

“They’re starving us to pay for these wars”

New York City postal workers speak out against Israeli genocide in Gaza

Robert Milkowski, A. Woodson
3 November 2023

Postal workers at one of the biggest mail processing and distribution centers (PDC) in the country are speaking out against the Israeli onslaught against the people of the Gaza Strip, a sign of growing opposition to the war in the American working class.

On Thursday, reporters visited the Morgan PDC in lower Manhattan during shift change to discuss the recent WSWs statement, “A call to the working class and youth: Stop the imperialist-Zionist genocide in Gaza!” They also spoke to workers about the recent anti-Zionist speech to the AFL CIO leadership by American Postal Workers Union president Mark Dimondstein. Dimondstein was the only member of the AFL-CIO executive council to speak out against Israel’s genocide in the Gaza Strip, with the rest of the union bureaucracy lining up openly behind American imperialism’s support for the right-wing Israeli regime. However, the text of the speech has not been published and Dimondstein has not issued appeals for postal workers to oppose the war.

Among postal workers, there is a sharp feeling that the massive growth of military conflict all over the world was connected with and paid for by worsening conditions for workers at home. Indeed, postal workers are confronting a massive restructuring program, mis-named “Delivering for America,” which aims to cut tens of thousands of jobs and close thousands of local post offices over the next decade. It is being implemented with the full support of both major parties. In response, postal workers have formed the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee to, in the words of its founding statement, “provide us with means to share information that is being withheld from us, to freely discuss strategy, and to coordinate joint actions across the country” independent of the pro-corporate union bureaucracy.

One APWU worker said, “It is sad. It is tragic. There should be no killing, and the Israelis are killing thousands of children. I’ll take some of your leaflets and pass them out to my co-workers.” She took about a dozen leaflets to pass out.

Another, when asked about their thoughts on Gaza, replied, “They need to stop, stop, stop!” Another said, “It’s genocide! We need to defend Palestine from Israel—absolutely!”

Another Morgan worker addressed the contrast between the continuous cuts to social spending and worsening pay and living conditions for workers, and the limitless money for war. “They gotta stop! We’ve got people here starving, living on the street, and the government is sending money over there to kill people? It’s crazy!”

Another worker observed, “It’s like Smedley Butler said, ‘all wars are bankers’ wars.’” This was in reference to the former Marine Corps general who famously wrote the book *War is a Racket* in 1935.

A 20-year APWU member declared: “What is going on with the Palestinians is wrong. It is bad. What is being done to the Palestinians is genocide. It is systematic ethnic cleansing. This is a total violation of all UN resolutions. And unfortunately, this is being funded by US taxpayers. Unfortunately this is being handed over by Biden.”

“The war in Ukraine is wrong. Putin is trying to seize Crimea, and NATO felt they couldn’t let him get away with that. But we are dealing with a system where every country is trying to advance their own best economic interests. They are continuing the wars to advance their own interests alone. They are not protecting humanity, and this includes the United States.

He also connected wars abroad with austerity at home. “Since 2007 the unions have betrayed us by putting in tiers. A job with the Post Office used to be a good job. At USPS, they have now gotten a taste of low-wage workers, and they will never give that up. In 2007, they were supposed to open up the books so we could see what was going on in the Post Office. That didn’t happen. But in a few years, the Post Office will be a minimum-wage job. We are getting closer every contract.

“I know a lot of workers now at USPS who are taking

home less than \$10 an hour now. These are the [lower tier] PSEs and CCAs. Once all the deductions are subtracted and the union dues are taken out, these workers, who are only making \$15 to \$17 dollars an hour to start with, they take home less than \$10 an hour, and they may not even get 40 hours a week. The Post Office used to be a job where a worker could better their situation in life and move up to what they called a ‘middle class job.’ Now because of the unions and USPS they have taken that away. We have lost a lot.”

A mail handler at Morgan said, “What is happening in Gaza is horrible. It is bad. The media portrays the Palestinians as terrorists. They deserve freedom. These are their lands. But even if this wasn’t their land, they don’t deserve to be treated like this. I think Israel is carrying out genocide. I don’t like Biden.

“I just started studying what is happening in Gaza. I should have known more before, but take a look at my Instagram page.”

When asked about what should be done, and what she thought about the Palestinian trade unions’ call for workers all over to stop handling war materiel for Israel, the mail handler said, “I don’t want to not aid the Palestinians, but we also have to worry about our jobs. Everybody is scared. People aren’t speaking because they are scared. However, to see so many people turn their backs and don’t care, that is frustrating.

“But it is going to be like this. They need to threaten people like that because they are lying about what is going on. They are lying about the Palestinian attackers beheading the kids. Now they are not reporting at all about the mass demonstrations worldwide.

“I don’t agree with what the unions are doing. For instance, this is my first hour of work today, and this is when they have scheduled my break.”

Asked about socialism, she said, “I have thought about socialism, and it is getting more and more interesting.”

Another APWU explained, “Most of the people in here are against [the assault on Gaza], but they keep it to themselves because they’re afraid of repercussions, afraid for their jobs.”

“To me, I look at the situation in Gaza like another Holocaust, only against the Palestinians. But the Israeli government is doing it on a false premise, like they’re defending themselves and their land as if it has always been theirs.

“They try to make it seem like they’re just defending themselves after the attack on October 7. But I’m way beyond even considering that at this point, considering what they’re doing to the Palestinians now.”

When asked about the history of Zionism and the founding

of the state of Israel in 1948, he replied, “1948! If we go to 1948—they don’t want us to go to 1948 because 75 years of oppression of the Palestinians will come to light. The Germans instigated the Holocaust on the European Jews, not the Palestinians or the Muslim countries, in fact the Palestinians welcomed the Jews before 1948, they welcomed the Moors and the Moroccans too! The Palestinians took them in when no one else would.

“So I don’t understand how it’s fair for them to decide it was okay to give the victims of the Holocaust a piece of the Middle East. The Muslims didn’t kill the European Jews.

“A lot of people who were born after 1948 don’t know what happened. They assume the Israelis were always there and the Palestinians don’t want them to have a spot—like, ‘We were already here and then they came and attacked us!’ But that’s not the way it is.

“The first thing people need is to know what really happened. We have to stop letting them make up the narrative. Let’s get the real people together—really regular people—like us—who really don’t want to shoot each other—and tell the others the truth—because they’ll listen to us. Americans are in a bubble, behind the lines in the Empire.”

Asked about the divisions among workers, he made extremely important points against racialism and nationalism. “I’m just saying, we’ve got more things in common than we’ve got separating us. You got everybody based on flags. Flags aren’t people! Most borders are just lines the colonizers drew—they’re not real! They just decide it’s real.”

He concluded, “They’re starving us to pay for these wars. They’re killing us! You have to work six or seven days, that’s not correct. We should be working 35 hours. We’re losing everything we ever gained.”



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact