

Ceasefire protesters interrupt California Democratic Convention, temporarily halting event

Jacob Crosse
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Outrage over the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza erupted at the California Democratic Convention held in Sacramento this past Saturday, when some 1,000 protesters interrupted speeches given by warmongering politicians with demands for a ceasefire. Caucuses scheduled for Saturday night were canceled after protesters, many waving Palestinian flags, occupied the lobby outside the convention hall.

Many of the ceasefire protesters were with Democratic Party-aligned groups, including the Jewish antiwar group IfNotNow, as well as young people with Gen-Z for Change and Students for Justice in Palestine. Protesters chanted “ceasefire now” and many carried signs that read “Save the Children of Gaza” and “No tax \$ for the Israeli occupation.”

While several top Democrats skipped the convention, such as Governor Gavin Newsom, Senator Alex Padilla and former Speaker Nancy Pelosi, three current House members seeking the support of delegates at the convention for their competing campaigns for the Senate seat being vacated by longtime Senator Dianne Feinstein spoke at the event.

Protesters specifically targeted speeches given by Democratic politicians who have yet to endorse a tepid ceasefire resolution, including Representatives Katie Porter and Adam Schiff. Both vociferously back Israel’s genocidal military campaign.

In a nearly five-minute video released on October 11, Porter denounced the “unprovoked” Hamas “terrorist attack” on October 7, and boasted that she “proudly voted to fund the Iron Dome” and was “prepared to review and pass additional security assistance.”

Schiff, an over two-decade-long proponent of US and US-backed military operations around the world, from Iraq, to Syria, Ukraine, and now Gaza, was one of several Democratic politicians to participate in the “March for Israel” pro-genocide rally that was held in Washington D.C. last week.

Rep. Barbara Lee, the only politician who wasn’t interrupted by protesters on Saturday, is one of approximately 40 members of Congress who has endorsed the weak ceasefire resolution aimed at channeling mass anti-war sentiment back into the Democratic Party and Biden’s 2024 re-election campaign. Lee tempered her support for a ceasefire by noting that she “firmly” supports “Israel’s right to defend itself.”

Once the convention resumed on Sunday a vote by the delegates was held on the Senate contest; none of the candidates achieved the 60 percent majority required to secure an endorsement from the convention. Lee earned 41 percent, followed by Schiff at 40 percent, while Porter was a distant third with 13 percent.

While only a few dozen members of Congress have so far evinced support for a ceasefire, a Reuters/Ipsos poll released on November 15 showed that 68 percent of the public supported a ceasefire. Only 31 percent of those surveyed by Reuters/Ipsos supported sending Israel weapons. Similar figures were seen in a recent NBC News poll which found that 56 percent of voters, including 70 percent of those aged 18-34, disapproved of “Genocide Joe’s” backing of Israel.

Saturday’s protest in Sacramento, the California state capital, was one of dozens that have been organized since October 7 by liberal Jewish groups, non-profits tied to the Democratic Party, and local chapters of the Democratic Socialists of America, aimed at “pressuring” Democratic

Party politicians to support a ceasefire.

Despite broad public support for a ceasefire, including among Democratic Party voters, capitalist politicians continue to pledge their support for Israel's "right to defend itself," and slander anti-genocide protesters, many of whom are Jewish, as "antisemitic" and Hamas supporters.

As with the ceasefire protest held outside the Democratic Party headquarters last Wednesday in Washington DC, which ended in a police riot, after Saturday's convention was postponed, Democratic politicians released several statements slandering the protesters while refusing to entertain a ceasefire.

At the resumption of the convention on Sunday, the chair of the California Democratic Party, Rusty Hicks, declared that an "investigation" was underway and vowed to take punitive action against any delegates who participated in Saturday's protest.

"Any delegates who actively participated in or aided the furtherance of those activities or events in violation of our party's code of conduct will be held accountable." Hicks neglected to state if any delegates or politicians who supported the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza, "will be held accountable."

The California Legislative Jewish Caucus, which is co-chaired by Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel (Democrat-Encino) and state Senator Scott Wiener (Democrat-San Francisco) released a statement on November 18, denouncing protesters for chanting "from the river to sea" and "resistance is justified when people are occupied."

"[C]hants calling for the destruction of Israel and appearing to justify the Hamas attack [are] completely unacceptable," the statement read.

Democratic Assemblymember Marc Berman was one of several Democratic and Republican politicians to endorse to the CLJC statement. He retweeted the statement and added, "I will never accept groups that storm through security chanting for the elimination of Israel and justifying the rape, torture and murder of 1,200+ innocent people."

California Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis retweeted the CLJC statement, adding, "I will always stand up for the safety of, and in solidarity with, my Jewish sisters and

brothers," implying that the only "real Jews" are genocide-supporting Zionists.

California Senate Minority Leader in the Senate, Republican Brian Jones, joined his Democratic colleagues in condemning Saturday's anti-genocide protest as an expression of "antisemitism."

"Sadly, antisemitism is growing within the Democratic Party," Jones wrote. "What happened at their Party's convention is completely unacceptable & must be denounced. I stand with the @CAJewishCaucus, and I'm calling on ALL members @CA_Dem to join us in condemning this antisemitic protest."

Politico reported on Monday that Schiff and Porter were "unmoved" by Saturday's protests.

The response of Democratic Party politicians to overwhelmingly peaceful ceasefire protests over the last month and half serves as a warning to the students and workers in the United States. Despite the peaceful character of the protests, Democrats have joined fascistic Republicans, and their Christian nationalist supporters, in backing the ongoing genocide while slandering protesters as antisemitic and backing police violence against them, even as over 13,000 Palestinians have been killed in the US-NATO backed Israeli ethnic cleansing campaign, including more than 5,000 children.

The task of workers and youth opposed to this slaughter is not to patiently convince the butchers overseeing and funding it to "reconsider," but to expand and politically arm the growing anti-genocide movement with a political perspective of mobilizing the working class, and a historical understanding that the fight against imperialist war necessitates a struggle against the entire capitalist system, including all its political representatives.



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