

Thousands march in Washington and New York against Gaza assault

A reporting team
12 January 2009

An estimated 10,000 people gathered Saturday, January 10 in Washington DC to march against the US-backed Israeli attack on Gaza. The thousands marched in dreary weather compounded by hail and cold rain.

Attendees came from across the east coast, arriving in buses from Florida, Virginia, Philadelphia, New York and other areas. There were thousands of students, youth, families and workers. Many Arab-American, Palestinian, and other immigrant families came to express their opposition to the attack on Gaza. Little children wore placards depicting some of the Zionist atrocities. On the podium and in the crowd there were also Jewish students and workers opposed to Israel's actions.

The marchers assembled in Lafayette Square just north of the White House where they heard nearly two hours of speeches. Speakers included Ralph Nader, Cynthia McKinney of the Greens, ministers, organizers, activists and a writer for *The Nation* magazine. As at previous anti-war marches, speakers fostered illusions in pressuring the Democrats while stating only the most obvious aspects of the crisis. And yet, no significant Democrats even made an appearance. Just two days before, the Democratic-controlled Senate passed a noxious resolution uncritically supporting Israel's actions.

After the speeches the march wound its way past the *Washington Post* building—where the paper's lies and Israeli bias were condemned—and offices of defense contractor Lockheed Martin. The organizers did not

target the newly seated Congress where the Democrats control both houses and support Bush's pro-Israeli policy.

Chants of "Free, Free Palestine" continued, and occasionally a section of the crowd began to chant "Long live Intifada."

Reporters from the *World Socialist Website* distributed 600 leaflets and spoke to marchers. Tariq, a Syrian American worker told the WSWS, "I do construction work. I think what is happening is pure genocide. They want to drive the people out, but where are they to go? It is their land. It is unheard of what is going on in Gaza. They are war crimes. This didn't start overnight. The Israelis cleared out all the trees and orchards in Gaza so they could see everybody. They gave the Palestinians a choice of dying slow or dying fast. Die by hunger or die by bombs. Now the people of Gaza have no food. They are burning their clothes for heat. What is this for? So another colonial power can ride in Mercedes. All we are asking for is justice."

Tariq continued, "The Egyptian bourgeoisie is compliant in this. They have closed down their side of the border. The bourgeoisie all over and imperialism all over want this. Mubarak is part of this because he doesn't want to see people next to him live in freedom. I appreciate that Syria supports the Palestinians, but that is for their own purposes. I know they would send them out in a heartbeat. The struggle in Gaza is taken forward by the construction workers, ironworkers who are defending themselves."

In New York City, over 3,000 people assembled in Times Square to oppose the Israeli Defense Forces'

blitzkrieg into Gaza. Many were immigrant workers from the Middle East including Palestinians, Lebanese, and North Africans. Delegations from community organizations, mosques, and schools came by chartered buses from the outer boroughs of the city as well as from New Jersey. Particularly noticeable were the hundreds of youth and students of Arab and Middle Eastern descent. Sizeable groups of Americans of all backgrounds also participated.

The protesters chanted “Not in our names! Not with our money!” and “Free, Free Palestine.”

Many people carried homemade banners and placards, often with grisly images of victims of the Israeli assault. One sign read, “Israel: Stop Committing Genocide on our Children” Another read: “Stop the Gaza Holocaust.”

Supporters of the World Socialist Web Site distributed over 500 copies of the statement, “A Socialist solution to the Gaza crisis,” which was received with great interest by many of the protesters.

Many at the rally were well aware of the criminal and duplicitous role played by the Democratic Party in this latest assault on the Palestinian people. One Pakistani worker told the *World Socialist Web Site* that the recent Senate vote in support of the Israeli actions was a part of a “gang up” against the Palestinians.

The WSWS spoke to three Moroccan youth about the need for a socialist program to unite the international working class against Zionism, American imperialism and the bourgeois regimes in the Arab countries. One said, “Yes, I agree, the Arab regimes represent the wealthy. We need the fight of poor against rich here.”

The organizers of the march leveled no criticism at President-elect Barak Obama for his silence on the Gaza massacre. One protester, a woman of Middle Eastern decent, who was listening to the chants and speeches from the front of the rally, asked a WSWS reporter exactly whom the demonstration was supposed to appeal to.

Meanwhile, leading Democrats addressed a much

smaller pro-Zionist demonstration near the Israeli Mission to the UN. Prominent speakers included Gov. David Paterson and the darling of Wall St., Sen. Charles Schumer.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact