

Thousands attend vigil for Wadea al-Fayoume in Plainfield, Illinois

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Around two thousand people crowded into the gym and all around the parking lot of the Prairie Activity and Recreation Center in Plainfield on Tuesday to recognize the life and death of Wadea al-Fayoume. Fayoume was a Palestinian-American 6-year-old murdered last Saturday by his 71-year old landlord in a vicious hate crime. Wadea's mother, Hanaan Shahin, was also grievously injured in the attack. Hundreds attended the boy's funeral on Monday, and many, many more were present at the vigil the next day.

The White House, Justice Department and leading Illinois Democrats have stepped in to attempt to control the narrative and obscure their party's role in the murder, as the Biden administration intensifies its support for the genocidal war on Gaza. Earlier that same day, Israel Defense Forces struck a hospital a Netanyahu government spokesperson initially took credit for, claiming it was a Hamas cell location, before deleting his post on X/Twitter.

As the horrific civilian casualties became evident, the official media and government narrative shifted to claim Hamas had struck the hospital. The siege that began in retaliation against the October 7 Gaza uprising has set off protests internationally, with millions demonstrating in recent days, including hundreds of American Jews who traveled to Washington, DC to demand an immediate ceasefire.

Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker and Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson appeared at the boy's funeral yesterday, and the FBI and the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division are reportedly investigating the attacks, emphasizing the influence of right-wing talk radio on Czuba.

Everything was done to attempt to silence opposition to the war and obscure what really happened to Wadea.

Vigil organizers attempted to limit the views that could be expressed, warning at the beginning of the presentations, "If your feelings get too big, take a break, go outside."

A representative from the White House was introduced, Dilawar Syed, the Deputy Administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration, as a prominent Muslim appointee of Biden. He said, "Pres. Biden has been clear, there is no room for hate—" At this, the crowd could contain their disgust no longer.

Loud boos erupted and shouts of "Your president has blood on his hands!" and "What about the fake news?"

Wadea's grandfather addressed the crowd to speak about how the ideological atmosphere of total war resulted in his grandson's murder. He said, "Our loss of our son, this gentleman [Czuba] was one of the best friends of the family. He loved him, brought him toys, treated him as a grandkid, but unfortunately the wrong message when it comes to certain people becomes a killing machine..."

"Our media, our Congress, even our president. They come out and give us wrong info, wrong details, and it goes into their mind. So, this gentleman went from one of the best men to that child ... and when we heard it, we couldn't believe it."

World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke with many participants, some agreeing to appear on camera and noting that to do so was an important political decision and referring to the doxxing and harassment taking place.

Six women spoke with the WSWS on condition of anonymity and explained that they left the event early when the organizer asked those who did not agree with

the prohibition on politics to remain silent.

“If you’re emotional, step out,” one young woman said. “Insulting. We left! We all left. As soon as we heard ‘we’re blessed to have the representative from the White House,’ we were gone. We’re out.”

One older woman described her anger and sorrow at the siege taking place: “People’s lives matter! It’s not right to do this. The Jewish people tell about what Hitler did to them. They’re doing the same things. How? How can you? It’s heartbreaking.”

A young woman said, “It’s extremely insensitive that they had a White House representative come when we all know the stance of the president.”

Then an older woman added, “He’s sent all these weapons to kill innocent people. People who have been fighting for seventy years for their land.”

Another young woman said, “There was no mention of Palestine in the vigil. There was not much mention of the war. It was kind of turned into a narrative about Plainfield, when it’s a much bigger issue they’re failing to address.”

“Yeah exactly,” one of the older women said. “It’s not a ‘conflict’, it’s an occupied place. They’re defending their land.”

A young woman said, “We spoke with someone who was planning to do a speech tonight, and they let us know that it was almost like they were revising it and making sure that certain things weren’t said. Like obviously mentioning Palestine. It feels like this was filtered.”



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