

Sheffield Gaza Solidarity Rally, 17/01/09, Sheffield City Centre:
an account of political degeneration in ten photos.

By Camila Bassi



Workers' Liberty comrades arrive at the rally with our banner "Israel out of the Occupied Territories, Two Nations, Two States". We start handing out our bulletin with the headline: "How can we best help the Palestinians? Stop Israel's assault on Gaza - Israel out of the Occupied Territories. Support a two-state settlement - an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, with the same rights as Israel. Solidarity with the Palestinians must not mean solidarity with Hamas - support workers, women and the left on both sides, and the Israel anti-war movement."



The banner is disagreeable to members of the *Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC)* and the *SWP*, so it is soon blocked in an attempt to homogenise the 'politics' of the rally, i.e. to silence the demand "Two Nations, Two States".



A *Workers' Liberty* comrade turns up with a placard stating (on one side) "Solidarity with women, workers and the left!" and (on the other) "No to IDF, No to Hamas".



Members of *Permanent Revolution* gather around my younger comrades shouting that they are disgusting equivalents to scabs in the Miners' Strike. Two members of the *PSC* grab the placard and proceed to rip it up, stamping on its remnants. They also attempt to take my camera. With the *SWP* on the loud hailer encouraging the action, the majority of the rally starts clapping, and it is declared that Hamas are the democratically elected representatives of the Palestinian people and that we are not welcome. The speech after is taken by a leading member of the *Socialist Party*, who says nothing of the action.



I collect the pieces of the placard, and we stay for the remainder of the rally and march. A small number of brave, politically sympathetic people approach us to state their distress. These people seem to have no trouble understanding that political solidarity with the Palestinian people should not equate to political solidarity with Hamas.