

Mobilize educators to stop the genocide against Gaza and to defend our students!

Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee (US)
10 December 2023

The Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee (US) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (US) will be hosting an online meeting this Saturday, December 16, 2023 at 3 p.m. Eastern Time to discuss the historical and political questions raised in the fight against the genocide in Gaza, and to provide a socialist perspective to end it. We urge all teachers, school workers, parents and students who want to join this fight to attend here on Zoom.

For two months, the far-right regime in Israel, supported and funded by the United States and its NATO allies, has carried out a ruthless bombing campaign against the Palestinians in Gaza, coupled with a blockade meant to starve the population and deprive them of basic necessities including medicine, food, water and fuel. Over 17,000 people are confirmed dead, the vast majority of whom are children and women, and over 1.8 million people, 80 percent of the population, have been displaced.

This is a genocidal war that is long in the making. Documents published in the *New York Times* reveal that the Netanyahu government, and certainly the US government as well, had far-advanced warning of Hamas' planned attack on October 7 but did nothing to prevent it, in order to justify long-standing plans for the full ethnic cleansing of Gaza. There is significant evidence showing that the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) were directly responsible for the deaths of many Israeli civilians on October 7.

As American educators, we condemn the historic crimes being committed by the Zionist regime against the Palestinians, aided and abetted by the Biden administration with the full backing of the entire political establishment.

From day one, the Biden administration has declared there are "no red lines" for Israel, which the US has

used to secure its own imperialist interests in the Middle East for the past 75 years. Amid the deliberate targeting of hospitals, schools and refugee camps, the US has continued to provide military, logistical and political support to Israel. In October, as the blood was still dripping from Netanyahu's hands the day following the barbaric attack on the Al-Ahli Arab hospital, which left 500 dead, Biden flew to Israel and embraced the mass murderer.

The attacks on civilians are not the exception but the rule. Last week's targeted assassination of Dr. Refaat al-Ar'eer, an English teacher, author and Palestinian rights advocate, exposes the hatred and fear that the Zionist regime has for all who speak out against its crimes. At least 63 journalists and 205 healthcare workers have been killed. Over 260 schools have been hit with bombs or missiles.

At the same time, the unlimited funds the US is sending to Israel and Ukraine are being stolen from the working class at home. On top of the \$1 trillion military budget, the additional \$105 billion requested by Biden for war takes place amid deepening calls to slash Medicare, Social Security, and public education. School districts across the US have announced massive budget cuts, meaning school closures, layoffs, pay cuts and further austerity.

Speaking to the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee (ERFSC), teachers across the US condemned the genocide and the Biden administration in particular.

Describing the character of the genocide, a Detroit Public Schools teacher commented, "There is no war. There is an annihilation of a group of people whose only crime is that they lived there before the occupation and who are paying an incredible price for that."

A former Montgomery Public Schools teacher in

Alabama stated emphatically, “The Biden administration and Democratic Party are directly involved in this genocide. The blood of 15,000 civilians, mainly children and women, is on their hands. The money they are using to carry out this war should be used to meet human needs: public education, infrastructure, healthcare and a secure retirement for all.”

But these deep-rooted sentiments of solidarity with the oppressed and opposition to war find no expression inside the official organizations that claim to represent us.

We condemn the role of the teachers unions in the US, which cover for and defend the crimes of American imperialism in Gaza and throughout the world. In refusing to mobilize educators against the genocide, the bureaucratic apparatuses that control the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Education Association (NEA) are trampling on the democratic rights and will of rank-and-file teachers, who want to put an end to war. These rotten organizations do not speak for us; they speak for American capitalism.

The figure that most embodies this apparatus is Randi Weingarten, millionaire president of the AFT, self-proclaimed Zionist, Democratic National Committee (DNC) member, and career agent for US imperialism. Just as she campaigned aggressively in support of the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, she is playing the same role now in Israel.

In November, amid ongoing mass protests throughout the US against the genocide, many led by students on college and high school campuses, Weingarten flew to Israel to show solidarity with the Zionist regime, upholding Israel’s “right to defend itself,” while promoting the ludicrous lie that Biden has humanitarian motives and “cares deeply about Palestine.”

The AFT and NEA have done nothing to defend our democratic rights and those of our students, who have faced intimidation, censorship, and disciplinary action from school administrations, billionaire university donors, and right-wing media for denouncing the genocide. The Biden administration has played a central role in this reactionary campaign, including its civil rights investigations into schools where students have protested.

We oppose this anti-democratic conspiracy against the democratic right to strike and protest. We reject the

slander that opposition to genocide, or to Zionism, is antisemitic. The false equation of the Zionist state with the Jewish people is disproven by the many thousands of Jewish protesters against the genocide. Furthermore, this false equation will only foster antisemitism under conditions in which Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians.

The far-right atmosphere being whipped up against protesters, including the doxxing and blacklisting of university students, has created a dangerous precedent that imperils both educators and our students. Three Palestinian students in the US were shot on November 25 in Vermont. A Palestinian teacher in New York City was witch-hunted after he criticized Israel.

We believe the working class internationally has the power to end this genocide. The American working class, in particular, must do everything in its power to stop the production and shipment of war materiel to Israel from the US, the main accomplice in the genocide.

But the mobilization of the working class to stop the war cannot be done within the confines of the trade union apparatus or while workers remain tied to the two parties of American imperialism. Educators must break with the Democrats, the Republicans and the union bureaucracies, all of which are united behind the genocide.

The ERFSC is fighting to develop the political independence of the working class in order to build an international movement of workers to stop the war, defend democratic rights and channel society’s resources to public education and other social needs.

We call on educators to help build this movement by having political discussions at their workplaces, organizing and participating in demonstrations against the genocide, supporting and defending their students’ right to protest, and forming rank-and-file committees, independent of the union bureaucracies, to unite the entire working class. We urge educators, parents and students to take up this fight by joining the ERFSC today.



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