

UAW President Fain, DSA congresspeople hold press conference to falsely posture as opponents of Gaza genocide

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18 December 2023

United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain appeared at a press conference in front of the US Capitol in Washington D.C. on Thursday morning with several Democratic members of Congress and officials from two other unions, ostensibly calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.

The event included four members of the House of Representatives from the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), along with California Representative and millionaire investor Ro Khanna and Indiana Representative Andre Carson. Representatives from the American Postal Workers Union and the United Electrical workers (UE) also spoke, as well as members of two pro-ceasefire union campaign groups.

The participants at the event promoted House Resolution 786, sponsored by Democratic Congresswoman and DSA member Cori Bush (Missouri), which urges the Biden administration to call for a ceasefire and send humanitarian assistance into Gaza. First introduced on October 16, the resolution has predictably gone nowhere in the US Congress.

The 50-minute press conference offered flabby moralizing designed to avoid placing blame for the genocide in Gaza squarely where it belongs: with the Biden administration, the Democratic Party and the entire US political establishment. Indeed, speakers generally avoided using the word “genocide” to describe the killings by the Israeli military and said as little as possible about the Biden administration’s complicity in these crimes.

The basic argument stressed throughout was that US imperialism, the Democrats and the Biden administration risk undermining their credibility around the world by supporting Israeli war crimes. Minnesota Representative Ilhan Omar summed up this perspective when she said, “The brand of our party, a party that prides itself on our defense of democracy and the most vulnerable at home and abroad is being damaged as the United States continues to support this massacre, this war.”

In reality, the Democratic Party is a centuries-old capitalist institution associated with such crimes as slavery and segregation, and countless wars of imperialist aggression, which is positioning itself today as the foremost party of American militarism.

The speeches criticized Biden in the most tepid possible fashion, presenting his fault as merely inaction or not doing enough to rein in Israel, rather than a central participant in the genocide. “How many more children must be killed ... before the United States acts?” Omar said. She claimed that the Israeli government had “thumbed their nose at our president” and “made clear on an almost daily basis that they will not abide by any red lines that the United States sets.” As a matter of fact, the US government has said explicitly and repeatedly that it has no such red lines.

Only a few minutes after the press conference, Democrats in Congress voted by better than two to one in favor of the latest National Defense Authorization Act. The law, which passed with strong bipartisan support, includes \$874.2 billion in funding for the US war machine and a provision

to fast-track the delivery of weapons to the Israeli military.

While most of the congresspeople at the press conference cast token votes against the bill, Andre Carson voted in favor of it, only minutes after speaking.

His vote only underscored the dishonesty and cynicism of the event as a whole. The US political establishment has failed to quash the mass opposition to the genocide through witch-hunts and censorship. Now, it is deploying a section of “progressive” Democrats and the trade union bureaucrats to capture this movement and neutralize it behind claims that pressure on Biden will force him to stop Israel.

Thus, many of those assembled on the platform were, until only a couple of weeks ago, vocal *supporters* of Israel’s genocide, only now pretending to support a ceasefire. All of the congresspeople present have voted continuously to fund US wars. In early October, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez denounced protests against Israel as promoting “hatred and antisemitism” and called for them to be shut down. A week later, she declared she “no longer had any reservations” about funding for Israel’s Iron Dome missile defense system, which in fact she has voted for repeatedly.

On Thursday, Ocasio-Cortez couched her supposed support for a ceasefire in terms of the danger it presented to the US’s ability to use “human rights” propaganda to launch wars all over the globe. “The credibility of the United States ... [and] our commitment to human rights is on the line,” she declared. “We cannot allow ourselves to set that precedent. Not protecting the human rights of Palestinians will threaten our ability to stand up for human rights in Latin America, in Africa, across Asia, in Europe, for Ukraine.”

What hypocrisy! US imperialism has long used supposed concern for “human rights” as a political cover for its plundering operations. The regions listed by Ocasio-Cortez are areas of the globe which the US has drowned in blood, supporting coups, assassinations, dictatorships and mass killings one after the other.

Her reference to Ukraine is particularly ominous. The US has used allegations of war crimes by the Russian military to justify its continued support for a war which it fomented and which has already killed hundreds of thousands of people. Washington is allied with Ukrainian neo-Nazis who make no secret of their belief that ethnic Russians are subhuman “orcs,” who should be wiped off the face of the earth. At the same time, the political leaders of American imperialism do not care an iota about how many Ukrainians are slaughtered in order to advance their aims of regime change in Moscow and the colonial breakup of Russia.

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, who was not at the press conference, is another key figure in this false “antiwar” faction. Sanders has repeatedly rejected a ceasefire and continues to reject it but is posturing over tying further to aid to Israel with “conditions” that the Israeli military

take measures to protect civilians. In other words, the architects of genocide must do more to protect human life!

Michigan Representative and DSA member Rashida Tlaib, the sole Palestinian American in Congress and herself the target of a racist witch-hunt campaign, played a particularly shameful role in appearing alongside such figures and shoring up their public credibility. “Our government has always been an institution that responds to outside pressure,” Tlaib absurdly declared, even after acknowledging that Biden had completely ignored the mass global protests. She had nothing to offer in response except calling for “more people to call on their elected leaders” to support a ceasefire.

Tlaib is bolstering the Democratic Party, of which she is a loyal member, which for decades has acted as the graveyard of antiwar movements. She is contributing to an environment which will free up the Biden administration to continue supporting the genocide, while rendering opponents politically vulnerable to renewed provocations.

