

The arrest of Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein is an attack on democratic rights

Niles Niemuth
29 April 2024

The *World Socialist Web Site* condemns the police assault and arrest of Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein at a protest Saturday against Israel's US-backed genocide in Gaza. The arrest is part of an escalating assault on basic democratic rights that is being directed by the Biden administration and has the support of both the Democratic and Republican parties.

All charges must be dropped against Stein and the hundreds of others who have been arrested while protesting in recent weeks.

The Socialist Equality Party's candidate for president Joseph Kishore condemned Stein's arrest and noted the politically coordinated character of the assault on protesters and its connection to the wars being prosecuted by the US and its allies:

The attack on protests nationwide is being directed by the Biden administration. It is supported by both the Democrats and the Republicans, the twin parties of the capitalist ruling elite.

Amidst the expanding protests in the US and internationally, both parties joined hands to pass a massive bill that Biden signed last weekend to finance the US-NATO war against Russia, the genocide in Gaza, and the developing conflict with China.

The corollary to global imperialist war is the vicious attack on democratic rights. The SEP is fighting to develop a movement in the working class, connecting the defense of democratic rights to opposition to imperialist war and the capitalist profit system.

Stein, a 73-year-old Jewish woman, was crushed by a police officer wielding a bicycle as she linked arms with students and other protesters resisting efforts to clear out the anti-genocide encampment at Washington University in St. Louis. Protests have erupted on campuses across the US and internationally following the violent attempt on April 18 to break up an encampment at Columbia University in New York City.

Stein and her team were among 100 arrested at the protest, which called for Washington University to divest from Pentagon contractor Boeing and to boycott Israeli institutions. Her deputy campaign director, Kelly Merrill, was violently thrown face first into the ground by another officer before being detained. Green Party campaign director Jason Call was also arrested and spent 7 hours in jail.

The contingent of Greens were in St. Louis as part of their party's effort to collect at least 10,000 signatures from registered voters as they seek to overcome onerous requirements just to get on the ballot in Missouri. Stein's arrest is particularly notable since, as reported last month, the Democrats are waging "all-out war" on third parties and independent candidates. Millions of dollars are being spent on an "army of lawyers" who are working to keep any alternatives to Biden and Donald Trump off the ballot.

Stein, who faces the absurd charges of trespassing and assaulting a police officer, spent six hours in jail before being released. Depending on the degree of the assault charge she could face between 15 days in jail up to 7 years in prison.

"Today I have really sore ribs, I'm going to the emergency room to see whether I have a rib fracture

because they were using their bikes as a weapon,” Stein told NewsNation Prime on Sunday. “Basically ramming the handles of the bike into our chests and into my rib cage and trying to flip us over. I wiggled out of that assault, and was told by the officer that I was assaulting him, which is absolutely ludicrous.”

If such an attack on a popular opposition presidential candidate—Stein won nearly 1.5 million votes when she last ran in 2016—had happened in China or Russia it would have been front-page headline news in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and other newspapers. Instead, it is treated as a minor incident and quickly forgotten in the American press.

The assault on Stein and the students at Washington University is part of the broader crackdown on student protests against the Gaza genocide being directed by the Biden administration and the Democratic Party, in collaboration with the fascistic witch-hunters in the Republican Party.

They have maintained that the assault on peacefully protesting students and faculty is necessary to combat a supposed surge in antisemitism and to maintain order on campuses. As a result, more than 900 people have been arrested over the past two weeks of protests on college campuses.

On Monday a delegation of congressional Democrats, including former House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and Trump impeachment manager Adam Schiff, issued a letter to the Board of Trustees of Columbia University demanding they take action against protesting students who have rebuffed attacks by the police.

The Democrats falsely claimed that the encampment had been “the breeding ground for antisemitic attacks on Jewish students.” They called on the trustees—who include an array of Wall Street billionaires and Democratic Party operatives—to take decisive action or resign to make way for those who will. “The time for negotiations is over, the time for action is now,” the letter threatens.

This follows the declaration by President Joe Biden condemning “reprehensible and dangerous” antisemitism, which has “absolutely no place on college campuses, or anywhere in our country.”

The arrest of Stein exposes the “Big Lie” of supposed antisemitism. She is among hundreds of Jews who have been detained over the last two weeks protesting the genocide. Some 300 members of Jewish Voice for

Peace were arrested in Brooklyn last week while taking part in a protest seder outside Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer’s home.

It is necessary that the working class intervene to defend democratic rights and demand an end to the repression of students and others protesting the Gaza genocide. And students must turn to the working class as the only social force which has the power to put an end to war.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact