

Google employees fired for opposing Gaza genocide hold emergency press conference after 20 more are terminated

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22 April 2024

A group of the nine Google employees, who were fired and arrested on April 16 for protesting the company's cloud services contract with the Israeli government, held an emergency press conference on Monday afternoon to review what happened during their sit-in and to reiterate their demands.

The participating workers, some of whom spoke anonymously to avoid further retaliation on their rights, shared their views of the sit-in experience, the response of the company and the police and the nature of Project Nimbus, the \$1.2 billion cloud services and artificial intelligence contract between Google and the Israeli government and military.

The livestreamed event began at 2:00 p.m. and was moderated by Zelda (they/them), a Google software engineer and one of four employees who were fired and arrested for participating in the sit-in at the company's New York City offices. The *World Socialist Web Site* previously interviewed Zelda on Friday.

In the press conference, Zelda revealed that the number of Google employees who have been fired in connection with the sit-in now exceeds 50. In addition to the 28 workers who were terminated last week, the company used the weekend to fire another 20 workers, some of whom had expressed support or had their picture taken with the protesters.

Zelda explained the demands of the protest were “to drop Project Nimbus,” “to address the mental health and safety crisis of workers due to how their labor is being used without their consent” and “to end the culture of abuse, harassment and discrimination of Palestinian, Arab and Muslim workers.”

Zelda added, “Google engaged in further indiscriminate retaliation against 20+ workers,

including many non-participating bystanders. It is clear that Google is afraid, and they are trying to send a message that protesting for our labor conditions will not be tolerated within the company. This is illegal fear-mongering, and it will not stop us from continuing to organize and fight for the company to drop Project Nimbus.”

The moderator also solidarized with the students, faculty and alumni on college campuses who are speaking out against the Israeli genocide against the people of Palestine. Zelda said, “We condemn the repression faced by all who are unwavering in their commitment to end all complicity and profit from the genocide. It is not lost on us that the workplace and college campus are facing increased aggression from the police state for refusing to stay silent.”

In all, there were 12 Google workers who spoke during the press conference. The workers described an environment of harassment and intimidation against those who have sought to speak out against the Israeli genocide in Gaza and expose the lies spread by Google management about the nature and purpose of the Project Nimbus contract.

Hasan, who is also one of the nine workers who was fired and arrested, described the peaceful character of the 10-hour sit-in in New York City. He said, “I decided to participate in the sit-in because I could no longer ignore Google's role in the AI-powered genocide in Palestine. I was comfortable with the risks because realistically whatever doors this sit-in closes are not doors I want opened. Google pays us enough to not think too much about what they are doing, but it wasn't worth it, and I wanted to support my coworkers who have been harassed for standing up against this

project.”

Hasan explained that once the workers were notified that they had been put on administrative leave by Google management, they were blocked from using the restrooms in the building, and the police showed up shortly after that.

Cheyne, a Google employee who was fired for the sit-in in Sunnyvale, California, spoke about the reasons for his participation. “Google workers have been advocating against Nimbus for years. We have tried escalating through the proper channels. I myself consulted my managers and followed their advice. I organized a group of more than 10 people in cloud to request a meeting with a senior executive to discuss our concerns. We never received a response, not even a canned, ‘Thank you for sharing your concerns.’”

“Throughout my entire time organizing with this campaign I have consistently seen people afraid—afraid to speak out, afraid to lose their jobs, their health care, their citizenship. Protests are what people turn to when other means have failed. I knew what I was risking doing the sit-in. I made the choice to participate because Google refused to hear us and because I am fortunate enough to weather the risks that others couldn’t, which is why I am enraged that Google chose to retaliate against so many of our colleagues who did not participate in the sit-in—people who left immediately when asked; people who merely attended a peaceful rally; no meetings, no calls with HR, just instant retaliation. Our protest was peaceful, we sat in an office for nine hours.”

Oreo, a Palestinian American with family in Gaza who remained anonymous during the press conference, explained that he did not participate in the sit-in protest, was never asked to leave the building but was fired for protesting outside and holding a protest sign. He said, “On the day after the event, I was not asked any questions, I was not called in for an investigation. I was terminated by an automated email, and all communication went dark after. So, I couldn’t explain to anyone that I wasn’t at the sit-in.”

Ray explained about the nature of Project Nimbus and dispelled the lies about the contract with the Israeli government and military. She said that the contract provides powerful tools for the Israeli state to enable “the world’s first AI-powered genocide.” A recent investigation by 972 Magazine revealed that the Israeli

military is using artificial intelligence “to target and assassinate Palestinians in Gaza,” Ray said.

Google has repeatedly tried to redirect worker dissent by claiming Project Nimbus is not a military contract. However, the employees know that this is a mischaracterization, given that from the beginning the Israel Defense Forces played a big hand in selecting Google and Amazon for the contract for their “ability to support big data analysis, artificial intelligence and machine learning for the military.”

Ray also said, “Through this contract, Google and Amazon are aiding and abetting the Israeli apartheid state and genocidal campaign in Gaza against Palestinians. Instead of cleaning up its house, we are realizing that ethical concerns of the contract and listening to workers, Google has decided to punch down on its workers who have decided to speak out, retaliate against them, allow them to be doxed and harassed. The company has tried to misdirect worker dissent and silence workers to hide their own moral failings.”

Many of the workers described the methods of intimidation, including doxing, used by the company against workers who oppose Project Nimbus and speak up in defense of Palestinian rights. In one instance, Google employee Mohammed was harassed and accused of supporting terrorism.

In concluding the press conference, moderator Zelda reiterated the demands of the sit-in protesters and added that they are also demanding that all the workers be reinstated by Google “because we haven’t done anything wrong by saying ‘No tech for apartheid’ and ‘No tech for genocide’.”



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