

“What is going on in Palestine has shaken the earth to its core”

Hundreds call for ceasefire in Gaza at Irvine, California protest

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Over 500 people carried out a boisterous demonstration in defense of the Palestinian people on Sunday in Irvine, California. People of all ages, nationalities and ethnicities, including many Palestinians, marched side by side in opposition to the genocide being carried out by Israel in Gaza with the full support of the Biden administration.

Irvine, a major city in Orange County south of Los Angeles, has a population of over 300,000 people. The headquarters of many corporations, especially in technology and semiconductor sectors, are based in this city. It is also home to the University of California, Irvine.

Protesters on Sunday gathered at a major intersection, waving Palestinian flags and carrying signs denouncing the genocide, attracting many motorists who honked their horns in support.

This WSWs reporter handed out over 50 leaflets and interviewed several demonstrators on the ongoing genocide, the role of the US government and the way forward.

Fatana, an organizer of the protests, recalled, “We were at the Irvine City Council meeting last week, and there was a lot of genocide supporters there, and [the council’s] justification was that Israel is defending itself. My response was, ‘If Israel is defending itself, what’s the need to bomb hospitals? Are you defending yourself from sick patients? You are bombing schools. Are you defending yourself from students? From children? You are bombing apartment buildings. It is like self-defense from families, from children, from elderly.

“I’m not even Palestinian. I’m Afghan. So I know the suffering. I know what it’s like to see and witness your country being bombed.”

When asked what she thought of Biden, Fatana replied, “Biden stabbed us in the back. Me and a lot of people that I know voted for him. We voted for him, and he stabbed us in the back. So I don’t even think that we will even want to consider voting in the new term. It has left a bad taste in our mouths.

“And here, these protests in Irvine over the past several months, it has been so diverse. We have Jews that come and support us. We have African Americans that come support us.

We have the Asian community coming out and supporting us. It is amazing to see that. They have messed with the wrong generation. You see protests all over the world. What is going on in Palestine has shaken the earth to its core, to its core.

“Israel may have the bombs, may have the support of the US, as far as the presidency goes, but Palestine has the support of the whole world. They tried so hard to change the narrative. They tried so hard to turn the world against us Muslims, against us Palestinians, but little did they know that they turned the world into Palestine.”

Amani is in eighth grade and came with her family to the Irvine protest. “I have family and friends in Palestine. We are from the West Bank.

“After 75 years of conflict with Israel, obviously Hamas was created as a resistance to resist this occupation. They struck on October 7, and now the whole world is suddenly starting to care about the conflict. And they (the bourgeois media) say the Palestinians attacked first. But that’s not the situation.

“Actually on October 6, the Israelis attacked another Palestinian village, and in June they attacked my village. Two days ago they attacked my village and stole 30 cars.

“Our village is actually in the West Bank, where there’s no Hamas at all. The Israelis use Hamas as a justification to attack Gaza, but there’s no Hamas in my village. It’s an innocent village.

“So that is why we’re here today to stand in solidarity with our people and to help the people in Gaza because this is inhumane what’s happening to them. There is no food, no water.”

This reporter explained the SEP’s call for workers internationally to refuse to handle war materiel being shipped to Israel. Amani replied, “They definitely should. They can do something. They have the power. If they really wanted to, they could stop the shipments to Israel.”

Asked to comment on protests centered on appeals to Biden, she said, “I’m not sure. Biden’s in a world of his own.” This reporter pointed to the fact that Biden’s unwavering backing, along with Macron, Scholz and Sunak, of Netanyahu’s genocide makes him a war criminal as well. Amani replied,

“He definitely is.”

Amani said, “There’s a lot of homeless people here. He could be helping his own civilians, be helping schools. But instead he’s bombing children. So I don’t 100 percent agree with what he’s doing.”

In response to the call to unite Jewish and Arab workers against Zionism, she said, “They definitely should. Judaism and Zionism are not the same thing. We love our Jewish brothers and sisters. We should definitely unite ... and do anything in our power to stop this genocide.”

Ibrahim, an engineer, brought his two children to the rally. In response to the idea of workers throughout the world refusing to handle shipments of weapons to Israel, he said, “I think that would be a big step. If we could accomplish that, that would change the trajectory of this world. It would really change the trajectory of this world.”

Kareem, a worker in the supply chain, agreed that the working class had to take action.

“One hundred percent, because without us, then the gears of our nation don’t ... it’s like the supply chain. Everybody plays a role, and if a majority—the working class—it makes up a majority of the population. If they take a stand and say, hey, we are not going to continue and make the society ‘go with the flow,’ then, you know, the higher ups, they start losing money.

“Our politicians keep stuffing their pockets. That is why they always say it is a rich man’s war and a poor man’s suffering. So while the working class suffers and we spend all our money, instead of getting proper education and healthcare and helping our vets, the people you know that gave everything for this country, we put our money towards bombs to kill little kids that have nothing to do with any of this. It is horrible.”

Kareem, concluded, “Everyone is human, everyone has the right to live. And the fact that a lot of people, you know, that decision whether or not you get to live is in the hands of somebody else, that is extremely unfair on people. So, free the world.”

At the end of the rally, this WSWs reporter addressed the remaining 100 or so participants.

“What is happening in Gaza now is a genocide. Since October 7, the IDF has dropped the equivalent of three of the atomic bombs that were dropped by the US on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in WWII.

“This is a war crime of monstrous proportions being carried out before the eyes of the whole world.

“Netanyahu and Biden must be charged with war crimes for carrying out genocide against the Palestinian people. Alongside them should include all the leaders of NATO.

“Throughout the world, millions and millions of people on every continent have taken to the streets to denounce this genocide. These protests have involved workers and young people of every race, nationality, religion and ethnicity. The

prominent role of young Jewish people in standing with the Palestinians is a new development.

“The WSWs and SEP absolutely support these international demonstrations. But we say no amount of protest will change the mind of Netanyahu or Biden. They defend capitalism. The Socialist Equality Party says turn to the working class. Support the Palestinian unions’ call for workers all over the world to refuse to handle production and shipments of war materiel to Israel. Some of this has happened in Belgium, Spain, Australia and briefly at the Port of Oakland. That’s how you stop war. Mobilize the international working class.

“We support the call by Will Lehman, a socialist autoworker at Macungie, Pennsylvania, who ran for UAW president against the union bureaucracy of Shawn Fain. Lehman supports the call by the Palestinian unions that workers in all countries refuse to handle the production and shipment of war materiel to Israel.

“This includes the workers in Israel and throughout the Middle East. We call for the unity of Jewish and Arab workers in the Middle East for a society based on equality, with full democratic and social rights for all, as part of a socialist federation of the Middle East.

“The SEP and the IYSSE support working class action to stop the shipment of any items to Israel that could have any conceivable military use. The massive social power of the international working class must be mobilized in a political general strike, to shut down production and stop this genocide.

“I urge you to read the *World Socialist Web Site*. If you agree with what I’m saying, please join us.”

At the conclusion of the rally, several people signed up to receive more information.



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