

# Palestinian American hospitalized following suspected hate-crime vehicle assault in Cleveland, Ohio

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Over the weekend, millions of people around the world peacefully protested the US-NATO-backed Israeli genocide of the Palestinian people. These protests, documented extensively on the *World Socialist Web Site*, included workers, young people, immigrants, students and the elderly of all ethnicities and religions, including Jewish people who reject the antisemitic lie that Judaism is synonymous with Zionism and support for the Israeli government.

An entire generation has been politicized by the unanimous backing of every major imperialist government and capitalist politician for the Netanyahu regime's ethnic cleansing campaign in Gaza in the wake of the October 7 incursion by Hamas forces into Israel. In just over two weeks of sustained military operations by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) against the trapped civilian population of Gaza, IDF bombs and bullets have killed over 5,000 people, including 2,055 Palestinian children, according to Defense for Children International-Palestine (DCI-Palestine)

In response to this slaughter, protests in the United States have been overwhelmingly peaceful. Yet police, and far-right and Zionist elements, encouraged by genocidal statements issued by US and Israeli government officials, violently attacked protesters and innocent bystanders this past weekend.

On Monday, the Cleveland, Ohio, branch of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-Cleveland) called on state and federal officials to investigate an alleged hate crime vehicle assault that occurred on Sunday afternoon. According to CAIR-Cleveland, a 20-year-old Palestinian American man walking home after eating lunch was hit by a dark SUV while on Cook Road in Cleveland.

The victim reported the driver yelling anti-Palestinian threats before striking him, including "Kill all Palestinians" and "Long live Israel." The victim dodged out of the way from the first attempt to run him down. However, the driver allegedly turned around and hit him while yelling "Die!"

CAIR-Cleveland shared a photo of the man hospitalized at St. John Westshore Hospital for his injuries suffered during the attack. CAIR-Cleveland noted in its press release that the organization has documented an "increase in incidents of anti-Muslim bigotry in the weeks following the escalation of violence in Gaza."

Since the horrific murder of six-year-old Wadea al-Fayoume on October 14, CAIR has received reports of Muslims being attacked on public transportation in New York, a mosque vandalized in Philadelphia and a Muslim mother assaulted in the Bay Area for wearing a hijab.

A Sunday protest in Skokie, Illinois, ended in chaos with at least two arrests after one person was hit by a car, a man shot a pistol into the air and someone sprayed protesters and police with pepper spray. According to local news reports, roughly 200 pro-Palestine protesters had gathered outside an "Israel solidarity" event organized by the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Ateres Ayala in Skokie, a suburb of Chicago.

According to witnesses, social media footage and a *Chicago Sun-Times* reporter, as the event inside was winding down, a 39-year-old man drove a black sedan toward the pro-Palestinian protesters before getting out of his car. Once he got out of his car, the man chased after a female protester. As he was running after her, other protesters surrounded him at which point he pulled out his

gun and fired a shot into the air. A witness told a *Sun-Times* reporter that the man's car had several Israeli flags.

On Monday, police announced that the man lived in Chicago, had a concealed carry permit and would not be facing any charges.

Shortly after the shooting on Sunday, another altercation broke out after a different man, draped in an Israeli flag, grabbed a Palestinian flag from a protester. When the latter tried to retrieve their flag, witnesses say the man wearing an Israeli flag pulled out a "can of mace" and sprayed it into the crowd, hitting protesters, a police officer and a *Sun-Times* reporter.

Speaking to the *Sun-Times*, one pro-Palestinian protester said, "We did expect them to come out and say a few disgusting things and to try and scare us; they always do that. I didn't think at any point they'd use pepper spray." One of the victims of the pepper spray attack told the paper they wanted to press hate crime charges. "It was very scary. ... Honestly I'm still feeling the effects."

Drone footage captured by *Unicorn Riot* during a protest Sunday in Minneapolis, Minnesota, showed a vehicle trying to drive through a group of protesters.

According to *Unicorn Riot*, the driver first threatened protesters with a box cutter and then later a knife, before driving through the crowd, injuring at least two people. As of Sunday night, Minneapolis police had yet to announce any arrests.

An October 21 pro-Palestine protest in Eugene, Oregon, ended in one arrest after a fascist wearing a black trench coat fired a splatter ball gun at demonstrators Saturday afternoon. According to police and eyewitnesses, the man, identified as 51-year-old Jonathan Wisbey, drove his black pickup truck, which was adorned with right-wing bumper stickers, including a Gadsden "Don't Tread on Me" flag and "Punisher" stickers, to the front of the march in an attempt to block the crowd. While blocking the march with his truck, Wisbey began to cuss at the protesters at which point one of them slashed his tires with a knife.

In response, Wisbey drew his splatter ball gun, which looks very similar to a pistol and shoots gel beads, and began firing it into the crowd. As Wisbey was shooting,

two other protesters, armed with real pistols, drew on Wisbey causing him to drop his weapon. Eugene police officers detained all three armed persons, with Wisbey being charged with menacing, second-degree disorderly conduct and first-degree bias crime.

While only a select few violent counter-protesters have been arrested, at two pro-Palestinian protests in New York City, one on Friday, the other on Saturday, over 150 people were arrested. On Friday, 139 people were arrested after blocking traffic outside Senator Kristen Gillibrand's office. Protesters called on Gillibrand to stop supporting US military aid for Israel and to provide humanitarian support to Palestinians.

On Saturday night, following a large peaceful protest attended by thousands of people in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, police officers with the New York Police Department's (NYPD) Strategic Response Group, many of whom have been trained by the IDF, rioted against protesters, before carrying out nearly 20 arrests.

Independent New York-based journalist Talia Jane reported that police blocked the march from moving in any direction before assaulting the crowd. "NYPD created a horseshoe blockade," Jane reported, "forcing the protest to a halt, then declared it unlawful and began making arrests as protests had nowhere to go. *Nothing* happened prior to this."

Of the 19 people arrested, three were under the age of 17. Speaking to the *Gothamist* following the arrests, Nerdeen Kiswanin, founder of Within Our Lifetime, one of the organizers of Saturday's rally, said, "We wanted to come together to make it unequivocally clear that we stand with the people of Gaza and Palestine. It's our right to protest, it's constitutionally protected. You cannot demand that protest ends."



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