

# Democratic Socialists of America is a “key player” in Israel’s assault on Gaza

Andy Thompson  
7 November 2023

On Monday, *Jacobin* magazine, the leading publication associated with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), published an article by Liza Featherstone titled “Democratic Socialists of America Is a Key Player in the Fight Against Israel’s Assault on Gaza.” The piece is a frantic attempt at damage control as the DSA has been exposed for its support for Zionism and the State of Israel since the beginning of the genocide in Gaza one month ago.

DSA-backed candidates in Congress like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (a DSA member) and Bernie Sanders have spent the past few weeks shifting between making empty statements of opposition to the “humanitarian crisis” in Gaza and stating their unwavering support for the two-state “solution” in Palestine and Israeli’s right to “self-defense” as it has now killed over 10,000 Palestinian civilians.

The war against Gaza has caused the ongoing crisis within the DSA to accelerate. Hundreds of thousands in the US have demonstrated their opposition to the Biden administration and the Democratic Party, of which the DSA is a faction. They have been joined by millions more throughout the entire world in powerful displays of international support for Palestinians.

It is the largest mass movement against war since 2003. At that time, opposition to the Iraq war was channeled behind the Democratic Party. Now it is the Democratic Party and the Biden administration that are openly backing a genocide of the Palestinian people, while pursuing a war against Russia in Ukraine. The DSA, which has called upon its members and supporters to vote for Biden and has backed the NATO war against Russia, is now being exposed as an accomplice to genocide.

More and more young people and workers who mistakenly thought that they were supporting a socialist organization are now confronted with the bitter reality that the DSA is a pro-imperialist organization.

Featherstone’s article is a desperate and rather pathetic attempt to turn reality on its head and present the DSA as mounting an opposition to Israel’s genocide. What the article does not say is perhaps more revealing than what little it does.

In recounting the recent “actions” of the DSA, of which there are supposedly “too many to list,” Featherstone focuses on a handful of small demonstrations called at the offices of New York Congresspeople where the DSA politely asked them to sign onto a ceasefire resolution. She boasts that the resolution was sponsored by DSA-backed representatives Ocasio-Cortez, Cori Bush,

Rashida Tlaib and Jamaal Bowman.

Featherstone must assume her readers have no memory. After the bombings began against Gaza and the first pro-Palestinian demonstrations emerged, Ocasio-Cortez’s immediate response was to call for the protests to be “shut down.” She characterized the peaceful demonstrations in Times Square as “bigotry and callousness” and said that they were “unacceptable.”

One week later, on October 16, she doubled down in an interview on CNN where she said that she would vote to fund the Israeli Iron Dome missile system if a vote came to her desk. “I believe that Hamas needs to be dealt with,” she said, “on the sole principle of Iron Dome and defense, I absolutely think there’s an openness, for sure.”

The DSA’s members in Congress fully support the Democratic Party line, that Israel has a right to defend itself from the “terrorist” Hamas.

An earlier manifestation of the DSA’s Zionist political orientation came in 2021 when Jamaal Bowman voted to provide Israel with over \$4 billion to fund the Israeli military. Shortly after, Bowman traveled to Israel and met with then Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, who was previously chief of staff to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and leader of the far-right Yamina Party. The fascist Bennett once bragged, “I have killed lots of Arabs in my life—and there is no problem with that.”

After a section of DSA members called for Bowman to be expelled for backing the Zionist state, the DSA National Political Committee issued a statement saying that it would take no action against Bowman.

Featherstone makes no mention of this. Instead, she writes that the DSA has been “bird-dogging” Democratic members of Congress. If that wasn’t enough to convince you of their efforts, she then proudly declares that the DSA has carried out its biggest call-your-congressmen campaign yet!

One can only imagine the fear that must be consuming Hakeem Jeffries when he instructs his aides to delete the messages on his answering machine.

Notably, Featherstone’s article says nothing about the positions of Bernie Sanders, who the DSA has backed full-stop since his initial run for president in 2016. Last week Sanders published a statement where he offered up that Gaza is facing a “catastrophe” and that humanitarian aid should be provided, as if it had been hit by an earthquake and not bombs built and paid for by the United States.

