

Louisiana college students hold protest at Tulane University denouncing Israel's genocidal war against Gaza

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27 October 2023

Israel's genocidal war against the Palestinians in Gaza has provoked mass outrage and opposition across the United States and internationally. For weeks, millions of people across the world of all backgrounds, ethnicities and religions have held demonstrations and protests against the crimes of the far-right Israeli government, which has the full support of the Biden administration and all the imperialist powers.

Students have been at the forefront of this growing antiwar movement, holding protests and demonstrations at campuses across the US. Despite a concerted campaign to intimidate students and suppress opposition—waged by university administrations, corporate donors, and politicians—students have continued to demand an end to the war, the occupation of Palestine and US military aid to Israel.

As part of this growing movement, students at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, held a rally Thursday in support of the Palestinian people. Students from Loyola University, which is adjacent to Tulane, also attended.

Despite pressure from the university, including one-sided statements from Tulane's President Michael Fitts denouncing Hamas' "terrorist attacks" and multiple pro-Zionist articles in the student newspaper, over 100 people participated in the protest.

Prior to the rally, Jewish and Muslim student organizers issued an open letter to the university in which they demanded the university denounce Israel's genocide of the Palestinian people, divest from Israel, and condemn instances of Islamophobia against Arab and Muslim students.

A group of Zionists counter-protested the rally. At least two people were arrested during an altercation that broke out between the groups. Tulane University responded by saying it is increasing campus security, as well as discouraging students from participating in further protests that are not officially sanctioned.

Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* attended the

rally and spoke to several students.

A Tulane student, Ale, who helped build for the rally said, "I think it's very important, in the face of violence that a lot of people aren't talking about, and I think it's important to show compassion for a group of people who are being villianized and criminalized right now. I think that all lives should be important, not just Jewish lives and not just Palestinian lives. I feel like Palestinian students and Palestinian people in general must feel very alienated in the US right now, and I think that it is important that we show support and that their lives also matter."

Reflecting on the cover-up by the corporate media of the mass movement against Israel's slaughter, she added, "It's very purposeful to make people feel alone in supporting Palestine, and to make people feel like nobody supports the view that they do. It's an intimidation tactic. I think, as we all know, media is not always representative, it's not always democratic, and it is dominated by the view that the government wants us to believe."

She emphasized that the one-sided propaganda was creating "not only suppression but also obfuscation and makes it so that people don't feel confident to take a stand. I think a lot of people's hearts are in the right place, but when you hear propaganda about murdered babies and Biden backing up claims that aren't fact-checked, it makes it so hard to take a stand without feeling like you are lacking compassion for anyone. I feel like the lack of accurate media coverage, from my perspective, is definitely the issue that is mattering a lot to me. A lot more people could be out here if there was accurate information given."

She observed that the efforts to criminalize protests "will lead to a culture of suppression of any views. It's part of a broader movement, and I feel like we've been moving as a nation more and more toward that now, when any resistance, even non-violent resistance is inherently criminalized."

Colette, a student from Loyola, said that she attended the rally "to show that Loyola as a whole but also me as a

person, are proudly anti-genocide. You have to make the choice to actively condemn the actions and the harm that's going on. It's innocent Palestinian lives, an invasion of their homes. You have to actively condemn that."

Speaking on Biden's support for Israel she said, "As Americans we should be ashamed in our federal government, in our military, to back this. I come from a military family but this is purely shameful. This pushes capitalism, it pushes revenue. It pushes sociopolitical agendas over human lives."

She spoke against military aid to Israel and the broader drive to war. "We need to change the military-industrial system. You can't have a war unless you have people in the military and people are going into the military because they do not have access to education. That's a huge thing why people join the military—access to education. For my dad, for my stepdad, my step dad's two kids. They are going into the military because they do not have access to education because of the 1 percent hoarding wealth, because of [capitalist] society."

Two other Tulane students, who wished to remain anonymous, relayed that many students have been afraid to speak out in support of Palestine. "There haven't been opportunities to voice support for Palestine on this campus. This is the first opportunity that's felt like there might be some level of safety." They reported that Arabic students had been verbally harassed on campus.

The students denounced the US government's blanket support for Israel. One stated, "It's far from the first time I've been embarrassed by the United States, but being the only UN veto for a ceasefire resolution is absolutely ridiculous. Why are we sending billions of dollars, and the biggest warships in the world, to suppress a group that's already been oppressed to the point of starvation?"

Asked about the WSWs' call to unite the international working class in a socialist movement to end war, the students agreed on the need to overcome national and other divisions. One said, "A world movement, ideally, would be great. It's challenging because of a lot of these groups are pitted against each other. In order to reach socialism, we have to break this barrier of militarizing against one another."

"I agree," the second student added. "I want to emphasize how social media is breaking down those barriers. We can relate more across international boundaries."

Another Loyola student, Elsie, spoke on the long history that preceded the current crisis. "I'm here today because Israel has an unlawful and violent occupation of Palestine. They've been murdering them and killing them violently since the Nakba in the 1940s. My friends and I went to visit

our friend in Palestine this summer, and I saw firsthand what they do to them. I was only there for four days, but I saw the violent checkpoints. I was with my friend in a car while they shot at us from tanks. I saw them not let people into mosques. I saw people with AK-47s threatening innocent civilians to step forward to a checkpoint.

"It amazes me that most people in the world don't actually know that this is going on, and it's really important that this propaganda is cut through and that people know what's going on so that Palestine can be free, and the indigenous people of their own land can live in peace."

She continued, "I'm very scared for what the land invasion will look like for Gaza. It is terrifying to think about, and I don't think any of us are prepared for the amount of death that's probably going to come. But that's why we have to keep trying to make our voices known, try to demand from our countries, even if it's not in a peaceful way, that they stop funding these occupations, these violent military regimes, and we have to stand up. They're not going to listen to us through our votes, our voting system is rigged. They don't care, they just want to spend billions of dollars on military weapons."

Students were very receptive to the WSWs' call to build an international socialist movement to end the genocidal war against Gaza and to unite the working class in all countries.

To get involved with the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), which is fighting to build such a movement in the US and internationally, reach out today.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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