

*From the Detroit/Seattle Workers' Voice list
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Demonstrations against Israel's murderous campaign in Gaza spread widely

by Pete Brown, *Detroit Workers' Voice*

Israel's murderous campaign against the Palestinian people is being denounced far and wide as genocide. Since a temporary ceasefire ended, Israel has expanded its attack on Gaza, announcing that people who have moved south to escape Israeli bombing must now move again, further south. Two million people are supposed to be squeezed into two square miles around the town of Rafah, at the extreme southern border of Gaza. Outrage against this has led to very large demonstrations in Amman, Jordan; Sanaa, Yemen; Sidon, Lebanon; Johannesburg, South Africa; Vienna, Austria; and, notably, Hebron, the West Bank. Also, there have been dozens of demonstrations across Australia in recent weeks as protesters tried to interrupt weapons shipments to Israel and disrupt normal parliamentary functions. In most places, demonstrators face repression for daring to raise political issues and to make rulers face up to their support for genocide. In many places, certain slogans like "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" are banned by police, who stand by ready to break up any demonstration that dares to raise this cry.

Demos across the U.S.

In the United States, demonstrators hound President Joe Biden everywhere he goes – to give pompous speeches, or to Xmas tree-lighting ceremonies. Protesters refer to the President as "Genocide Joe" and deride him with the slogan, "Biden, Biden, you can't hide; we charge you with genocide." Another popular chant is "Free, Free Palestine." (1) Demonstrators are taking advantage of the holiday season to publicize opposition to the Israeli genocide at numerous events where crowds gather. There was a protest on Black Friday (a traditional shopping day, the day after Thanksgiving) in Chicago, along Michigan Avenue. Protesters called on shoppers with the chant, "While you're shopping, bombs are dropping." In New York, a thousand people showed up to demonstrate at the Rockefeller Center tree-lighting ceremony, which is televised nationally. Police, who had been tipped off about the protest, formed solid lines blocks away from the ceremony to prevent protesters from coming in. As they pushed demonstrators away, scuffles with police occurred, and there were some arrests. Also, a fight occurred when some provocateur held up a Nazi swastika sign, and his sign was immediately attacked, apparently by some of the demonstrators. (2) Demos also occurred at tree-lighting ceremonies in Miami and Boston.

Protesters also descended upon a "conference on Israel's future" held in Denver at the end of November. This was a conference of some of Zionism's top funders and political leaders, gathered to chart the course for Israel's continuing expansionism. But protesters were able to interrupt many of their meetings. (3)

City councils and trade unions

Protests have taken place at political meetings of many different kinds – congressional hearings, Pentagon news briefings, congressional town halls, etc. One of the tactics employed is to get local city councils to pass resolutions of support for the Palestinian cause. Usually these are simply calls for a permanent ceasefire – not exactly support for a free Palestine, but at least a call for some relief from the constant, murderous bombardment Israel is throwing at them. Such resolutions have passed in some cities, such as Oakland and Detroit. (4) (5) Similar resolutions have been passed by a number of union locals, and a few national unions have made such statements. This includes the United Auto Workers, American Postal Workers Union, California Nurses Association, Chicago Teachers Union, and United Electrical Workers. (6)

Corporate protests

In some places, workers have staged protests against their own companies' ties to Israel. Workers at Google in New York City staged a protest against Google's Project Nimbus. This is a \$1.2 billion contract Google has to supply cloud computing services to Israel's military and government. Workers gave out informational leaflets outside the company's offices and also erected a makeshift shrine in memory of a Google ex-intern, a resident of Gaza who was killed by Israeli bombing. (7) Activists have also staged protests outside Raytheon company buildings in El Segundo, California and Tucson, Arizona. Raytheon does maintenance on Israel's Iron Dome system of anti-missile defense. Activists tried to block access roads to Raytheon buildings and displayed banners opposing the company's support for genocide. (8)

Dealing with suppression

In almost all cases, activists have to deal with suppression. Political and corporate leaders are surrounded by guards whose job it is to prevent people from expressing grievances. Activists need to anticipate this and devise tactics to deal with it. For example, at Raytheon, as protesters were chased away from one access gate, they immediately flew to another. Proposed resolutions at city councils and trade unions were often watered down to appeal to a broader audience, making a minimal demand to stop the killing. This was necessary to ensure passage of the resolution and doesn't contradict support for Palestinian rights. Some other examples of suppression:

