefire. Dozens of rallies were held across the country on Saturday. Relatives of Israeli hostages and their supporters attended the events, while hundreds marched outside Netanyahu's home in Jerusalem chanting "Jail now!" Public support for Netanyahu continues to decline with many calling for his immediate resignation. Despite the external and internal pressure, Netanyahu remains defiant. He stated on Sunday that "there will be no ceasefire without the return of the hostages. We say this to our friends and to our enemies. We will continue to defeat them."

The size and scale of protests across the globe are clear indicators of discontent with policies of the United States and other countries concerning the war on Gaza. The demonstrations have not yet affected official policies; and most elected officials have expressed their disdain for what they describe as antisemitic or improper behavior. Broader public opinion, however, does seem to be shifting. According to a Data for Progress poll, 66% of American voters support a ceasefire. There have yet to be any ramifications at the ballot box for these policies; and the threat of losing political capital does not seem to be enough to urge policy makers to change their stance. Nevertheless, for the Democratic party at least, there do appear to be some chinks in the armor. According to data from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, nearly half of the party's members disapprove of how President Biden is handling the crisis. Tellingly, majorities of Democrats younger than 45 (65%) and nonwhite Democrats (58%) say they disapprove of Biden's handling of the conflict. Although the conflict is happening in the Middle East, the coming months will determine how much of an impact it may have on American politics as the country prepares for its next presidential election.