His statement then turned into a war mongering diatribe against Hamas, parroting the propaganda that Hamas executed infants. “The people of Israel were horrified and outraged by this attack. Understandably, many wanted to strike back forcefully,” he wrote.

During his presidential campaigns, Sanders has said that he believes “some wars are necessary.” Sanders has supported imperialist wars for decades, including the 1993 US intervention in the Somalian civil war, the NATO air war against Serbia in 1999, and the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan.

On Friday, Sanders called the police on pro-Palestinian demonstrators outside his Senate office. Capital police were mobilized, and arrested over 50 people who were demanding that Sanders call for a ceasefire.

These positions should not come as a surprise. They are in line with the political function and orientation of the DSA leadership. But to the many people who have supported Sanders and the DSA, falsely believing them to be socialist, the events have come as a shock.

Forced to admit that prominent figures in the DSA like historian Maurice Isserman have broken from the organization, Featherstone ends her article by interviewing Ashik Siddique, a member of DSA’s National Political Committee, who claims that “DSA members are the most united I have ever seen us.”

Featherstone also omits the fact that she has promoted Democratic Party leaders who are now among those most fervently backing Israel’s genocide. This includes Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer, who she wrote “has embraced some of the socialists’ top priorities” and New York Governor Kathy Hochul, who she wrote is “somewhat responsive to socialist demands.”

The same evening Featherstone’s article was published, another group announced it was breaking with the DSA. The Palestine Solidarity Working Group announced on Twitter that it was formally ending its affiliation with DSA, stating, “At convention, DSA National voted against upholding anti-Zionism ... It should come as no shock due to the repeated attacks our group faced within DSA that we do not believe it is a safe space for our members to organize due to repeated targeting, doxxing, leadership bans, and even the attempted expulsion of one of our founding members.”

There is one other glaring omission from Featherstone’s article: the working class. Workers have been disgusted at what they have seen unfolding in Gaza and have no interest in supporting Biden and Netanyahu’s genocide. Workers in Belgium and Spain have followed the call of Palestinian trade unions to refuse the handling of any weapons going to support the massacres in Gaza.

Featherstone and the DSA have totally ignored this call of the Palestinian unions. They hope to hide the call for strikes from the public. More than anything else they fear the mobilization of the working class.

The AFL-CIO union bureaucracy, in which the DSA is thoroughly embedded, has begun a clamp-down on calls for strikes and refusals to handle weapons. Two of the leading members of the AFL-CIO executive committee, United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain and Teamsters President Sean O’Brien, have been promoted by the DSA.

Fain has said nothing about the genocide, focusing his efforts on

ramming through sell out contracts for 150,000 autoworkers at the Big Three auto companies. He has been in constant communication with the Biden administration to coordinate the shutdown of the Big Three strike and subordinate workers to the imperialist war drive.

The workers in these two unions alone could bring the Israeli war to a screeching halt. Workers in the UAW and Teamsters are involved in manufacturing and transportation that is critical to the production and shipment of weapons to Israel.

Only Will Lehman, the rank-and-file socialist candidate in the 2022 UAW presidential election, has made an appeal directly to the working class. On November 2 Lehman issued a statement demanding that the UAW cease producing any equipment for the Israeli military.

The DSA on the other hand cannot even remind its readers that the working class exists. This is not an organization of opposition to the Democratic Party. Quite the contrary, the DSA is a loyal faction of the state apparatus.

Their role is to disorient, confuse, and trap the anti-war movement in the Democratic Party and prevent it from developing an independent socialist character.

That hundreds of DSA members are disgusted with this rotten organization and its assistance in the genocide of Palestinians is a healthy development. But it must also be accompanied by a total break with middle-class politics and appeals to the Democrats.

The working class, the great majority of the world’s population, who are opposed to war and are expressing solidarity with the Palestinians, is the powerful revolutionary force that can change the course of events and mount a defense of Gaza. It is this force that must be mobilized. Workers and young people who have joined the demonstrations against genocide should take up the fight to build a genuine socialist leadership in the working class.

This is the program that the Socialist Equality Parties and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality are fighting for. All those who agree should contact us today.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**