

# New York City educators hold rally outside UFT headquarters to demand union call for ceasefire in Gaza

Sandy English  
20 November 2023

On Wednesday, about 250 New York City educators and supporters rallied in front of the headquarters of the United Federation of Teachers' (UFT) monthly Delegate Assembly to demand the union leadership call for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. The union's headquarters are located in Manhattan's financial district.

The rally was organized by the Movement of Rank-and-File Educators (MORE), a caucus in the UFT that holds a few seats in the Delegate Assembly, and the New York City Educators for Palestine. Present also were members of Jewish Voices for Peace.

Several educators made passionate speeches to the rally, denouncing the killing of children and the need to halt the genocide, and to respect the human rights of the Palestinian people. The rally, which included many Jewish educators (for well over a century, a large percentage of educators in New York City have been Jewish), chanted the popular "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free," which the government and media have falsely claimed is antisemitic. They also chanted slogans against President Biden for his unrelenting support for Zionism and the genocide.

Inside at the assembly, there was debate on a proposed resolution condemning both Israeli and Palestinian violence. MORE supporters and others sought to amend the resolution to include a call for an unconditional ceasefire. But pro-Zionist forces in the assembly sought to include language condemning Hamas. When MORE's amendments were defeated, some 20–25 delegates walked out in protest.

The rally demonstrated the outrage of New York City teachers over the genocide, part of a massive antiwar movement which has involved tens of millions of

people around the world. But it also underscored the ironclad support of the union bureaucracy for US imperialism and for war. The mass movement will have the power it needs to stop the genocide once it becomes rooted in the working class. But that is bound up with the need for a rebellion against the pro-corporate union apparatus and the formation of new organizations, rank-and-file committees, to organize a fight against the bureaucracy.

Supporters of the *World Socialist Web Site* distributed 230 leaflets on "*the way forward in the fight against the genocide in Gaza.*"

One retired educator, Marilyn, when asked why she had come to the rally, said:

"I saw this was happening this morning, and said to myself, 'I have to be there.' I never thought I would see a genocide carried on in front of us, 24/7, and still it doesn't stop. It makes you realize the power of imperialism in Washington and the Democratic Party, and how they are determined to go ahead with that colonial settler state in the middle of the Arab world.

"Everyone is calling for a ceasefire now, stop the war. And then they go to the Democrats or whoever they vote for and get told that they don't want to hear about it."

The WSWS asked Marilyn what she thought the role of the working class was in stopping the genocide. She replied, "I feel until the workers who are producing the weapons really decide they're going to put their tools down, I think we're in trouble."

Marilyn had already heard of socialist autoworker Will Lehman's [call for actions](#) by UAW workers to halt production of weapons bound for Israel. "I think that's a wonderful plan. So many jobs in this country are

connected with the defense industry, truck drivers and many more.”

Educators have been participating in the mass rallies against the genocide in New York City, notably the rally on Thursday, November 9, at New York’s Central Library in Manhattan, which was attended by thousands, including many students who had walked out of class. The meeting was addressed by a Palestinian educator who works for the New York City Department of Education. He was witch-hunted by the right-wing *New York Post* for his principled stance.

The Chancellor of Schools, David Banks, a key figure in the Democratic administration of Eric Adams, has also issued a letter instructing teachers that they may not discuss the slaughter in Gaza with their students or colleagues, also implying they would lose their jobs if they speak out on social media or elsewhere off the job.

A key role in this campaign of censorship is played by the UFT and its parent organization, the American Federation of Teachers. AFT President Randi Weingarten, a high-ranking Democratic Party operative, is one of the leading pro-Zionist figures in the AFL-CIO. In addition to attempts to slander workers opposed to Zionism as antisemitic, Weingarten is also a staunch supporter of the Ukrainian neo-Nazis who are key US proxies in the war against Russia.

She played an active role in fomenting the 2014 coup in Ukraine. In October 2022 she visited the western Ukrainian city of Lviv where she met with Mayor Andriy Sadovyi, a vocal supporter of the legacy of Stepan Bandera, the fascist Ukrainian Holocaust perpetrator and Nazi collaborator. Now Weingarten has signed on to support and defend a holocaust of another oppressed people.

A recent meeting of the AFL-CIO Executive Council was dominated by a debate between Weingarten and APWU President Mark Dimondstein, the only major union official who has condemned the genocide. The AFL-CIO issued a statement on October 11 backing Israel and denouncing Hamas.

War abroad is connected with war on the working class at home. Last week, Mayor Eric Adams announced hundreds of millions of dollars in budget cuts. According to him, this is because the city is unable to house and feed a few thousand migrant workers fleeing desperate conditions in their own countries. In fact, the hundreds of billions of dollars

that go to war in Ukraine and arming the Zionist state have made it impossible for public education and social programs to function.

The support for US imperialism by Weingarten and the AFL-CIO also mirror their support for US capitalism at home. Weingarten was a key figure in the profit-driven reopening of schools during the pandemic, aligning herself with extreme-right antivaxxers and other right-wing figures. The reopening of school districts, in defiance of overwhelming opposition from teachers and parents, led directly to new waves of mass infections which killed countless people.

A new strategy is needed. Educators and workers cannot wait for the permission of the pro-war bureaucrats before they act. They need to come together to break the attempts at censorship by the Adams administration and to take control out of the hands of the UFT bureaucracy to build a movement to defend Palestine and oppose the US war machine.

This means the building of Educators Rank-and-File Committees, sending delegations to the workers who manufacture and transport arms to Israel, and leading walkouts and school shutdowns that are systematically expanded to educators and students around the world.

All those who want to fight for such a program should join the Northeast Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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