

*From the Detroit/Seattle Workers' Voice list*  
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# Gaza protests defy repression

by Pete Brown, *Detroit Workers' Voice*

Protests against the Israeli massacre of Palestinian civilians continued in January despite the attempts to suppress them under the guise of “opposing antisemitism.” The latest large demonstration in the United States was held on Saturday, January 13, in Washington, D.C. (1) On the same day, similar protests were held in London, Paris, Rome, and Dublin. The demo in Washington was sponsored by national Islamic coalitions, but as at other such demonstrations Jewish activists played a prominent role in the march. Those present said that as Jews they felt a special responsibility in calling on Israel to stop bombing Gaza. The general demands of the demonstration were for an immediate ceasefire and release of all hostages; also, release of all political prisoners and an end to the occupation.

## **MAGA celebrates a victory**

In early January right-wing politicians in the U.S. were celebrating their victory over the so-called liberal establishment that allegedly controls American universities. After browbeating the presidents of Harvard, MIT and the University of Pennsylvania in congressional hearings, MAGA Republican lawmakers were able to force two of them to resign. The lawmakers, led by MAGA stalwart Elise Stefanik, had denounced the university presidents as they appeared stumped by questions like, “Does the advocacy of genocide violate your university’s code of conduct?” The presidents sat stone-faced or mumbled something like, “No, not unless it’s actionable.” They never tried to throw the question back in the face of the MAGA Republicans by saying, “Yes, we oppose genocide against any people, in particular the people in Gaza!” Nor did they do anything to expose the MAGA politicians for running a fraudulent “investigation”, when it was clearly just a kangaroo show trial.

So, two of the presidents were forced out of office, and the MAGA right gleefully declared, “This is just the beginning!” College administrations faced demands from politicians in many states to suppress student organizations that uttered a voice of protest against the savage Israeli assault on the people of Gaza.

## **But leftists fight back**

But student organizations at many colleges were not intimidated. For example, at Ohio State University the administration suspended a student group called Central Ohio Revolutionary Socialists because they were carrying out political activity critical of Israel. But the students did not simply fold their tents and walk away quietly. Instead, they intensified their activity, this time broadening their work to include the fight for freedom of speech and association. Now they are involved in a petition campaign demanding reinstatement by the university. (2)

Off-campus activists have also been busy. In Seattle, demonstrations have been held nearly every weekend since October 7. As can be seen from this article (3), the news in Seattle is not that a demonstration is going on, but that the demonstrators have finally decided to lift their blockade of a

freeway. On Saturday, January 6, activists blocked the northbound lanes of a major freeway, I-5, for hours, causing a six-mile backup of cars. While this was occurring, drivers in the southbound lanes were honking their support. A couple thousand people participated in this demonstration. A few hundred blocked the freeway while others rallied nearby, unfurling banners, holding up signs and chanting slogans. Supporters of the Communist Voice Organization passed out hundreds of copies of a leaflet titled "Stop bombing Gaza!" to participants.

In California, activists began the new year by shutting down the opening session of the California state legislature. Masses of them occupied the state capitol in Sacramento and forced the legislature to adjourn without business as usual. (4) In New York, demonstrators blocked a major tunnel carrying traffic into Manhattan, and at the same time activists blocked a number of bridges into the city. Police arrested scores of activists, but that will not stop the demonstrations. (5)

Internationally, as noted above, large demonstrations continue to be held in major European cities, including Copenhagen. (6) Protesters blocked bridges outside parliament in London on January 6 demanding that Britain give up its support for the Israelis' offensive against the Palestinian people. (7) Demonstrations also continue in Canada, Australia, South Africa and other countries. Support for Palestinian liberation is more widespread than ever before, and the Israeli government is receiving widespread condemnation for its genocidal offensive against Gaza.

## NOTES

1. Cybele Mayes-Osterman and Eduardo Cuevas, with contributions from Tom Vanden Brook, "Thousands at Saturday protest in Washington, D.C. call for Israel-Hamas ceasefire", *USA Today*, January 13, 2024. [Thousands at Saturday protest in Washington DC call for Israel-Hamas cease-fire \(msn.com\)](https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/Thousands-at-Saturday-protest-in-Washington-DC-call-for-Israel-Hamas-cease-fire)
2. "Solidarity with Central Ohio Revolutionary Socialists: Stop the repression against Palestine activists." *Tempest*, January 3, 2024. <https://www.tempestmag.org/2024/01/solidarity-with-central-ohio-revolutionary-socialists/>
3. Heidi Groover and Taylor Blatchford, "Protesters demanding cease-fire in Israel-Hamas war leave I-5". *Seattle Times*, January 6, 2024. <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/demonstrators-block-traffic-on-northbound-i-5-in-seattle/>
4. "Activists in California shut down state capitol to demand ceasefire in Gaza," *Democracy Now*, January 4, 2024. [https://www.democracynow.org/2024/1/4/headlines/activists\\_in\\_california\\_shut\\_down\\_state\\_capitol\\_to\\_demand\\_ceasefire\\_in\\_gaza](https://www.democracynow.org/2024/1/4/headlines/activists_in_california_shut_down_state_capitol_to_demand_ceasefire_in_gaza)
5. Olivia Rosane, "Protests urging Gaza cease-fire block NYC tunnel, bridges. 'We are trying to show how it feels to be trapped in a city you can't leave,' one participant said." *Common Dreams*, January 8, 2024. <https://www.commondreams.org/news/activists-block-manhattan-gaza>

6. <https://www.facebook.com/leila.qpali/videos/1440771473520421>
  7. "Pro-Palestine protesters block bridge outside UK parliament: Demonstrators gathered on the streets of central London, demanding an immediate ceasefire in Israel's war on Gaza." *Aljazeera*, January 6, 2024. <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2024/1/6/pro-palestine-protesters-block-bridge-outside-uk-parliament> <>
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