Minnesota Nurses Association fires staffer for pro-Palestinian statements

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Tania Singh, a union staffer for the Minnesota Nurses Association (MNA), was fired from her position in October after making social media statements supporting the right of the people of Gaza to defend themselves. After being placed on paid leave for five days, she was terminated after the MNA launched an investigation into Singh's social media accounts.

In an article published on PrismReports.org in November, Singh spoke about her termination. "I think the words I used really hit people because I specifically said I support Hamas because I support the oppressed's right to resist in any way they deem fit." Singh continued, "It will be a cold day in hell when the oppressor is actually dictating the terms of how you're going to resist."

Responding to the attempt by the political establishment to censor opposition to the war on Gaza, Singh added, "It is new-age McCarthyism … and it is so scary."

The MNA's termination of Singh expresses the broader political role of the trade unions to prop up the pro-war Democratic Party and suppress the growing opposition of workers to the economic and political situation.

It goes without saying that the MNA has not disciplined anyone for supporting Israel's genocide. In firing Singh, the MNA makes clear that it supports the genocide and rejects any expression of opposition. If this is how the union treats its own paid staffers, one can only imagine how it is prepared to respond to pro-Palestinian statements from the rank-and-file.

She is far from the only person in the healthcare industry to be victimized for opposing the genocide. In mid-November, Dr. Gazaleh Moayedia had a presentation canceled at the Montefiore Medical center in New York City when hospital administrators became aware of Dr. Moayedia's social media posts calling for a ceasefire in the region. Dr. Zaki Masoud was terminated in October by New York University's Langone Winthrop Hospital after he expressed support for the struggle of the Palestinian population of Gaza. A petition demanding the reinstatement of Dr. Masoud, has now gathered 91,000 signatures.

The firing of healthcare workers is all the more criminal given that it takes place in the midst of a massive new wave of Covid-19, which is believed to be infecting hundreds of thousands of Americans every day.

From the beginning, the US trade unions lined up openly and explicitly with Israel's war, with the AFL-CIO issuing a statement along these lines on October 11. The AFL-CIO then actively worked to overrule and ban any statements of opposition to Israeli war crimes by local or regional union bodies.

But the nearly-unanimous support of the bureaucracy has failed to intimidate the anger among rank-and-file workers. Tens of millions of workers and youth have taken part in demonstrations across the world against the ongoing genocide in Gaza. In particular, there is widespread revulsion by healthcare workers over Israel's deliberate targeting of Gaza's healthcare system, in order to use the spread of disease and absence of care as a weapon of war against the civilian population.

A growing burden of disease in Gaza has been caused by a lack of clean drinking water, plumbing, safe shelters and medical care. It is estimated that just nine out of Gaza's 35 hospitals continue to function. Remaining facilities are struggling to provide care under the chronic lack of medical equipment, medication, supplies and beds. It is estimated that at least 250 healthcare workers have been killed since

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October 7 and over 500 healthcare facilities have been bombed.

The open and unvarnished support for genocide has threatened to discredit the trade union apparatus. In recent days, certain layers have made a tactical shift in order to better capture and defuse this anger. Last week, the United Auto Workers passed a statement proclaiming its support for a “ceasefire.” But the UAW supports a “ceasefire” entirely on Israel’s terms, including the total destruction of Hamas.

The support of the apparatus for genocide is connected to their support for American capitalism, which also is expressed in their enforcement of sellouts on workers in the US. Last year, the MNA rammed through a sellout contract on 15,000 Minnesota nurses, following a strike which the union limited in advance to only three days. The contract includes wage increases which do not make up for historically-high inflation, and no meaningful safeguards against under-staffing.

Their support for US capitalism is also expressed in the bureaucracy’s support for the pro-corporate Democratic Party. The MNA is an affiliate of the National Nurses United (NNU), a trade union with 225,000 members across the US. Below are some of the more notable politicians the MNA/NNU have recently endorsed and their positions on the genocide in Gaza.

? President Biden and Vice President Harris for a second term, in June, 2023. After a decades-long career supporting the Israeli government, Biden demanded Congress allocate an additional $105 billion to fund the US military and escalate the US/NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and arm the Israeli military against the people of occupied Palestine.

? Katie Porter for U.S. Representative from California in 2020 and Barbara Lee for U.S. Representative from California in 2020. Both Porter and Barbara Lee spoke at an National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW) event on October 8, in which they stated their full unequivocal support for the Israeli government.

? Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez for U.S. Representative from New York in 2020. She voted in support of US government aid for Israeli militarism. She condemned a pro-Palestinian rally held in NYC on October 8. She also called for pro-Palestinian protests to be “shut down”.

? Jamaal Bowman for U.S. Representative from New York in 2020. He voted for a bill arming Israel in 2021 and traveled to Israel to visit with former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett. After October 7, condemned pro-Palestinian protests and urged the US and the “global community” to “stand up for all life” without elaborating on Israel’s ruthless campaign against Gaza.

? Bernie Sanders for US president in 2016. On November 5, Sanders appeared on CNN to oppose calls for a ceasefire. He wrote an op-ed on November 22 in the *New York Times* in which he called for a “temporary pause,” and presented the US-backed slaughter in a biased, distorted and pro-Israeli manner.

The firing of Singh is a warning that the opposition of workers to war cannot find any expression within the trade union apparatus. Instead, workers must organize themselves independently, connecting the fight against war with the struggle for safe staffing and improved working conditions in hospitals all over the world.

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