

Outside Democratic Party headquarters in Washington D.C.

US Capitol Police attack peaceful Jewish protesters and their allies at vigil against Gaza genocide

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Outside the Democratic Party headquarters in Washington D.C. on Wednesday night, Capitol Police officers rioted against some 200 protesters attempting to hold a candlelight vigil and peaceful ceasefire protest over the killing of more than 12,000 Palestinians in the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza.

Despite the peaceful character of Wednesday's demonstration, which featured protesters singing songs and chanting, Capitol Police officers responded aggressively. When protesters with Jewish Voice for Peace, IfNotNow and the Democratic Socialists of America locked arms in front of the entrance and exit of the Democratic National Committee office building while leading Democrats were inside, the police escalated their assault.

Video shows that as protesters, who were facing away from the building and not attempting to enter it, were chanting for a ceasefire, police charged them and threw at least one of them down the stairs. One protester confirmed having suffered a concussion from the police assault.

In total, some 90 protesters were injured by cops, according to a statement by IfNotNow, one of the Jewish organizations that led the protest. The organization said its members were given no warning before police attacked them with pepper spray, bicycle thrusts, punches and kicks. One person reported being thrown against a wall and choked by a cop, while another reported being grabbed him by the hair and flung to the ground.

In a statement issued on Twitter/(X), Capitol Police confirmed that they arrested one protester for "assault," although they have yet to release any evidence of the alleged assault. Police claim that six of their officers suffered minor injuries, presumably while beating unarmed protesters.

The protest coincided with a Democratic Congressional

Campaign Committee (DCCC) fundraiser that was being held inside the building. The fundraiser included virtually the entire House Democratic leadership, including Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, Minority Whip Katherine Clark and Caucus Chair Pete Aguilar.

Jeffries was one of several politicians who spoke in favor of the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people at the "March for Israel" pro-genocide rally, a state-sponsored demonstration that was held the day before. In a statement issued Thursday morning by Jeffries, Clark, Aguilar and DCCC Chair Suzan DelBene, the Democratic Party leadership claimed, falsely, that "protesters escalated their activity in a manner that exceeded a peaceful demonstration."

Joining the Democratic leadership in denouncing the protesters, not the police, as violent instigators was California Democratic Rep. Brad Sherman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Sherman is an over two-decade-long defender of US imperialism in Congress. In an October 14 appearance on Fox News, Sherman called for military packages to Ukraine and Israel, with the latter including "advanced munitions, artillery shells" and "replenishment of the Iron Dome."

Sherman, who was inside the Democratic Party HQ during the protest, wrote on Twitter/(X) that he was "evacuated from the #DNC after pro-terrorist, anti-Israel protesters grew violent, pepper spraying police officers and attempting to break into the building."

"Apparently," Sherman added, "these pro-Hamas demonstrators want Republicans to prevail in the next Congressional election."

After lying on social media, Sherman was welcomed on CNN Wednesday night and Fox News Thursday morning, where he again slandered protesters and falsely claimed that they used pepper spray and instigated the violence with the police. “Their willingness to attack police, like they did with pepper spray, is a force multiplier,” Sherman said on CNN and Fox.

One unnamed Democratic representative told Axios that Wednesday’s protest “scared me more than January 6.”

To compare what happened on January 6, a multi-hour assault by several thousand fascists who took over the Capitol building, to 200 peaceful protesters, most of them Jewish, protesting in front of a building calling for a ceasefire, while the politicians were wining and dining inside, is provocative and reactionary.

Wednesday’s protest was one of dozens that have been organized by liberal groups in the US in the last month that seek to pressure war-criminal politicians into adopting a ceasefire position by engaging in non-violent civil disobedience. While numerous protests have been held in the US and internationally, involving millions of people, politicians in capitalist “democracies” have ignored popular demands for a ceasefire, slandering the protesters as “antisemitic” and branding the demonstrations as “hate marches,” while funneling billions in arms to the genocidal Israeli government.

Joining Democrats in slandering the mostly Jewish protesters and their allies as Hamas-supporting antisemites were several Republicans, many of whom played a central role in Trump’s failed coup.

Christian fascist House Speaker Mike Johnson, who, like Jeffries, participated in the “Stand for Israel” pro-genocide rally on Tuesday, wrote on his Twitter/(X) account that “pro-Hamas protesters ... violently attacked the Democratic National Committee headquarters. I condemn this criminal activity, which injured six brave Capitol Police officers, in the strongest terms. As Americans, we must unite with one voice in steadfast support of our ally Israel.”

Johnson added that Congress “will not be intimidated by this vile display of antisemitism.”

Arkansas Senator Tom Cotton called on the Biden administration to “use every law-enforcement tactic against these pro-Hamas insurrectionists that it has used in the January 6 cases.”

“Track them down, arrest them, convict them, and lock ’em up,” the fascist Republican demanded.

While Democratic and Republican politicians locked arms in supporting police violence against peaceful anti-genocide protesters, as of this writing, so-called “progressives” and phony socialists like Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rep. Cori Bush and Rep. Jamaal Bowman have yet to release a statement refuting the false claims of their “colleagues” that the protesters were violent Hamas supporters who pepper sprayed the police.

This silence is not a mistake. As Israel began its carpet bombing of Gaza after October 7, leading to mass protests in New York City, Ocasio-Cortez condemned the protests as an expression of “hatred” and “antisemitism” and called for them to be “shut down.”

“It should not be so hard to shut down hatred and antisemitism where we see it,” Ocasio-Cortez said.

The bipartisan support for police violence against peaceful protesters underscores that the fight against ethnic cleansing and imperialist war can not be won by appealing to the capitalist parties responsible for the slaughter.

The Democratic Party, which has proven unable and unwilling to defend democratic rights in America, or anywhere else, would sooner join hands with their fascistic “Republican colleagues” to imprison antiwar demonstrators than take up their demand for an end to the genocide and ethnic cleansing being carried out by the fascist Zionist regime of Benjamin Netanyahu.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* noted in a November 9 statement of the International Committee of the Fourth International, published as its Perspective column, the fight against Israel’s genocide in Gaza “must be based not on pressuring governments, but on struggle against them all.”



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