

“I’m against helping another country commit genocide”

## Weekly protests against Gaza genocide continue on New Year’s Eve in Irvine, California

Kimie Saito  
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On New Year’s Eve in Irvine, a city in Southern California, over 600 people participated in an afternoon protest against the Israeli genocide in Gaza. Protesters gathered at the busy intersection by the City Hall building and peacefully marched together.

Sunday’s event was larger than the previous demonstration held two weeks ago and is part of an ongoing series of weekly protests since the Zionist terror began on October 7. On December 23, hundreds of people also held a protest at the Irvine Spectrum shopping mall.

As of this writing, over 22,000 Palestinian civilians, overwhelmingly women, children and the elderly, have been killed by the Israel Defense Forces with US-supplied bombs and artillery shells. Thousands more may die of starvation. In a recent interview with the *New Yorker*, Arif Husain, chief economist at the United Nations World Food Program, estimated that “pretty much the entire population” of Gaza, some 2.2 million people, “is in a food-security crisis or a worse situation.”

Like the mass demonstrations all over the world, Saturday’s rally was very diverse. Young and old alike expressed their solidarity with the Palestinian diaspora, many of whom live in the US, while family members remain in Gaza or the occupied West Bank.

Hundreds of demonstrators expressed outrage at the Zionist barbarism and the Biden administration, chanting in both English and Arabic. There were many people holding up homemade signs, wearing kaffiyehs and waving Palestinian flags. There were no speakers at the march, but participants chanted for a ceasefire.

Chants included, “Biden, Biden, you can’t hide, we

charge you with genocide” “Biden, Biden, you’re a liar, we demand a ceasefire,” “Raise your hand, raise your fist, Palestine will exist,” and “Resistance is justified, when you are occupied.” When a large red truck stopped at the intersection and the truck driver raised his fist and blared his horn, the crowd cheered.

Among the many handmade signs was “Stop killing children!” Another read, “You don’t need to be Muslim to stand up 4 Palestine. You just need to be human.” One student’s sign showed a “flying ginsu” Hellfire missile saying, “How is this humanitarian aid?” Another read, “We can’t breathe since 1948.”

One woman in a wheelchair held a sign that read, “I am here for you, Reem, & 1,000s of children being slaughtered in Gaza. Ceasefire now!” This was in reference to Reem, a three-year-old Palestinian child, and her five-year-old brother Tarek, who were killed as they were sleeping in their home by an Israeli airstrike in the Al Nuseirat refugee camp in southern Gaza at the end of November.

This reporter distributed leaflets explaining the call by Will Lehman, a socialist autoworker who ran for UAW president last year against Shawn Fain, for the building of rank-and-file committees. Lehman is calling on workers to support the Palestinian unions’ call for workers all over the world to refuse to engage in war production and to stop shipments of war materiel heading for Israel, at docks, train stations and airports .

At one war-production plant, Allison Transmission in Indiana, the Rank-and-File Committee of Allison Transmission Workers was recently formed to oppose UAW President Shawn Fain’s sellout and blocking of a strike. The plant produces tanks and other military

vehicles vital to the US military support for Israel and Ukraine.

After hearing about Lehman's call for workers of the world to engage in a political general strike to stop the genocide, one elderly man, Mohammed, asked if he could help distribute the leaflets, and he returned to get more.

Rihab, a 73-year-old Palestinian woman, recounted her family's long history prior to and after the 1948 Nakba, including the expulsion of her father:

"They prepared the house and everything in Jaffa. In 1948, they kicked him out, and he went out of Jaffa with nothing, just his keys.

"He lived in Hebron, and he married my mom, very poor. He struggled to build his life again. Then we were two, me and my brother. [My father] worked with the United Nations to help refugees. And we lived nicely there in Hebron.

"Then in 1967 they kicked us out again from Hebron to Amman. And then we had nothing again; we lived again on the floor another time. And then I went to another school, to a different school, different people."

"Then I had to go and work in Saudi Arabia—I was 18 years old—to help the family and my people. I worked as a teacher. I registered at the university and worked at the same time. After that, I met my husband, and I got married. I finished studying, and I have a good occupation.

"I have seven kids, and every one is different, but they are very good—four doctors and three engineers—because we are Palestinians. We work very, very, very hard. And now I have hope that in Gaza they will stand again. They will never be under the ground.

"But if they stop the war, they will be very, very excellent, because we are harder. We are hard-working. And Palestine will be free. Even if one child is still alive, Palestine will be free."

Rihab's granddaughter, Salma, is a student at Cal Poly Pomona. She held up the sign with a picture of a drone-fired missile, labeled, "How is this humanitarian aid?" She described how the Israel Defense Force soldiers constantly harass and beat Palestinian residents in their daily lives.

"My aunt is in Hebron. Normally it takes seven minutes to get from where our house is, my family's house, to her house. And it took her an hour and a half just to get there because the IDF were just stopping everyone. They didn't let anyone move. They were harassing people, beating people.

"So it's very, very difficult for people, even in the West Bank. That is what a lot of people don't know. And the media doesn't show also what's happening in all of Palestine, not just in Gaza."

There were growing expressions of awareness of the interconnection between the Israeli genocide and social conditions at home. One of the main banners in the protest read, "Fund our services and education, not bombs and occupation."

Joseph, an auditor, told the WSWS, "It's not justified, 20,000, 30,000 people killed, and it's just not right. Innocent kids, innocent women, it's just not right."

Maria, a paralegal, concurred, "Our tax money is going to fund the genocide, so that's not appropriate."

Joseph continued, "Especially when we have so many issues here, like healthcare, housing, homelessness. I mean, the money should be used for Americans.

"I'm against helping another country commit genocide."

Maria said there should be more funding "for college education, just in schools in general.

"Our schools need money. Our teachers need to be paid more too."

Joseph added, "Programs such as music and art, they are being cut. Everything could be funded. There are people out there that don't have health insurance. I know someone who is sick with the flu, and they could not go and get medical attention because they did not have insurance."

This reporter informed Edgar, a young warehouse worker, about actions by workers in Spain, Belgium and Australia to block war supplies to Israel, and the brief incident at the Port of Oakland of workers refusing to handle war materiel going to Israel.

He said, "I think it's a good thing that they were doing what they could to stop the shipments. Nobody really wants all this to be going on. But there's only actually a few people that will do something about it. So I think it's good that they're all coming together to actually do something about it."



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