

Wayne State University Board of Governors snubs students protesting Gaza genocide

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On December 7 Wayne State University students and supporters held a picket and rally outside the offices of the WSU Board of Governors to demand the university take up a Student Senate resolution calling for divestment in companies complicit in the genocide in Gaza.

The action, organized by the WSU chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine, drew nearly 100 people. The spirited protest took up chants denouncing the ongoing Israeli genocide against the Palestinians living in Gaza and the Biden administration, which has made the onslaught possible. The demonstrators also called out the WSU Board of Governors, which refused to place the Student Senate resolution on Gaza on its agenda.

The Board of Governors is comprised of leading figures in the state's civil rights, trade union and Democratic Party establishment. It is chaired by Mark Gaffney, former president of the Michigan AFL-CIO and a member of the Teamsters union. Vice Chair Shirley Stancato was former president and chief executive officer of New Detroit and a bank executive. The board also includes a former chief justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, Marilyn Kelly, and former Michigan Secretary of State Terri Land.

After assembling on campus and marching to the WSU Board of Governors office, protesters were told that would not be allowed inside the building. Campus police were stationed at the entrance.

On November 30 police had blocked WSU students from entering a publicly accessible building, where they had planned to quietly protest Israel's genocide in Gaza. The group of several dozen students included members of the campus student organizations Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), Jewish Voice for Peace, the International Youth and Students for Social

Equality (IYSSE) and members of the Student Senate.

A Wayne State student who participated in this week's protest said he felt outraged by the claim that opposition to Israel was equivalent to antisemitism. Asked by a *World Socialist Web Site* reporter what he thought about the call of the IYSSE for the developing a movement in the working class against war, he said, "The war should be stopped. It's terrible that everything is built to slaughter people.

"We've done so maybe shady things in US history. That is why I am here today, to try to do something against it."

A spokesman for the Students for Justice for Palestine addressed the rally first. She described the horrible images she had seen of the devastation and loss of life caused by the continuing Israeli onslaught on Gaza.

"We are here today to say that Wayne State University should divest in war profiteering companies that are killing, harming our children. We will be heard, Arabs, Muslims and our allies, by the Board of Governors since they don't want to listen to us, we have come to the steps of their meeting today.

"Let's not forget that last week, when we did our sit-in, they walked us out of the faculty administration building at Wayne State University. We were just going in there to remind them that we exist. We were not doing anything, just sitting in to remind them that we are Palestinians and our allies. Instead they locked us out, even though it was a public building during open hours. We will not allow this."

World Socialist Web Site Labor Editor Jerry White was invited to address the protest and rally on behalf of the Socialist Equality Party and its campus youth organization, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE).

"The entire world is witnessing in real time the

greatest war crime of the 21st century, White stated. “With the full support of the Biden administration and the European imperialist powers, Israel is conducting a genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza, killing over 16,000 people, wounding at least another 41,000, with the majority victims being women and children.”

He continued, “The purpose of the Israeli military operations has become increasingly clear: to drive the entire population of Gaza across the Egyptian border into the Sinai Desert, emptying Gaza and making it available for Israeli settlers. It is no exaggeration to say that Netanyahu and his fascistic government are implementing their ‘final solution’ to the Palestinian problem.

“The claims by the Biden administration that it is pressuring Israel to limit civilian casualties are cynical lies. The US has given Israel 15,000 bombs, including 2,000-pound bunker busters and 57,000 artillery shells. The Democrats and Republicans, and the entire US media, have defended these war crimes, claiming that ‘Israel has the right to defend itself.’ At the same time, the US propaganda machine slanders anyone opposing this genocide, including Jewish protesters themselves, as “antisemitic.”

“On Tuesday, the US House Education Committee held hearings where the university presidents from Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology pledged to work with both parties, the FBI and the Anti-Defamation League to crackdown on anti-genocide protests. For all of their protests against alleged antisemitism, Democrats at the hearing had no problem joining right-wing Republican members of Congress and Trump supporters who are working with neo-Nazis, including the ones who marched in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017, chanting ‘Sieg Heil’ and ‘Jews will not replace us.’”

He placed the genocide in Gaza in the context of an expanding world war launched by the US. “From Gaza to Ukraine to China, American capitalism is in the deepest economic crisis in its history.” He continued, “There is rising anger over inequality, wars and endless budget cuts to finance these wars. There are growing strikes in America and around the world.”

White called for students to turn to the working class, as the only social force that can put an end to war. “Appealing to the Democrats and Republicans to halt

the genocide is fruitless,” White warned. “Workers are angered and horrified by what is happening in Gaza,” White explained. “Young people must turn to the working class to build a powerful anti-war movement independent of both big business parties and the trade union bureaucracies directed against war and its cause, the capitalist system,” he concluded.

Following the protest, WSU IYSSE members and others who attended the protest met in the Student Center to discuss a strategy to oppose the ongoing genocide. Students discussed the objective roots of the Israeli onslaught on Gaza, the broader development of war in Europe and Asia, and the role of the Biden administration and other imperialist leaders.

IYSSE members discussed the necessity of students turning to the working class and the need for an internationalist program and perspective, including the fact that crackdowns on protests and the stifling of free speech are happening across the globe.

The meeting also discussed the recent attack on socialists in Sri Lanka. Wayne State IYSSE members are writing letters of support for Dehin Wasantha and Lakshman Fernando at the University of Moratuwa, who were assaulted by right-wing thugs while building for a meeting against the Israeli genocide in Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka.



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