

NYC physician, medical student speak on Gaza genocide and intimidation at campuses and workplaces

Clara Weiss
18 January 2024

The Gaza genocide has galvanized immense opposition among healthcare workers and students around the world. Despite freezing temperatures, thousands of people, including many healthcare workers, students and youth, joined a rally in Union Square, Manhattan on Monday to protest against the genocide in Gaza.

The rally was jointly organized by Doctors against Genocide and Healthcare Workers for Palestine. Protesters chanted, “We are all Palestinians, in the thousands, in the millions,” and “Hands off Yemen.” Many held up posters with the names of healthcare workers who had been killed in Gaza over the past 100 days.

The WSWS spoke with a physician and a medical student about the genocide and the crackdown on freedom of speech at workplaces and on campuses in the US.

The medical student explained why he came to the rally:

I feel that it is my responsibility as a person of conscience and as a person who will soon serve patients as my career to advocate for the rights of oppressed people, especially when healthcare institutions and healthcare workers are being intentionally targeted by imperialist powers. This is an opportunity to grow the liberation movement for oppressed people everywhere, not just in Palestine, but particularly in Palestine.

Asked about the crackdown on freedom of speech on campuses, he said:

In my personal experience, I’ve found it difficult to talk openly and in public about these issues because in many cases universities have a very strong bias to Zionism and invest in the war and genocide. Having students call universities out on these issues is very dangerous for their donor base and must be avoided at all costs by the administration. That means the administration will punish students for speaking out. We’ve seen this all across New York City, with places like Columbia shutting down groups that are advocating for the liberation of Palestine. We’ve experienced it personally at my school as well. That gives us all the more reason to remain steadfast and to be out here and be advocates for each other.

A physician who teaches part-time and asked to remain anonymous told the WSWS:

As healthcare workers, we have a duty to prevent harm and also attempt to heal. We are organizing because today in the world there is a tremendous amount of suffering and killing that’s happening in a very tiny, small piece of land called Gaza, which is being unrelentingly bombed. The entire infrastructure is destroyed. Those who have not been murdered by the IDF

are now facing starvation, lack of access to clean water, and lack of healthcare. We know that this is literally genocide and we as doctors have a duty to speak out against that. That's why we're here.

I've always been pro-Palestinian. Thirty years ago I did a rotation in a hospital in east Jerusalem and in the West Bank, and I learned a lot. I saw the devastating effects of the occupation, especially with children and young adults. Unarmed people shot in the back and paralyzed by the Israeli police. Ambulances stopped at IDF checkpoints for hours, despite having critically ill patients, like a comatose child with a head injury. Since that time I've been a supporter [of the Palestinian cause].

Describing the situation facing his colleagues in Gaza, he said:

If their hands haven't been blown off by the bombing, their hands are still tied, because there is not even the basic infrastructure to provide even the most fundamental healthcare. There's not even clean water. That's one of the basic foundations of having a healthcare institution — it's got to have clean water. They don't even have that. It's really dire, very, very dire. People use the expression "bombing something to the Stone Age." They literally are doing that. And it's unconscionable, it's absolutely unconscionable. Surgeries and amputations without anesthesia? It's just absolutely abominable.

The discussion then turned to the climate of fear that has been created on campuses and at workplaces. The physician noted:

It's been hard because there's a lot of doxxing. I actually got doxxed at my work. I signed a letter supporting students who were being doxxed — the letter simply denounced the

doxxing of students. But then I got doxxed by patients and families. I'm OK though, I didn't get fired, although I got a lot of flak for it. Other healthcare workers who have been doxxed have not been as lucky as I am; some had job offers rescinded, some were fired.

It's been very difficult. There's a lot of retribution at workplaces, whether it's a small workplace like a private practice or whether it's a large academic institution. People have been fired for simply saying what's on their mind, for simply calling out genocide. One of the reasons why we formed is not only to organize against this, but also as a social support for physicians and other healthcare workers who are facing this kind of discrimination and this kind of intimidation just for speaking out against the killing of an innocent people.

Asked about the role of the Democratic Party in the genocide, he laughed and said:

They're contributing to it. Joe Biden has a \$13 billion check and he's like: "You know what, you guys should stop settling in the West Bank. Oh, but here's your \$13 billion." What kind of pressure is that? That's not pressure.

A WSWS reporter noted, "We're heading into an election now where voters are going to have the so-called choice between 'Genocide Joe' and fascist Trump. And no doubt some will try to make the case to vote for 'Genocide Joe' as the lesser evil, but how can you seriously make this argument now?"

The physician replied, "Yep, couldn't agree with you more!"



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact