

New York City educators protest AFT President Randi Weingarten's role in Gaza genocide

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On Wednesday, about 50 New York City educators from both the public K-12 school system and public universities, as well as museum workers and others, rallied in front of the Museum of the City of New York to demand that American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten call for a ceasefire in Gaza.

Weingarten was a featured speaker at the 40th Anniversary Gala of Citizens Action of New York, an advocacy organization closely associated with the Working Families Party (WFP). The WFP functions as a ballot line for the Democratic Party in New York, supported by the trade union officialdom. Other speakers included leaders of the WFP, Democratic Party-elected state officials and trade union bureaucrats, including Brandon Mancilla, the president of United Auto Workers Region 9A and a member of the Democratic Socialists of America.

Weingarten is a member of the Democratic Party National Committee and a key advocate of the mendacious program of "Israel's right to defend itself." She has not only refused to call for a ceasefire in the genocide of the Israeli Defense Forces of Palestinians in Gaza but has played a key role in ensuring American support for Israel. She was recently appointed by the secretary of Homeland Security, Alejandro Mayorkas, to a new Homeland Security Academic Partnership Council which has been formed to repress freedom of speech on university campuses in light of mass student opposition to the Gaza genocide.

In a recent trip to Israel, she attempted to pose as a pacifist who is devastated by the death of both Palestinians and the Israelis who were killed in the attack of October 7. The purpose of her trip was to

downplay and relativize the murder of tens of thousands of Palestinians.

As *the World Socialist Web Site* noted, "Despite her crocodile tears for deaths on 'both sides,' Weingarten predictably did not meet with any representatives of Palestinian organizations, including the Palestinian trade union federation, whose call for workers around the world to take industrial action to halt the shipment of weapons to Israel has received widespread support from rank-and-file workers."

The rally against Weingarten took place under conditions in which school authorities all over the United States have taken an aggressive stance, with the support of the state and the Democratic Party, to stifle and illegalize pro-Palestinian dissent by students and educators. Rutgers University in New Jersey and Columbia University in New York have suspended Students for Justice in Palestine clubs on their campuses and students at Hillcrest High School in Queens, New York, have been witch-hunted and smeared as antisemites in the media for protesting against the genocide.

Congress, in a witch-hunting resolution introduced by far-right New York City Rep. Elise Stefanik, has called on the presidents of Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to resign for an alleged failure to condemn "genocide of the Jews," just as the president of the University of Pennsylvania was forced to resign by billionaire donors last week.

Educators and others who participated chanted against Weingarten and against Biden's support for the Gaza genocide. Supporters of the Educators Rank-and-File Committee participated in the rally and distributed a leaflet based on the recent WSWs article on Randi

Weingarten.

The World Socialist Web Site interviewed several educators. One retired teacher, who asked that her name not be used, told us:

I am absolutely heartbroken about what's going on, and I want you to know that there are many, many rabbis that come to these demonstrations also and feel the way we do. I am absolutely horrified. We have creeping fascism in the United States. It's just outstandingly frightening and horrifying.

I know there are huge budget cuts coming. I also have been betrayed by my own union about that issue as well. They want to take away our Medicare, which we worked for all our lives, and give us Medicare Advantage, which is a total farce on the whole world of medicine.

Are we going to persuade Randi Weingarten here? Well, we've got to let her see us. We've got to do consciousness raising in every way. She should not be allowed to sleep well at night.

Several New York City educators and others spoke to the rally powerfully, opposing the genocide. Among them was Jesse Thomas, a teacher and writer for *the World Socialist Web Site* who spoke on behalf of the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee, whose New York City branch was formed in August 2021 for independent educators' action to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Randi Weingarten is a key player in the machinations of US imperialism, which is an acting complicit partner in the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

The United States is responding to the massive opposition to the slaughter in Palestine with an increasingly desperate agenda of censorship and repression, branding all opposition to its agenda in the Middle East as antisemitism.

Meanwhile, only last week, a US congressional hearing led by the fascistic

Republican Trump supporter Elise Stefanik forced the resignation of the president of the University of Pennsylvania. Stefanik then demanded Harvard President Claudine Gay and MIT President Sally Kornbluth resign.

Stefanik is herself a proponent of the "Great Replacement Theory," a xenophobic and racist ideology which stokes white nationalism and has directly motivated far-right shooters in the United States, including in Buffalo, New York, in April 2022

The Democratic Party is, from top to bottom, completely complicit in the shift to the right of American politics. Faced with the prospect of social opposition to the agenda of war abroad and austerity at home, its leaders, including Joe Biden himself, would rather empower the fascistic right than embolden a popular movement against capitalism.

Randi Weingarten sits on the National Committee of the Democratic Party. She has made multiple visits to Ukraine to work with far-right nationalists to promote the agenda of the Biden administration.

Michael Mulgrew, as has been already pointed out, has not lifted a finger against the genocide, and has, furthermore, actively worked to suppress widespread discussion of the issue within the Department of Education.

If there is going to be movement to end the genocidal assault in Gaza, it is clear that it must be carried out in direct defiance of the union bureaucrats who are thoroughly tied to the corporate system.



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