

Amid anti-genocide protests and sit-ins by high school students

Chicago City Council approves Gaza ceasefire resolution directed to Biden

Andy Thompson, Kristina Betinis
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On Wednesday, the Chicago City Council voted 24-23 to pass a resolution supporting a “humanitarian ceasefire” in Gaza, with Democratic Mayor Brandon Johnson casting the tie-breaking vote.

Since the destruction of Gaza began in October, opposition to the genocide and the complicity of the Biden administration has grown in the US. In the Chicago area, which has the largest Palestinian diaspora in the US, protests have taken place nearly every weekend, along with walkouts by college and high school students and demonstrations at City Council meetings demanding a ceasefire.

The resolution adopted Wednesday was proposed by Democratic Socialists of America Alderwoman Rossana Rodriguez-Sanchez and DSA Alderman Daniel La Spata. Its first four paragraphs invoke the authority of the United Nations and the toothless ceasefire resolution passed by the UN General Assembly, and uncritically present the imperialist-dominated organization as a force for world peace.

The final paragraph resolves that copies of the resolution be sent to President Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and the Illinois Congressional delegation. All of these politicians and both capitalist parties have responded to the global protests against Israel and Israel’s enablers in Washington, Berlin, London, Paris and other imperialist capitals by redoubling their support for the fascist Netanyahu regime, even as Israel has intensified its campaign of mass murder and starvation of defenseless Palestinian civilians.

Earlier this week, Rodriguez-Sanchez told WBEZ that the ceasefire resolution was symbolic, with no binding authority, but claimed it “would send a

message to the Democratic Party at a critical time.”

Last October, at a special session reserved for the purpose, the Chicago City Council passed a resolution supporting the Israeli assault on Gaza.

The resolution adopted Wednesday night aimed at bridging the widening chasm between the Democratic Party leadership and the vast majority of the population, and shoring up flagging support for Biden and his party under conditions where millions of workers and young people are opposing “Genocide Joe” because of his support for Israeli war crimes.

The vote was originally scheduled for last week, but 28 members of the 50-seat City Council demanded that it be delayed on the grounds that it would be insensitive to hold it on Holocaust Remembrance Day. The delay was denounced by Jewish Voice for Peace, Jewish Fast for Gaza and the US Palestinian Community Network. A large protest was held last Wednesday at City Hall before the City Council voted to postpone the vote on the resolution for one week.

Last October, Mayor Johnson barred pro-Palestinian demonstrators from the Council chambers as the Council adopted a pro-Zionist resolution condemning Hamas. Yesterday, even as he voted for the ceasefire resolution, Johnson again ordered Chicago police to remove pro-Palestinian demonstrators from the Council chambers in advance of the vote.

Johnson announced the change in his position on January 24, saying he was now in favor of a ceasefire. “I condemn the actions of Hamas,” he said, “but at this point now I believe we’re looking at 25,000 Palestinians that have been killed during this war and the killing has to stop. So yes, we need a ceasefire.”

DSA leaders Rodriguez-Sanchez and La Spata have

made no criticisms of Biden for colluding in the genocide in Gaza or expanding the war throughout the Middle East. This is despite the fact that on Tuesday, Biden told the press that he had decided on the US military attacks to be launched against Iranian assets, which will massively escalate the US war in the region.

The tepid and toothless ceasefire resolution, aimed at channeling mass anti-war sentiment behind the pro-war Democratic Party, stood in sharp contrast to the statements made by students and young people protesting at City Hall to demand a ceasefire.

After being removed from the Council chambers, hundreds of demonstrators packed City Hall to await the announcement of the vote. The news that the resolution had passed was met with cheers, followed by a march through the Loop as the protesters left City Hall.

On Tuesday, hundreds of students from 15 Chicago high schools walked out of their classrooms to protest the US-backed genocide in Gaza. Students marched outside of their schools, held rallies and listened to speeches, after which they staged a sit-in at City Hall to demand that the City Council approve the ceasefire resolution.

Students marching on City Hall carried handmade signs with slogans such as: “Free Palestine,” “IDF Has Got to Go,” “Let Gaza Live,” and “Ceasefire Now.” One group of students marched out of their school chanting, “Got Money for War But Can’t Feed the Poor.”

Students came from every corner of the city, including Lincoln Park High School, Curie High, Lane Tech, Whitney Young, Westinghouse Prep, Kenwood Academy and Senn High, among others. The schools are all affiliated with Chicago Public Schools, a district which primarily serves working class students.

Before joining the demonstration at City Hall, students from Lincoln Park marched to the office of Alderman Timmy Knudsen to demand support for the ceasefire resolution. Lincoln Park students had been threatened with discipline by the school administration for joining the walkout, but were undeterred.

At City Hall students could be heard chanting, “Not another penny, not another dollar, we won’t pay for Gaza’s slaughter” and “City Council you can’t hide, we charge you with genocide.”

While the demonstration was officially called to

support the ceasefire resolution, many of the students’ demands went far beyond what had been proposed by the DSA aldermen. Students spoke with a basic understanding of the history of the state of Israel and in opposition to Zionism and national chauvinism.

“Imagine being in Gaza right now,” said one speaker at the City Hall sit-in. “Imagine walking through your neighborhood and all you see are bodies and bloodstains... Imagine the anger in your heart when the media somehow makes you out to be the oppressor... The Middle East has known no peace since the establishment of Israel... As long as the Zionist state continues to exist, Palestinians and Arabs will continue to die. That is the ultimate goal of the Zionist movement. But I know that liberation is near.

“I can see a future where everyone in Palestine is free, no matter your religion or ethnicity, a country where Islam, Judaism, and Christianity can coexist in peace. I can see a Palestine where high schoolers like you and me can live to graduate.”

This call for a secular state in Palestine with equal political rights for all was met with enormous cheers from the assembled students.

Another speaker declared, “We are sick of seeing our government give billions to the IDF to drop bombs on men, women and children. We are sick of seeing our brothers and sisters in Gaza be bombed in the name of counter-terrorism. Everyone needs to do whatever they can to stop genocide.”



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