

Mobilize the working class in defense of protesters against the Gaza genocide!

World Socialist Web Site editorial board
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The *World Socialist Web Site* denounces the enormous escalation of state attacks on protesters, including the mass arrests at Columbia, Yale University and New York University, justified on the basis of lies and slander. We call for the broadest possible mobilization of the working class throughout the US and internationally to oppose this assault on democratic rights and to stop the genocide in Gaza.

Over the past week, the protest movement has grown, especially on the campuses. Following the mass arrests at Columbia, encampments have now been set up at dozens of schools across the country, including in New York City, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, North Carolina, California and many other places. At Columbia University and NYU in New York City, faculty have openly solidarized themselves with the protests.

In response, the White House, together with fascist Republicans, has launched a vicious and coordinated campaign of repression and slander.

On Sunday, President Joe Biden issued a statement in which he doubled down on US “ironclad” support for Israel’s genocide in Gaza. He claimed that there is “an alarming surge of antisemitism in our schools, communities and online.” Similar statements smearing student opponents of genocide as “antisemitic” were issued by New York City’s Democratic Mayor Eric Adams and New York Governor Kathy Hochul.

On Monday, the fascist Republican senators Tom Cotton and Josh Hawley called on Biden to send the National Guard to quash the protests at Columbia University. “The nascent pogroms at Columbia have to stop TODAY,” Cotton wrote on X. “If Eric Adams won’t send the NYPD and Kathy Hochul won’t send the National Guard, Joe Biden has a duty to take charge and break up these mobs.”

These are foul lies and Orwellian doublespeak. There is no “surge of antisemitism” on college campuses. The anti-genocide protests include large numbers of Jewish people, especially youth. New York City, which has emerged as a center of the protests, has the largest Jewish population in the world outside of Israel.

One of the biggest Jewish political organizations in the US, Jewish Voice for Peace, has been banned at Columbia University and many other campuses for its anti-war stance, and dozens, if not hundreds, of Jewish protesters have been arrested, suspended and fired for their political views.

As for Hawley and Cotton, their own politics carries the stench of genuine antisemitism. Hawley was a leading supporter of Trump’s January 6 coup, and he and other fascistic Republicans have promoted the far-right and antisemitic “Great Replacement Theory.”

In Ukraine, the Biden administration has armed neo-Nazis to the teeth, including the Azov Battalion, which proudly places itself in the tradition of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), an organization that was implicated in the murder of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian Jews during the Nazi-led Holocaust.

Hawley and Cotton’s call for the deployment of the National Guard or other military action invokes a sinister historical precedent: On May 4, 1970, 54 years ago, the National Guard was mobilized by the Nixon administration and the governor of Ohio to crack down on students protesting the US invasion of Cambodia at Kent State University. In the ensuing massacre, 13 students were shot, 4 of them fatally.

Is this what Hawley and Cotton have in mind?

Governments that are capable of endorsing, funding and abetting the murder of 40,000 innocent people are perfectly capable of endorsing mass violence against their own population. Richard Nixon had earlier

denounced the students as “bugs.” Today, Biden’s smear of protesters as “antisemites” is designed to legitimize similar state violence against opponents of war.

The ruling class sees the protests as a threat not only to its support for Israel, but to the broader war policy it is pursuing.

Just this weekend, the Democratic Party joined hands with the fascist Republicans to vote for \$95 billion in supplementary military funding, including \$26 billion for Israel’s genocide in Gaza and military confrontation with Iran. All of the Democrats in the House of Representatives, including the members of the so-called “Squad” such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ilhan Omar, voted to support another \$61 billion for the mass slaughter in Ukraine and \$8 billion to build up Taiwan as a staging ground for war with China.

Similar repressive actions are being taken by capitalist governments throughout the world. In Germany, the slander of anti-genocide protesters as “antisemites” has been the basis for the largest number of arrests of Jewish citizens for political activism since the fall of the Nazi regime. On Monday, Turkish police attacked and disrupted a protest targeting German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier for his complicity in the genocide.

The false identification of opposition to genocide with antisemitism is aimed at criminalizing any opposition to the crimes of imperialism and capitalism. The target is not only the opponents of the Gaza genocide. Fundamentally, the aim is to preempt the emergence and prepare the violent suppression of a much broader movement against war and capitalism among youth and, above all, within the working class.

The parallel to the Kent State massacre contains an important lesson. That massacre occurred in the midst of one of the largest strike movements in US history, including postal and autoworkers. It took place almost exactly two years after mass student protests in France triggered a general strike that brought the government to the brink of collapse. The American ruling class, terrified that the student protests would merge with the labor movement and acquire an openly socialist orientation, employed brutal state violence to suppress them.

The ruling class is well aware that the protests of the

past month are but the early stages of a far broader anti-war movement and revolutionary struggle by the working class.

However, to the extent that the movement against the genocide does not openly break with the Democratic Party and take root in the working class, it can be isolated, politically derailed and made an easy target for state repression.

We therefore urge students: Turn to the international working class! Mobilize support among teachers, healthcare, auto, logistics and transit workers! Break with the capitalist politics of the Democratic Party!

And we urge workers: Take up the defense of the students! The attack on their democratic rights is an attack on your entire class.

The aim of this state campaign is to abolish free speech, not only on the campuses but in all areas of social and political life. The explosion of militarism abroad is incompatible with the right to free speech at home.

Mobilize independently of the union bureaucracies and both parties of the ruling class to immediately stop weapons deliveries and arms production for the genocide in Gaza and the war in Ukraine!

Everything now depends on merging the fight against genocide, imperialist war and the attack on democratic rights with the development of the class struggle and the building of revolutionary Marxist leadership in the working class.

This year’s International May Day Online Rally, organized by the International Committee of the Fourth International, will be centered on the development of a working class and socialist movement against imperialist war. We call on all of our readers to register at wsws.org/mayday and to promote the rally as widely as possible.



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