

## Pro-Palestinian Rallies Sweep Australia as Calls for Sanctions Grow

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Tens of thousands of demonstrators marched across Australia on Sunday in a coordinated wave of pro-Palestinian rallies, reflecting growing political pressure on the Albanese government to reconsider its relationship with Israel. The marches took place in more than 40 cities and towns nationwide, with organizers claiming hundreds of thousands participated.

The rallies were backed by hundreds of community groups and unions, along with public figures including independent ACT Senator David Pocock, who has called for stronger measures such as sanctions and halting defense trade with Israel.

Organizers described the movement as a “groundswell,” pointing to the size and coordination of the demonstrations. Large gatherings were reported in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, and Adelaide, alongside regional centers.

Protesters carried Palestinian flags, banners, and placards demanding “sanctions now,” while chanting slogans critical of Australia’s military cooperation with Israel. In Melbourne, protesters filled the CBD, while in Sydney, the march stretched through Hyde Park and onto city streets.

Activists declared the rallies a response to the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza, where international agencies recently warned of famine conditions. Supporters argued that Australia should take a more assertive role in pressing Israel to cease military action and open access for aid.

While the protests were largely peaceful, the scale of the mobilization raised concerns about public order and political polarization. Authorities increased police presence in major cities to prevent clashes and ensure demonstrations remained under control.

Critics of the rallies argue that the events risk inflaming tensions within Australian communities. With large numbers waving Palestinian flags and chanting against Israel, Jewish community leaders voiced concern that the rallies could fuel hostility and intimidation.

The Albanese government has resisted calls to impose sanctions or cut off trade, while maintaining calls for a ceasefire, the release of hostages, and expanded humanitarian aid; on August 11, 2025, it announced Australia would recognize the State of Palestine at the United Nations General Assembly.

A defining feature of the rallies was the heavy involvement of trade unions and left-leaning political organizations. Union banners were visible across the demonstrations, underscoring how pro-Palestinian activism has been adopted by sections of the labour movement.

Senator Pocock’s support lent further political weight, though his position remains outside the mainstream of federal policy. Calls from activist groups for an immediate arms embargo

on Israel put the government in a politically difficult position, balancing international alliances with domestic activism.

For Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, the demonstrations underscore a growing divide within Australia over foreign policy in the Middle East. Labor faces pressure from both grassroots activists and its own left flank to take stronger action, while centrist and conservative voices warn against undermining relations with Israel and the United States.

Analysts note that while the size of the protests suggests momentum, public opinion remains mixed. Surveys show many Australians are sympathetic to civilian suffering in Gaza but also cautious about taking sides in a complex regional conflict.

Organizers vowed that Sunday's rallies would not be the last, promising continued mobilization until Canberra shifts its stance. Activists said public sentiment is turning in their favor.

Whether that sentiment translates into policy changes remains to be seen. For now, the government has not indicated sanctions or an arms embargo, and it continues to emphasize humanitarian support alongside diplomatic caution.

The nationwide demonstrations mark one of the largest coordinated protest movements in Australia in recent years, highlighting the extent to which the conflict in Gaza is reverberating far beyond the Middle East and exposing sharp divisions at home.