In Canada, five doctors who have put some posts on social media critical of Israel are now being hauled before a professional ethics board, charged with racism and allowing their politics to interfere with their medical professionalism. This is a good example of the topsy-turvy world of bourgeois legalism, where if someone criticizes Israel for its racist, murderous onslaught against Gaza, one is charged with antisemitic racism. These are serious charges, since the doctors involved may stand to lose their license. (9) Activists should be aware that, as in 1984, Big Brother is constantly watching, combing through social media posts looking for any signs of dissent. They should be prepared to stand up for their views and defend them to a hostile audience. The same goes for students at universities in the U.S., where any criticism of Israel is denounced by government leaders as "antisemitism". University presidents are being hauled before congressional hearings to answer for the anti-zionist views expressed by some of their students. Some students in organizations like JVP (Jewish Voice for Peace) have been doxed for daring to speak out against Israel.

A good example of responding to suppression took place at the convention of the National Communications Association. Attendees eagerly looked forward to a speech by a Palestinian-American professor, who was going to speak about how to communicate events in the Mideast to a mass audience. But at the last minute his speech was cancelled by conference organizers, who had decided it was inflammatory. Immediately, hundreds of conventioners walked out and picketed the building housing the meeting. Leaders of the NCA later apologized and backed down. (10)

Ties to environmentalism

Two recent examples show activists working to establish ties between environmentalism and the struggle against imperialist-zionist genocide. One was a demonstration against Israel's attack on Gaza at the COP 28 meeting in Dubai, UAE. Now, protest demonstrations of any kind are strictly illegal in the UAE. But as a special favor to the UN, as host of COP 28, the UAE agreed to allow a small space for demonstrators to gather. This is, of course, hidden from public view, so that inhabitants of Dubai are not infected by any germs of political consciousness. As protesters entered the protest space, they had Palestinian flags ripped away from them, and they were forbidden to mention any nation-state's name in their speeches. Nonetheless, the protesters did unfurl a banner calling for "ceasefire now". They were able to make a little bit of headway in a difficult situation. (11)

Another example came from a recent climate rally of 70,000 people in Amsterdam, Netherlands, at which Greta Thunberg was featured speaker. Thunberg spoke about the need to connect the two issues – environmentalism and opposition to imperialist aggression – as many attendees took up the chant, "No climate justice on occupied land." Thunberg was interrupted by a man who bolted onstage, snatched the microphone away from her and began hectoring the crowd, exclaiming that he wouldn't allow any politics to interfere with pure environmentalism. Others onstage wrestled the microphone away from the man and returned it to Thunberg, who took up the chant along with the audience. (12)

Notes

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<https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/rockefeller-center-christmas-tree-lighting-protest-demonstration-pro-palestinian/>

3. Karen Brulliard, "Protests for Palestinians greet Denver conference on Israel's future". *Washington Post*, December 1, 2023 at 4:23 EST.

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[My speech at Oakland City Council – Oakland Socialist](#)

5. Paige Rollins and Sherrie Smith, “Politics in Detroit”, *Outlier media*, 11/21/2023

<https://outliermedia.org/detroit-city-council-ceasefire-resolution-gaza/#:~:text=Politics%20in%20Detroit&text=The%20council%20approved%20a%20resolution,call%20for%20a%20cease%2Dfire>

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[| Google | The Guardian](#)

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<https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/ontario-doctors-disciplined-over-israel-gaza-protests-1.6666287>

10. Dana Cloud, “Academics protest Gaza genocide, face a clampdown on academic freedom.” *Tempest*, November 21, 2023.

[Academics protest Gaza genocide, face academic repression \(tempestmag.org\)](#)

11. “Tears and tight restrictions in Gaza protest at COP 28”, *France 24*, December 3, 2023

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231203-tears-and-tight-restrictions-in-gaza-protest-at-cop28>

12. “Thunberg draws attention to Palestine at climate rally”, *The Palestine Chronicle*, November 13, 2023

<https://www.palestinechronicle.com/thunberg-draws-attention-to-palestine-at-climate-rally-video>

December 5, 2023 <>