

“It reminds us of what happened during Iraq”

Protests against US-backed Gaza genocide continue in New York City

Our reporters
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Thousands of workers and youth gathered in Queens, New York City, Wednesday evening to protest the unfolding genocide in Gaza, hours after US President Joe Biden concluded discussions with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, indicating full US backing for a ground invasion. Earlier that day, hundreds of students, faculty and staff joined a protest at the Graduate Student Center of the City College of New York (CUNY) in Manhattan.

The day before, on Tuesday, hundreds of New York University students and employees demonstrated in Washington Square Park against the US-backed genocide. All protests were accompanied by a very heavy presence of the New York City Police Department which is known to maintain close ties to the Israeli military and police.

At the protest in Queens on Wednesday, the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to a group of medical workers from the borough. One of them said, “Genocide is happening right now and we see people coming together in the spaces they can—social media, the streets, DC. It just feels like everybody is going to be rallying to save Palestinians and stop what’s happening in Gaza, the escalation toward a ground invasion, calling for a ceasefire and Palestine’s right to be.”

Another medical worker said,

What brings me here is the oppression of innocent lives and the slaughter of innocent lives. Although the media is covering that there was a terror attack a week ago, the killing and displacement of the Palestinian people have been going on for the past 75 years, since the Nakba. We’re here for human rights, we’re here for the ability of people to have access to food, water, resources, healthcare, education. That’s all taken away from a certain group of people whereas we can all co-exist, like we do in New York City. We live in a melting pot, peacefully, we work together, we live together, we have our own food, we have businesses.

His friend chimed in, denouncing the war propaganda in the media,

It reminds us of what happened during Iraq. They were talking about looking for weapons of mass destruction and there were none. Thousands of lives were lost and they cannot take back those words. We are seeing this all over again with Israel and Benjamin Netanyahu. For example, with the hospital

attack recently, there’s a back and forth about who did the attack. Israel claims that Hamas did it. But it was determined that the hospital was bombed by aircraft and the Palestinians have no aircraft.

Another protester, also a health care worker, then added,

It’s really sad that the US is backing these countries with billions of dollars when in our own country there’s issues with healthcare. Even veterans who are suicidal and have PTSD are homeless and they cannot get the help that they need. They’re getting back from these other countries, it’s really terrible. But at the end of the day the dollar runs the world.

At CUNY, WSWs reporters spoke to dozens of students and passersby who joined the protest. Ayaan, a CUNY alumnus, attended the protest, and told the WSWs, “I’m here today to support the people of Palestine and the Palestinian movement against the Zionists, against the Israeli aggression towards them. I feel this isn’t right for humanity. Israel has been doing this for 70 odd years. Yesterday, you saw a hospital get bombed. That just violates all international law. It’s not even about religion, it’s not just because I’m Muslim. The hospital that got bombed was Christian. It’s about humanity.”

Asked about the media coverage in the US,

They’re not giving Palestinians the right coverage. A six-year old boy got murdered senselessly, it’s terrible. It’s because the media is focusing on certain things, which is causing people to commit such violent acts. The US in general has been supplying money for these violent acts for so many years, whether it was Biden, Obama, etc. You know where this money is going. It’s going towards killing innocent civilians, humans. And you just keep supplying them with billions and billions of dollars. That is our tax money which is going to kill innocent people, which isn’t right.

Tyler, a graduate student in philosophy at CUNY, said, “The situation in Gaza has been a tragedy forever, especially in light of

what's going on right now, it's a disaster. I think it's genocidal. That's it, how else to put it."

Discussing the role of the Biden administration and the Democratic Party in this conflict, he said, "I've become kind of really disillusioned with American politics more generally, not just simply the Democratic Party. I grew up Democrat, my family has been Democratic for ages, but once I grew up I realized they weren't doing anything for the people, they only care about their own interests. This is another example of that."

The US media coverage conflict, he said, has been "absolutely ridiculous. The people of Palestine are consistently dehumanized, almost showcased as non-entities, whereas citizens of Israel are portrayed as though they can do no wrong, which obviously isn't the case, we're witnessing a genocide."

Nader, a student at CUNY's law school, said, "The Biden administration is playing a role in escalating things and perhaps driving the whole planet to an unknown place. I definitely see the danger of a regional and global conflict. Escalating things in Gaza will lead to a regional war."

Mohamed, a cab driver in New York City, attended the protest with his two daughters.

"I'm Muslim and the people who are dying over there are my brothers. And the kids over there are my kids as well. That's why I'm here. What's happening over there is criminal, it's a war crime, [these are] criminal people. I'm standing here with my Palestinian people."

His 12-year old daughter who attended the protest with her younger sibling said, "They treat animals better than people in Palestine. It's sick how they go into hospitals, shoot little kids, children and they kill the women. I cannot even imagine it, it's so disgusting. Those are my Muslim brothers and sisters and I cannot do anything because I'm young but I want to put my voice out there to support Palestine, in any way I can."

Another student also spoke about the role of the Biden administration in the genocide,

The Biden administration has vilified the Palestinians from the beginning, no different from the Netanyahu government. Any recent lukewarm statement of sympathy at this point is because of public pressure. Biden is traveling to the Middle East now with sinister intentions. The major world governments, like any corporations with any kind of power, the stances that they're taking to try to turn people against Palestinians are due to self-interest. It benefits them to be aligned with Israel. And it's always been self-interest. It's always been about maintaining power. I think that's why they're carrying out this hate-filled propaganda campaign. And in the process, they are very conscious of the fact that this is hurting Palestinians. Seeing the passion, the conviction, the solidarity coming from the people across the globe has made me really proud. Seeing people come together like this really shows that we are on the right side of history. Ultimately, I think that resistance starts with the people. We do have the power, like within this country, to prevent further genocide and to ultimately long-term end this occupation.

In another indication of growing mass opposition both to the unfolding genocide and the complicity of US imperialism in it, earlier

on Tuesday, at NYU, between 300 and 500 protesters gathered on Tuesday afternoon in Washington Square Park. The protests took place after the NYU administration explicitly backed the pro-war narrative in the US media over the conflict, and attacked Ryna Workman, a law student, for a principled statement in defense of the Palestinian people.

In discussion with the IYSSE, several NYU law students expressed the wide-spread opposition on campus to Workman's victimization.

A third-year law student studying to be a public defender stated, "It is the responsibility of the Administration to make sure Ryna's rights are protected but they do not, even though the Administration knows what is happening in Gaza involves a genocidal state. The apartheid has been going on for a century and it is important to stand with those people. It is shameful the Administration would blindly support Israel. I think they act from beholdenness to wealthy donors and they defend the status quo. They are blind to atrocities."

Speaking on the removal of Workman as president of the Student Bar Association (SBA) because of their pro-Palestinian statement, a second-year law student told the IYSSE, "I am disappointed in the Administration for not protecting a student personal information from being spread so there are threats against them. The SBA did this but the Administration remained silent when they should be protecting this student. It is in the interest of people is to band together to stop this. Eight members of the SBA have resigned. None spoke on their positions on the conflict in Gaza but they have been getting threatening messages, from both sides."

An international student explained, "NYU wants to censor students like Ryna Workman who oppose the invasion by Israel, but international students like myself are even more restricted. If I say something I can get kicked out of the US. I am from India, where President Modi acts like Israel. Israel's attack is clearly criminal."

Another law student declared, "People should not be victimized for speaking out about genocide. It is completely against the role of the university. The university has failed."



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