

Protests against Israel's flotilla massacre held across US, Canada

Our reporters
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Thousands in the US and Canada have taken to the streets in protest over the last two days in response to Monday's raid by Israeli state forces on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla. Demonstrations were held in New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Dearborn, Michigan, as well as the Canadian cities of Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Vancouver.

In New York City, hundreds of protesters assembled in Times Square Monday, before marching to the Israeli consulate. They carried signs saying "Free Gaza," and "Israeli soldiers shot unarmed civilians." Three thousand people were reported in attendance in Los Angeles demonstrating outside the Israeli embassy.

Several Bay Area activists were on the flotilla and San Francisco was the scene of a large march in opposition to the massacre. Chanting, "End the siege in Gaza! Free, free Palestine!" demonstrators marched from the Israeli consulate to the downtown shopping district. A tiny counter-protest of a few dozen waving Israeli and American flags, under police protection, heckled and tried to provoke the marchers, calling them "terrorists."

In Chicago, several thousand people crowded the streets near the Consulate General of Israel on Tuesday under a large police presence. Contingents from Muslim pro-Palestine and Jewish anti-Zionist organizations participated, with many carrying signs reading "Free Palestine." Some protesters burned an Israeli flag and shouted slogans such as "Long live Palestine!" and "Long live Turkey!" In addressing the crowd, Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago chair Zaher Sahloul stated that the state of Israel's atrocities "do not reflect on the Jewish people's values."

Professor Noam Chomsky issued a statement from Chicago in response to the Israeli massacre of civilians. Noting that Israel's actions would be met with a NATO military response if they had been committed by Somali

pirates, Chomsky commented, "It is worth bearing in mind that the crime is nothing new. For decades, Israel has been hijacking boats in international waters between Cyprus and Lebanon, killing or kidnapping passengers, sometimes bringing them to prisons in Israel including secret prison/torture chambers, sometimes holding them as hostages for many years."

Chomsky himself was recently detained by Israel and prevented from attending a scheduled speaking engagement in the West Bank. (See "Noam Chomsky barred from entering West Bank")

About 500 people rallied on the steps of the Dearborn, Michigan city hall June 1 to protest the Israeli attack. The Congress of Arab American Organizations called the event. Participants included significant numbers of high school and college age youth from the local Arab-American community. There was also representation from the Turkish-American community.

Protesters chanted slogans and carried signs condemning the Israeli attack and calling for an end to the blockade of Gaza.

The WSWS spoke to workers and young people attending the rally. Ali Saleh told the WSWS, "Israel is getting \$3 billion a year from us to shoot innocent people. They sent commandos against innocent people on a ship bringing food. As easy a taking candy from a baby.

"Obama's policy is not straight. They have to open the blockade against 1.5 million people who they bombed the s--- out of last year.

"We don't need to be spending billions on Afghanistan to fight a war that has no reason. No one can justify this war.

"The same people that run big business are running the government. Look at Dick Cheney, Halliburton. We are just little fish. A lot of people are fed up with this. Every one in the government is part of one big gang now. This is not going to last for ever."

Sal, a Lebanese-American worker, told the WSWS, “Whoever gets to the White House the policy is always to help Israel. Right or wrong, Israel is always right.”

Speaking of the raid on the aid flotilla, Sal said, “There is no difference between Israel and the Somalis. The Somali pirates are not a government, but this is government terrorism.”

A worker who said she was of Jewish ancestry told the WSWS she had come to express her outrage at Israel’s actions. “I don’t condone what is going on over there. It is wrong, black and white wrong. Murdering innocent women and children and destroying families is wrong. I feel Israel needs to give land back. One half of the land they have now is stolen. We are all human beings and we all need to be treated fairly.”

A Yemeni student told the WSWS, “We want the American people to understand what happened. Fox News and CNN twist the story to make us the bad ones.

“This struggle is not just for Palestinians. It is for the whole world.

“We had hope in Obama. But it is just the same. It shows that Israel has enormous power in the US. They talk about controlling nuclear weapons in Iran but Israel has them, secret facilities and everything.”

Hamadi, a student at Edsel Ford High School in Dearborn, told the WSWS, “I don’t think they should be attacking innocents. That is immoral. I don’t understand why they are doing it. I am from Lebanon, but I think it is wrong.

“Israel attacks everyone, thinking they can do what they want.

“I was disappointed in Obama. In all his statements he said he would pursue peace. Now he is following in Bush’s footsteps. We brought him in thinking he would do good. Honestly, he hasn’t done anything.”



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