

SEP leader addresses Hamtramck protest against Gaza genocide

Our reporter
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On Sunday, a spirited rally against the Israeli genocide in Gaza took place in the Detroit enclave of Hamtramck, Michigan. Home to a large population of workers from Yemen, Bangladesh and Pakistan, Hamtramck is reportedly the first majority-Muslim city in the US with an all-Muslim city council. Once an auto manufacturing powerhouse, the small city has been economically devastated by plant closures.

The rally gave voice to the anger and outrage of the local population against the destruction in Gaza. The official death toll is now over 29,000, mostly women and children.

Speakers at the rally and march denounced the US-Israeli bombing that has expanded into Lebanon and Yemen. A local government representative announced that a mile-long stretch of Holbrook Avenue, one of the main streets in the city, is being renamed “Palestine Avenue.”

The main demand of the march was for a ceasefire, and some organizers called for an “uncommitted” vote at the Michigan Democratic primary on February 27 to show opposition to President Joe Biden.

On Tuesday, the US will veto a ceasefire resolution in the UN, despite the Netanyahu government’s vow to carry out a full-scale ground offensive against Rafah, where nearly 1.5 million Palestinian refugees are confined.

Several speakers denounced the continued support for Israel by the Biden administration and urged those in attendance to vote against Biden by writing “uncommitted” on their ballots. US Democratic Congressperson Rashida Tlaib announced on Saturday that she endorsed a group called “Listen to Michigan” campaigning for the “uncommitted” ballot.

“If you want us to be louder, then come here and vote ‘uncommitted,’” stated Tlaib in a Twitter/X video she

posted on Saturday.

The initiative is being led by Tlaib’s sister, Layla Elabed, which is making a special appeal to the Arab and Muslim communities in Dearborn and Hamtramck as a way of expressing their opposition to the war. Elabed has claimed that voting “uncommitted” is “our vehicle to return political power back to us.”

The mayor of Hamtramck is on record supporting the “uncommitted” campaign, with his spokesman telling the rally to do likewise. He said that Hamtramck was the first city in the US to pass a ceasefire resolution.

Tlaib, whose family is Palestinian, has tweeted in support of “uncommitted” after initially distancing herself from the campaign. Last November Tlaib was censured for her opposition to the Israeli genocide by Congress with the support of Democrats. The “Listen to Michigan” campaign has been endorsed by the mayors of Dearborn, Dearborn Heights and Hamtramck, all with Democratic-controlled cities with large Arab American populations. A number of Democratic state legislators, city councilors and the Detroit branch of the Democratic Socialists of America have followed suit.

At the rally the Wayne State University chapter of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) received a warm response from the young people in attendance. Scores purchased literature and left their names to become involved.

Larry Porter, the assistant national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party, spoke at the rally and opposed the false orientation of its organizers. Porter explained to the crowd that the SEP rejected the view that placing pressure on the government or calling on Congress was a solution.

“We support the position of the Palestinian trade unions, who have called for international action against

this war,” he said. “And for that reason, our program is very different from one of putting pressure (on the government) or calling your congressman as the solution. We believe that the issue is mobilizing the working class all over the world. That is the only class that is going to provide a real solution to this war.”

Porter went on to denounce not only Biden but both political parties who support the war. Referring to an earlier speaker, he said, “As the older gentleman said, look at the governments that are supporting this: France, Germany, Britain. They are all supporting this policy. We have no confidence in any of them. That is why we say about the Biden administration, it is headed by ‘Genocide Joe.’ But it is also the entire Democratic Party as well. Both the Democrats and Republicans are supporting a new holocaust.”

IYSSE campaigners spoke to attendees at the rally. Cassie Mason told the WSWs she came to the demonstration to show her opposition to the slaughter of innocent Palestinians. “For the last few months, it’s hard for me to talk about it, to even explain how I feel. It’s, it’s just I never imagined living in a world where I would have to wake up every day and see people, innocent people and children losing their lives,” stated Cassie. “Children losing their lives when we can do something about it, and people just aren’t. I don’t know how people are going about their regular lives right now.”

Like many young workers, the death and devastation have come as a shock. “In school we were just taught how beautiful the world is now compared to the things that we learned about in the past, like the Holocaust and the genocides of the past,” she continued. “We were told that things were going to be so much different, moving into the future and better. And I think every day we wake up and it’s a little bit worse.”

Cassie said she visited a concentration camp in Austria but never expected horrors of this nature would develop again. “Actually, I’ve been to a concentration camp. I’ve been to Mauthausen Camp, and I stood outside of a gas chamber. I just, I can’t imagine that that’s happening all over again.”

The WSWs also spoke to Gema and Gaston, who felt the Yemenis were at least standing up against the genocide. “I’m here to support Palestine and to support Yemen,” said Gema. “I mean, Yemen, what can we say? They’re fighting their own war, they’re fighting

their own starvation, and yet they are the only people that are not just laying down and funding this war.”

Gaston added that the media denounces Yemen, “They never say they are doing this because of Palestine and the genocide in Gaza. Just saying that they’re disrupting trade, but they don’t mention why ... anyone who opposes their views they will fund against. It has always been that way.”

A WSWs reporter pointed to the reactionary policies of the Egyptian and Jordanian governments, who back the US. Gaston drew the connection of the US overthrow of governments who do not carry out US ruling class interests and the coup attempt in the US. “Yeah, said Gaston, “the US does stuff like that. What was the guy’s name who worked for the CIA? He said about Trump, ‘That’s not how I would have done the coup? I think it was John Bolton.’”

“They have done this before, he continued. “This is what the US does. It is not just a Middle Eastern issue.” Gema agreed and pointed to Latin America and Africa.



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