Fain and the officials from the APWU and UE postured as purely verbal opponents of the war. From the podium, Fain declared that the unions “provide a bridge towards fighting against all forms of hatred, phobias, racism, sexism.” In reality, the union bureaucracy has spent decades fomenting racist campaigns blaming “foreign” workers, especially from Mexico, Japan and China, for the loss of jobs in the United States which the unions have sanctioned. In the 1982, the infamous anti-Japanese campaign by the UAW culminated in the racist murder of Chinese American Vincent Chin.

This is the outcome of the nationalist orientation which is the essence of the bureaucracy’s outlook, lining up with American corporations against their foreign rivals and support for US imperialism. This has led the bureaucracy to act as an extension of CIA-backed destabilization campaigns and coups around the world through the participation in State Department-funded fronts, such as the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) and the AFL-CIO Solidarity Center.

Fain and the apparatus which controls the other two unions are doing nothing to mobilize their combined 1.3 million members to oppose the genocide. They have responded with stony silence to the Palestinian unions’ call for strike action to halt the transfer of weapons to Israel.

Last month Fain appeared at an event with President Biden to stump for sellout contracts in the auto industry where union bureaucrats shouted down and ejected antiwar protesters. He has also kept workers on the job in key defense plants, such as General Dynamics and more recently, Allison Transmission, where workers overwhelmingly recently rejected a UAW-backed contract.

Fain’s sudden support for the Palestinians is a tactical maneuver, in response to the danger that growing anger over the bureaucracy’s sellouts will intersect with the growing antiwar movement (nevertheless, in follow-up statements, Fain has made clear that he “does not take sides,” supports the destruction of Hamas and the imposition of the Palestinian Authority, which functions as an Israeli-controlled puppet regime in the West Bank, on the survivors in Gaza).

A video statement by socialist autoworker Will Lehman calling for industrial action to halt the supply of weapons to Israel has been viewed more than one million times, and the UAW’s longstanding support for Israel has fueled anger among rank-and-file workers, including the UAW’s tens of thousands of graduate student members.

At the same time, Biden’s support for the Israeli genocide has badly damaged the Democrats’ electoral prospects in the key state of Michigan, the home of the largest Arab-American population in the US. The UAW is desperate to prop up Biden, who has provided financial and political support to his “labor partners” in the union bureaucracy.

The elevation of Fain to the head of the UAW parallels the dishonest promotion of pro-war Democrats as supporters of a ceasefire. Fain’s election last year—in a vote marred by massive irregularities—was part of a

maneuver by the UAW bureaucracy and the White House in response to fury among autoworkers over decades of corruption and pro-company contracts.

Fain, a career bureaucrat involved in negotiating numerous sellouts, was billed as the leader of a “reform” movement. His credibility, to the extent that he has any, rests on his support from the DSA and related groups, who have also entered into the leadership of the union under Fain. This includes Brandon Mancilla, DSA member and the new Region 9A director under Fain, who also spoke Thursday.

But the credibility of the Fain administration is in a state of collapse after the union rammed through sellout contracts in the auto industry a few weeks ago, following partial strikes designed to let off steam while avoiding seriously impacting production. Only a few hours after Fain appeared on the platform on Capitol Hill, General Motors announced 2,200 new job cuts, on top of thousands of layoffs previously announced at Ford and Stellantis.

The event was aimed as much as promoting the union bureaucracy as it was to bolstering the credibility of the Democrats. Speaker after speaker held up Fain and the union apparatus as the leaders of a fight against oppression both at home and around the world. Tlaib claimed the UAW had “moved mountains” in its latest contract. “They got those folks to take down those tier systems—we’re still working on [that],” she said, catching herself before falsely claiming the UAW had gotten rid of the hated tiered-wage structure.

The presence of Fain and the other union officials, Tlaib claimed, was the beginning of a transformation of the “labor movement” into a force against war. This term was employed to obscure the class gulf between the union *membership*, which is horrified by the genocide and opposed to war, and the union *bureaucracy* which controls these organizations and functions as an extension of management, the government and US imperialism as a whole.

While a minority of union officials have positioned themselves to capture and crush the opposition to war and the Democratic Party, the vast majority of the bureaucracy continues to explicitly support Israel, in line with their decades-long support for US imperialism.

The union bureaucracy is drawing closely together with the White House in a corporatist alliance, one of whose aims is the preparation of American society for war. In one contract struggle after another, the union apparatus has worked with the Biden administration to prevent or limit strikes and enforce sellouts with wages below inflation. The DSA is also heavily involved in this, such as its role in banning the rail strike last year.

The ruling class is responding so obstinately to the opposition to the Gaza genocide because its fundamental interests are at stake. US imperialism sees the war as part of a global redivision of the world, which includes the war in Ukraine and a future war against China, with control of Europe and Asia at stake.

The fake supporters of a “ceasefire” are also serving imperialism in a different way. They are a critical part of the preparation of public opinion for war. A key element of this is the downplaying and denial of the need for a *class struggle to force* an end to the war, instead holding out illusions that moral appeals and “common sense” can convince the warmongers to change course.

A genuine movement against the genocide must be based on mobilizing the working class to halt the production and delivery of war materiel to Israel and to oppose the entire political setup, both overtly right-wing and its nominally “progressive” wing.



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