

Hundreds rally in San Diego in defense of migrant caravan

Our reporters**26 November 2018**

On Sunday morning over 200 people attended a rally in Larsen Field, San Ysidro, on the San Diego-Tijuana Border, to support the migrants in the Central American caravan, who are seeking to claim asylum in the United States. The protest occurred several hours before US Customs and Border Protection shut down the San Ysidro border crossing and fired tear gas at several hundred men, women and children seeking to cross into the United States.

The rally was organized by the Migrants and Refugee Solidarity Coalition and received the endorsement of 83 human rights and pseudo-left organizations, which aim to divert social opposition back into the Democratic Party, including the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), the International Socialists Organization (ISO), Our Revolution, the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), Veterans for Peace, and the Freedom Socialist Party.

While the coalition voiced demands for demilitarization of the border and the rights of immigrants to be granted asylum, and drew the connections to the Israeli/Palestine border, there was no effort to tie the attack on immigrants to the failure of capitalism or the United States' imperialist wars and interventions all over the world. There was also no call to "abolish ICE," a slogan which the DSA has completely abandoned, or comment on the role of Democratic Party, which has been complicit in the attacks on immigrant rights.

The common theme echoed in the speeches at the rally was opposition to the militarization of the border and the sole responsibility of the Trump administration and the Republican Party for attacks on immigrants: "Trump, the GOP, and the corporate media have done their best to stoke fear into the US against the refugee caravan," claimed a speaker from the ISO. While

reiterating the importance of human rights and dignity prioritized over profits, the speakers carefully avoided mentioning the Obama administration's attacks against immigrants, which include the widespread expansion of ICE, Operation Detention Bed Quota (2009), and the deportation of over three million.

Despite the political affiliations of those speaking from the platform, there were still many working people and families that came out to express support for the caravan. The WSWS spoke to attendees of the rally who expressed their serious concern for the wellbeing of the caravan, currently stuck at the Tijuana border and facing down the might of the US military and border patrol.

Dan and Caroline, a couple both 28 years old, recently moved to San Diego from Texas. Dan said it was "gut-wrenching the way that these people who want a better life are being treated. They already have it so hard, and how is this country welcoming them?" Caroline agreed, "These immigrants have a right to come here, they are facing troubles that most people don't even understand, gang violence. The government is clouding the truth with lies that they are criminals and addicts."

They emphasized their belief that US asylum laws need to be broadened. "Persecution from a gang should be considered as means to qualify for asylum. When they deny people saying this doesn't meet the criteria, it's just semantics!" When discussing the role of the DSA as an arm of the Democratic Party, and its abandonment of the call to "abolish ICE," Dan and Caroline agreed that an independent political alternative was necessary.

Evan, a 38-year-old filmmaker, has been visiting the caravan to distribute food he prepares at home. He said the attacks on the caravan "feel like a breaking point,

we constantly see many breaking points but this feels like a point of departure. The Mexican officials aren't doing enough, people are desperate and hungry, many of them haven't eaten for days."

"I saw part of the march against the migrants [led by Mexican nationalists] and could not believe the audacity of people to treat a group of hungry and desperate people this way." Evan said he was concerned that the military would provoke a conflict with the caravan, pointing out that "San Diego is the hub of militarism in the Southwest."

Alberto heard about the rally through a Facebook posting and showed up to express his support for the migrants. "We are a country of migrants," he said. "The idea that people have the right to go anywhere when their own country is facing immense violence is an important one. And to paint such people as 'criminals' is wrong. Migrants are workers, they work, they contribute to the economy, to the communities that they join."

As for the Democratic Party feigning concerns for immigrant rights, Alberto smiled in a resigned manner, saying, "Well, for them the election has passed." While the Republican Party is openly attacking the rights of migrants, the Democrats merely postured about caring so long as they thought it would benefit them in the elections. Alberto expressed his support for the notion that the defense of immigrant rights is in fact a defense of the rights of workers because the guns that were being trained at the caravan could just as easily be turned against the workers in this country.

Reporters also spoke with Ouseli and Jaipsi, who had come with family members to the rally. Ouseli, employed at a local community college, spoke passionately about the right of workers to seek asylum, and to find safety for themselves and their family members.

Particularly affected by the stories of Tijuana residents who had turned on the caravan, Ouseli said, "The attack on the caravan by Mexicans is because of the fear that is being spread amongst the workers that the migrants are there to take their jobs. It is the same kind of fear that is being spread in this country as well. But, such kinds of nationalism are both unnecessary and dangerous ... the migrants just want what all workers want, security and the right to a decent life."

Jaipsi said the nationalistic sentiments that are being

stoked up on both sides of the border ignore the decades of imperialist war that have created the conditions for such a caravan of workers to flee Central America in the first place.

While there is growing support for the caravan, what is required to defend the rights of immigrants is the fight for socialist internationalism. The omission of a critique of capitalism, the fundamental cause of imperialist war, poverty, and gang violence, is not a bout of mere forgetfulness, but represents the concrete politics of the fake-left organizations, which seek to keep the working class bound to the Democratic Party.



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