

Lecturers: Reject sellout contract! Strike to halt crackdown against student protests! Secure a living wage, pay parity and job security at all University of Michigan campuses!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality at the University of Michigan, Michigan Educators Rank-and-File Committee
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The Michigan Educators Rank-and-File Committee and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality at the University of Michigan call on members of the Lecturers' Employee Organization to vote "No" on the sellout contract announced by the LEO leadership and organize a strike to halt the repression of peaceful student protests at U-M and nationwide against US/Israeli genocide in Gaza.

In refusing to call a walkout despite an overwhelming strike authorization vote by the rank-and-file of the 1,800-strong LEO, the officials of both the local union and the parent American Federation of Teachers are deliberately isolating the student protesters, even as President Biden endorses police raids and arrests to tear down encampments and crush protest actions at campuses far and wide.

As this is being written, Michigan state police are pepper spraying U-M students who took their protest against the genocide in Gaza and their demand that the university divest from Israel to an official event at the University of Michigan Museum of Art.

The leadership of the LEO is acutely aware of the tinder-box political situation at U-M and nationwide. Kirsten Herold, president of the LEO on the Ann Arbor campus and the secretary-treasurer of the AFT in Michigan, tried to put the responsibility for not calling a strike on LEO members.

She told *Michigan Public*: "A lot of our members were reluctant to strike precisely because there's so much else going on that adding our piece would be throwing fuel on the fire."

This was two days after a 90 percent vote in Flint and Dearborn in favor of a strike and a 75 percent vote in Ann Arbor. Knowing full well that the rank-and-file

overwhelmingly support the student protesters and oppose Biden's complicity with the war criminals who head the Israeli government, she cynically added that a strike now would be "extremely stressful for our students."

These are the statements of not only a coward, but an accomplice in genocide abroad and mass repression at home. Her boss, AFT President Randi Weingarten, was more open when she parroted the lying propaganda of the big business parties and the media, denouncing the pro-Palestinian protesters as "antisemites."

The leadership of both the LEO and the AFT are acting as labor police for Biden, the Democratic Party and the U-M administration, in the service of the global war being carried out by the US ruling class. The implications of this war program have to date been expressed most starkly in the US-backed murder of over 34,000 defenseless civilians, mainly women and children, in Gaza.

Biden's call for more police repression against courageous students and young people, based on a fraudulent definition of "violent" and "unlawful" protest modeled on the "anti-disruption" policy announced in March by U-M President Santa Ono, amounts to a formula for abolishing free speech and imposing dictatorship. It is no accident that it comes on the eve of an Israeli invasion of Rafah, a refuge for over one million Gazans driven from the rest of the pulverized enclave.

This drive to abolish basic rights equates opposition to genocide against the Palestinian people—a war crime without precedent since the Nazi Holocaust against the Jews—with "antisemitism." It underscores the fascistic character of both the Gaza war and the crackdown on its opponents—already involving the arrest of over 2,200 students, and counting.

Rank-and-file lecturers must stop this betrayal and come to the aid of the students! This is your fight!

The attack on the student protests is an attack on the working class. It is workers and their children who will pay for the escalating war against Russia over Ukraine, the planned war against Iran and the war preparations against China, all fronts in an emerging Third World War. Workers and working class youth are to serve as cannon fodder, while their wages, social benefits, schools and jobs are to be gutted to pay for record military budgets.

In line with this government policy, the wage packages in the tentative LEO contract condemn lecturers to four more years of financial insecurity. In April, Herold told the *Michigan Daily* that the workers on all three campuses do not make enough money to support themselves, and many have to work additional jobs to boost their income.

“LEO needs robust raises to make up for the erosion in salaries over the last three years,” Herold said. But the tentative agreement stipulates base salary increases of 8 percent, 6 percent, 6 percent and 5 percent, respectively, over the next four years for lecturers on the Ann Arbor campus, while those at the UM-Flint and UM-Dearborn campuses would receive 3 percent base salary increases in each of the contract’s four years.

Nothing can be won for lecturers on the basis of this crass capitulation to the university, the Democratic Party and the US war machine!

Lecturers must win not only full pay parity across the three campuses, but double-digit wage increases to make up for and surpass the losses in real wages as a result of previous contract betrayals.

In addition, the new contract must guarantee job security for every lecturer, along with decreased workloads.

The ratification vote must take place under the following conditions: Each member must receive the full text of the contract, with adequate time to study the details, and trusted representatives of the rank-and-file must be allowed to oversee the vote count.

Lecturers should link up with students at U-M and across the region. They should coordinate with educators, students and parents fighting school cuts and layoffs in Ann Arbor, Flint and other towns in Michigan.

A strike by U-M lecturers will be a beacon to students, faculty and staff across the country and around the world. Already there have been solidarity actions with students by faculty at other campuses, including at City University of New York and in California.

All of these struggles can and must be unified. What is key is the formation of an independent rank-and-file organization, not to pressure the union bureaucracy, but to overthrow it. Put the power into the hands of the workers

themselves!

Auto workers also are looking for ways to fight mass layoffs and oppose the treachery of UAW President Shawn Fain and his fake-left apologists and accomplices. They are natural allies in the fight to defend basic rights and stop war and genocide.

Lecturers should join and build the Michigan Educators Rank-and-File Committee, part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

As the IWA-RFC wrote in a May 1 statement published by the *World Socialist Web Site*:

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...

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 [Saturday] May 4 [3 PM EDT] as a critical step in building a mass socialist movement against war and dictatorship.



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