

UPS workers say: The working class must oppose the attack on students' right to protest!

The UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee
29 April 2024

The following statement was adopted by the UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee, founded last year to oppose the sellout contract pushed by the Teamsters bureaucracy. To contact the Committee, email upsrankandfilecommittee@gmail.com or fill out the form at the bottom of this page.

The UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee denounces the nationwide crackdown on student protests against Israel's genocide in Gaza. We call upon our coworkers, and workers across different industries, to come to the defense of students.

We also endorse the October 16 resolution of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions Gaza calling for workers across the world to halt the production and shipment of weapons to Israel.

Nothing like what is taking place now has happened in America since at least the Vietnam War, if ever. Thousands of students, professors and others have been arrested over the past week at campuses across the country for the "crime" of protesting. Riot police, snipers and drones have been deployed against students, and there are growing calls in Washington to deploy the National Guard.

They always tell us that these wars are for "human rights" and "democracy." But the deaths in Gaza and the attacks on protesters in the US show this is nonsense. What these wars are really about are the profits of US corporations and control over natural resources, trade routes and global supply chains.

The same profit interests are driving mass layoffs at home. At UPS, they've announced more than 12,000 cuts, and plan to close 200 facilities and automate "everything" as part of its so-called "Network of the Future." Thousands of autoworkers have already lost

their jobs this year. Nearly a million layoffs have been announced in the US since the start of 2023.

Layoffs and attacks on the right to protest are two sides of the same coin. Just as they want to make an example of students and ban all protests against war, they want to use mass unemployment to smash the growing wave of strikes and protests against poverty wages and terrible working conditions.

Students have taken a courageous stand. But they cannot defeat the war drive on college campuses alone. We, the working class, have to be the base of the fight against war. We are the majority of the world. We create all of the wealth, and nothing can move without us—including weapons and equipment bound for Gaza and other war zones. We must defend the rights of students by organizing mass demonstrations, strikes and other forms of working class protest.

Workers all over the world have no interest in these wars, where we are forced to kill each other. And we are the ones who are always forced to pay the trillions of dollars for war, through massive cuts to Medicare, Social Security, public education, infrastructure and other programs workers rely on.

The rights of the entire working class are at stake in the crackdowns on campuses. If they are able to do this, they will turn the same methods against workers. They will deploy riot cops against picket lines just like they did in the 1930s. In fact, the Democrats and Republicans both already voted to ban a strike by railroad workers in late 2022.

We reject with contempt the claim that the protests are dominated by antisemitism. Hundreds of those attacked by police over the past week are Jewish.

The massacre of civilians in Gaza which they are

protesting against is well-documented. Over 30,000 have been killed and the entire population of over 2 million is at risk of famine. The right-wing Israeli government refers to Gazans as “human animals” and a tent city—a concentration camp—is being constructed to house the survivors. Mass graves and other evidence of atrocities are being uncovered on a regular basis.

Behind Israel stands the US government. Both parties in Congress just approved \$26 billion in funding for the Israeli military. They also approved weapons for actual neo-Nazis active in the Ukrainian military, as well as weapons for Taiwan, which could be the center of a future war against China.

A working class fight against war has to be combined with the fight against the sellout union bureaucracy. By keeping us on the job and ramming through concession contracts, the bureaucrats are not only helping management lay us off. They are helping the government clamp down on the “home front” as it gears up for war.

All of the top union officials have close ties to pro-war Washington politicians from both parties. Teamsters General President Sean O’Brien is a regular visitor to the Biden White House. The Teamsters also donated \$5,000 to right-wing Republican senator Josh Hawley who demanded the National Guard be sicced on students. O’Brien has also met multiple times with Trump.

United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain rubs elbows with Biden all of the time. Borrowing a phrase often used by “Genocide Joe,” Fain says that autoworkers have to be the new “Arsenal of Democracy.” What this means is that workers have to be prepared to fight a third World War.

Some, like Fain, claim that they’re against the war in Gaza, even signing statements calling for a ceasefire. But we must not be fooled because they combine this with support for pro-genocide politicians. These are just dishonest phrases which they use to get out in front of us before we take action ourselves.

This is exactly the same method they use to ram through sellout contracts. UPS workers all remember the fake “strike ready” campaign which O’Brien and the Teamsters bureaucrats used to present the new contract as a huge victory, even the product of a “credible strike threat.” But they had no intention of calling a real strike any more than they have any

intention of doing anything to interfere with the war.

A working class movement against war will never be organized by the bureaucrats. They are all pro-war because they are all pro-profit system. Instead, it has to come from below, from us. We have to build new structures to organize against both war abroad and layoffs and sellouts at home.

These structures are rank-and-file committees. We are part of a global movement. Under the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, we have sister organizations across North America, Europe, Australia and Asia.

We urge our coworkers to join us. Contact us by filling out the form below or by emailing upsrankandfilecommittee@gmail.com. Endorse this statement and discuss it with your coworkers. Write your own statements in defense of students and plan solidarity actions at your hubs.



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