

The working class must take up the fight against the genocide in Gaza and in defense of democratic rights

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The escalating global crackdown on the student protests raises the need for the working class to intervene against war and police dictatorship.

Protests against the genocide are developing internationally, in defiance of police repression backed by every major party. This week, academics at The New School in New York City set up their own encampment, and professors at the University of Wisconsin staged walkouts in defense of students. High school students are beginning to take part in large numbers in the demonstrations. Protests are emerging all over Europe, from Britain to Germany.

The repression of students is also international in scope. Every capitalist party in every country slanders students as “antisemitic,” even though hundreds of those who have been arrested are Jewish. Police have turned large portions of major cities, such as New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, into armed camps. German police have already shut down an anti-war convention and attacked an encampment at the Free University in Berlin. The British government is preparing the same.

Meanwhile, “Genocide Joe” Biden has given a green light to the next stage in the genocide. Israel has begun the assault on Rafah, where 1 million Gazans are taking refuge with nowhere to go. Tens of thousands could be killed.

The attacks on the protests against genocide show the continuity between imperialist foreign and domestic policy. The genocide itself is only one part of a global counter-revolution, ripping up core democratic rights and normalizing mass murder as a legitimate policy tool.

As they help carry out genocide in Gaza, the imperialist powers are risking nuclear holocaust in their proxy war against Russia. Britain is arming neo-Nazis in Ukraine with long-range missiles to strike deep within Russia, and French President Emmanuel Macron is openly proposing deploying NATO troops to the front lines. They see both conflicts as two fronts in an expanding world war and are preparing a third front against China.

The working class must enter the fight against imperialist war. As Will Lehman, a socialist autoworker who ran for UAW president, said at last weekend’s May Day rally:

What we as workers need to connect as a class is that the fight against exploitation is the same fight as the fight against war: The connection becomes easier to make when we pose the questions: Whose class interests does the war serve? And whose class interests does the exploitation of workers as a class serve?

The ruling class makes money hand over fist from these wars. But the workers of the world are forced to shoulder their terrible cost. Workers and their children are the ones being frogmarched into the military. Hundreds of thousands of workers and poor people have already died in Ukraine and Palestine.

To free up money for war, a massive attack on workers’ social position is underway. US corporations have announced a million layoffs since the start of last year, with automation and AI being used as key weapons against jobs. Macron declares the end of the post-Cold War “peace dividend,” while Germany is remilitarizing and openly floating the return of the draft. The US ruling class is eyeing massive attacks on Social Security to fund the endless expansion of its trillion-dollar war budget.

The working class—whose labor is the source of all wealth, united across national borders by global production, and whose interests are diametrically opposed to imperialist war—is the most powerful social and *political* force in the world. It must be brought to bear to end the wars, connected with its struggle against capitalist exploitation.

The ruling class is so terrified of the peaceful student protests because it knows they can arouse the working class.

A statement last week by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), which called for international strike action to force an end to the police attacks, articulates the growing mass anger from below.

Within this context, a strike vote at United Auto Workers Local 4811, which covers 48,000 graduate student workers across California, is extremely significant. It is a sign that there is a growing recognition that the fight against genocide requires the methods of the class struggle.

The vote by UAW members also raises the need for intervention by industrial workers. Tens of thousands of UAW members are grad students, a highly exploited layer of campus workers, but hundreds of thousands more work in the factories and defense plants. The UAW membership must demand strike action as the starting point of a broader counter-offensive by the entire working class.

A GM worker from Flint said, “It’s the working class’s turn to stop business as usual and demand change. ... If the Flint sit-down strike took place today, it would be denounced as terrorist, because it stopped production.”

The worker concluded:

This new principle is itself terrorism against the working class, and we need to take the power back by stopping production and showing who really is in charge.

The mobilization of the working class against war requires a fight against the pro-war, pro-capitalist union bureaucracy. Having been forced by rank-and-file anger to call a strike vote, the UAW is delaying the vote to stall for time. It has made clear that its aim is to shut down the protests with a corrupt agreement like that reached at Northwestern University.

The bureaucracy is desperate to prevent the student movement from linking up with the working class. The enormous potential for this is shown by a series of recent strike votes, including by lecturers at the University of Michigan, autoworkers at Daimler Trucks, and, earlier this week, at the Stellantis Warren Stamping plant near Detroit.

But the bureaucracy is defying the rank and file’s demands for strike action and imposing sellouts, as it has at Daimler, is attempting to do at the University of Michigan, and will try to do at Warren Stamping.

For months, the bureaucrats in the UAW, and the union bureaucracy as a whole, have combined nominal “support” for a ceasefire with ironclad support for “Genocide Joe” and the Democrats. UAW President Shawn Fain dines with billionaires and warmongers at the White House and holds

up the union’s role in war production in World War II as the model for today. Last week, Fain even vetoed a proposal to divest the union from its investments in Israel, according to *Payday Report*.

But the objective growth of opposition to the war and the deep anger over the sellouts the bureaucracy has carried out have undermined these shabby maneuvers. There is enormous anger over the UAW’s endorsement of Biden and growing calls for this to be rescinded. Graduate students are furious over Local 4811 officials’ role in allowing police into the encampment at UCLA, where they attacked students.

Above all, the bureaucracy is terrified that the outbreak even of a local strike could spark a far broader movement. But this is exactly what must happen.

Workers must take the strike vote in California as a call to action. The working class must mobilize to impose its response to the war—organizing, in the face of inevitable resistance from union bureaucrats, rank-and-file strike votes and strike committees to prepare industrial action. This includes not only autoworkers, but manufacturing workers more broadly, dockworkers, railroad workers, healthcare workers, teachers, university faculty and staff, and others.

The student movement anticipates a deeper revolutionary movement in the working class. The cause of imperialist war is a world capitalist system that, mired in terminal crisis and faced with economic and social ruin, is compelled to stake everything on war and dictatorship.

The progressive solution to this crisis is based on the working class taking power, expropriating the Wall Street warmongers, marshaling society’s resources to meet human needs, and ending the arbitrary and obsolete national divisions that give rise to war.



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