

# Workers must prepare industrial action to halt police crackdown on student anti-genocide protests!

International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees  
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The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) calls on workers to take action to force an end to the police state crackdown on college campuses. The courageous stand taken by students against the genocide in Gaza requires the widest support in the working class.

Demonstrations, mass meetings and delegations of workers to campus protests must be organized, culminating in a nationwide and international strike to force an end to the assault on the basic right to free speech.

Workers are witnessing the beginning stages of martial law in the United States. While there is a long history of the use of police against anti-war protests, there is no precedent for the attempt to illegalize opposition to a genocide, which is being openly backed by the US government.

Against peaceful demonstrators, local governments controlled by both parties, and in coordination with the Biden White House, have flooded campuses with riot cops and mounted police, backed with drones and snipers, to beat and arrest thousands. While they claim this is needed to “restore order,” police are working with the extreme right, who at UCLA attacked protesters with fireworks and blunt weapons while police stood by. Even open massacres of students like at Kent State in 1970 are being considered, as shown by demands to deploy the National Guard to universities.

The unanimous support for the crackdown exposes the character of the political system as an instrument of class rule. Both parties also overcame their differences in 2022 to ban a national strike by railroad workers.

Getting the “home front” in order is seen as a necessary first step in preparing for massively

unpopular military escalation and war crimes on a scale not seen since the end of World War II. In the first instance, this means the Israeli invasion of Rafah, which would be, by far, the worst atrocity so far in the seven-month-long genocide in the Gaza Strip.

The genocide in Gaza and US war plans against Iran are only one front in an emerging world war. The campus crackdowns came as both parties voted to pass military funding bills not only for Israel, but also for the military in Ukraine as well as for Taiwan, which would serve as the tripwire in a future war against China.

Workers and their children will be shipped off to fight these wars, which are being paid for by the destruction of wages, pensions, healthcare and social programs. These wars have already claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and threaten nuclear annihilation.

The “human rights” and “democracy” excuses long used as political cover for war have been torn to shreds. Millions also see through the “antisemitism” lie promoted against the protests, not least because huge numbers of Jewish protesters have been arrested, including Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein.

In reality, these are imperialist wars for the domination of foreign markets, natural resources and global supply chains.

The cockpit of these wars is in Washington D.C. But attacks on protesters are taking place all over the world, including in Germany, where police shut down a conference by Jewish Voice for a Just Peace in the Middle East, as well as in the UK and France. In Ukraine, where young men are snatched from the street and shipped off to the front lines, the state security police arrested Bogdan Syrotiuk, a socialist opponent

of the capitalist governments in both Ukraine and in Russia.

Imperialist war abroad is accompanied by an assault on the social rights of the working class at home. US corporations have announced nearly 1 million layoffs since the start of last year. This is part of a deliberate policy, coordinated by the government and central banks, to use high inflation and automation to create mass unemployment. The aim is to smash the growing wave of strikes, which began after the start of the pandemic.

Students have taken a courageous stand. But their actions anticipate an even more powerful movement in the working class. The issues they have raised cannot be resolved on the campuses, but rather in the factories, warehouses, railroads and docks. The working class, the most powerful social force on earth, which creates all wealth through its labor, must leverage that power to force an end to genocide and war.

Workers must not be satisfied with dishonest ceasefire resolutions passed by union bureaucrats who support “Genocide Joe” Biden and other pro-war politicians. On Wednesday, United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain declared that the union would “never support” mass arrests, pointed to an empty ceasefire resolution it passed in December, and called on the “powers that be” to release arrested students and “stop supporting the war.”

But Fain and the UAW bureaucracy have endorsed Biden and even worked with riot cops to shield him from protesters during a visit to Detroit. Fain has also taken to wearing a pro-war sweater with the image of a bomber and the phrase “Arsenal of Democracy,” referring to the full-scale mobilization of US industry for World War II. Fain wants to help Biden accomplish the same thing today, this time not for “democracy” against fascism, but for genocide.

Fain and other union bureaucrats are working with Biden and US corporations to sabotage the fight against mass layoffs. Thousands of autoworkers have lost their jobs since the passage of a new national contract last fall, and the UAW called off a strike last Friday at the last minute by 7,000 Daimler Truck workers.

He claims that the UAW is preparing for strike action—in May 2028! If workers wait four whole years to act, how many new wars will have started, how many more working people will have been slaughtered,

and what rights will there be left to defend?

The rank-and-file must take the initiative out of the hands of the bureaucrats. As they have in many contract battles, workers must form rank-and-file committees independent of the bureaucracy to prepare strike action. They should take over union meetings, or organize their own meetings, to demand that the unions sanction strikes. In particular, the entire membership of the UAW, which includes tens of thousands of graduate students and hundreds of thousands of factory workers, must be called out.

If the bureaucrats refuse, or try to stall for time, workers should throw them out and replace them—not with career officials, but with leaders drawn from the shop floor who are prepared to enforce the democratic will of the working class.

Nothing is more dangerous than for workers to hope that this is just a momentary crisis that will pass once the ruling class comes to its senses. Just as in 1914 and 1939, war is not a mistaken policy, but a product of the breakdown of the capitalist system.

In defense of its interests, there is no line the corporate oligarchy will not cross. It should be recalled that the same ruling class that is attacking the anti-genocide protests sabotaged the public health response to the COVID pandemic, costing millions of lives. This ruling class has produced an emerging fascist movement led by Donald Trump. There is no progressive solution to this crisis on the basis of capitalism.

This means that the fight against war must be connected to the fight for socialism and the expropriation of the super-rich warmongers, using the resources they monopolize to meet human needs.

The struggle against war must be waged as a common international fight by workers in every country. The IWA-RFC calls on workers and young people around the world to attend the 2024 International Online May Day Rally on May 4 as a critical step in building a mass socialist movement against war and dictatorship.



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