

Thousands rally in Michigan against Israeli attacks on Palestinians

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Some 2,000 workers, students, youth and housewives marched in the Detroit suburb of Dearborn, Michigan April 1 to protest the Israeli attacks on Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The demonstration was called by local Arab-American organizations, including the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, and pacifist groups. The substantial turnout came despite renewed attempts by the Bush administration to intimidate Arab Americans, including a call by Attorney General John Ashcroft for more “interviews” of Arab and Middle Eastern immigrants.

Marchers carried signs denouncing Israeli military aggression and in particular Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Placards read, “September 11—every day in Palestine,” “Israeli occupation, state-sponsored terrorism,” “Sharon is a murderer” and “End the holocaust in Palestine.”

Other signs denounced US support to Israel and American intervention in the Middle East and Afghanistan. One banner singled out US Senator Carl Levin, a Democrat, for his “blind support of Israel.” Another read, “Down with King George,” comparing President Bush to Britain’s King George III.

A favorite chant of marchers was “Sharon, Hitler all the same, only difference is the name.”

The march proceeded two miles from northwest Dearborn to the city hall. Along the route workers, storeowners and neighborhood residents lined the sidewalks. Some joined in along the way.

On the steps of the Dearborn city hall organizers set up a podium and microphone to address the protest. However, while expressing horror at Israeli brutality, speakers had little else to say. No one spoke out against the ongoing detention of hundreds of Arab-American

immigrants by the US Justice Department. Nor did anyone draw a connection between the Bush administration’s brutal war in Afghanistan and its support for Israeli aggression against the Palestinians. The speeches concluded with a call for workers to write letters to Congress to protest US support for Israel.

The conservative character of the speeches was in marked contrast to the militancy and determination of the vast majority of march participants. Speakers were interrupted with chants of “Free Palestine” and “End the Occupation Now.” The podium had to continually appeal for calm and quiet. Finally organizers abruptly ended the rally and sent marchers home.

A reporting team for the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to marchers along the route. There was almost universal hostility to the Bush administration and to the lies of the big business-controlled news media.

A student at Henry Ford Community College, a young mother, told the WSWS, “We are like the American Indians. We are being displaced from our homes. In many years, America will look back and see that it was a mistake to back Israel.

“On CNN they compared a suicide bomber to an F-15 jet fighter. How can you make that comparison? People are killing themselves out of frustration. We don’t have a voice.

“I have heard that they rounded up 700 men from Ramallah and forced them to kneel. The Israelis had guns to their heads. This is going to be another holocaust.”

She denounced the detention of Arab immigrants by the Bush administration and the closing down of Islamic charities such as Global Relief Foundation. “A lot of people rely on Global Relief and other charities because there is a lot of hunger and suffering. Now there will be more people hungry,” she said.

Alec, a young truck driver of Lebanese descent, told the WSWS, “I am not Palestinian, but I am human.” He continued, “It seems that people are blinded by the news media. You see the hard-core aggression against the Palestinians. Israel is taking the land, bulldozing homes, killing mothers and children. What the Israelis are doing to the Palestinians is what Hitler did to the Jews.

“Arafat has no control over anything. He is sitting inside a room. All he has is a cell phone. Even if he was able to reach people, what could he do?

“The Palestinians don’t have any military power, tanks or airplanes or even machine guns. They don’t have any way to fight back. That is why they are committing suicide.

“I have no hatred for Jews. I have hatred toward Israel. Sharon is known to be a terrorist. He ordered the murders at Sabra and Shatilla.”



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