

Healthcare workers must defend students against police crackdown!

World Socialist Web Site Healthcare Workers Newsletter
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The World Socialist Web Site stands ready to assist all healthcare workers who want to oppose the police crackdowns. Get in touch with us by filling out the form below (all submissions will be kept anonymous).

The World Socialist Web Site Healthcare Workers Newsletter urges medical professionals across the US and the world to organize in defense of students.

We endorse the recent statement by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees calling for a “nationwide and international strike to force an end to the assault on the basic right to free speech.” Healthcare workers, who have been at the forefront in opposing the genocide in Gaza, must be at the forefront of actions by the working class to end the war on Palestinians and on free speech.

The constitutional rights to free speech and assembly are under attack. If they can use riot cops against peaceful student protests today, then tomorrow they will use them against workers on the picket line demanding safe staffing.

Both corporate parties support the war and the crackdown. Despite the slander of “antisemitism” against protesters, many of whom are Jewish, Democrats are working with real antisemites in the Republican party such as Marjorie Taylor Greene against the demonstrations. And both parties came together to pass funding for tens of billions in military funding for Israel, as well as to Ukraine, whose military is stuffed with neo-Nazis.

The same politicians claiming peaceful protests against genocide are intolerable disruptions to “order” never batted an eyelash when hospital morgues were stuffed full of bodies during endless and continuing surges of the pandemic. In fact, just as they both join hands against students, they joined hands to rip up public safety measures against the pandemic, including

basic things like masking and quarantining.

Healthcare workers across the country have been deeply affected by the scenes in Gaza, particularly the targeted attacks and mass murders in hospitals. From the beginning of the war, they have courageously taken the lead in organizing protests demanding a ceasefire. In open letters, demonstrations, vigils and social media campaigns, they have expressed outrage over the denial of healthcare, famine conditions, spread of disease and direct killings of patients.

Healthcare workers see Palestinian aid workers as their brothers and sisters. While Israel’s targeting of Gaza’s health system has little precedent since World War II, they see parallels between the physical destruction of Palestinian healthcare and the profit-driven starving of resources of healthcare in the United States and other so-called “advanced” economies.

Both have their source in the same profit interests. The massive criminal wars, spanning from Ukraine to the Middle East and with new fronts being prepared against China, are not being waged to defend “human rights” or “democracy” but for natural resources and supply chains.

Healthcare workers in the “homefront” find it impossible to fulfill their Hippocratic Oath as long as they are hamstrung by for-profit medicine. Healthcare workers struggle through shift after shift with unsafe staffing, impossible workloads and a lack of basic supplies.

The ruling class is attacking the basic social right to healthcare, which it views as a wasted expense.

The hospital system in the US has been crippled by four years of profit-driven pandemic policies. Meanwhile, the pandemic continues to rage. Some 573 lives were lost in the first week of April. Tens of millions are suffering from Long COVID. New viruses,

such as the avian flu (H5N1), have the potential to ignite into new pandemics.

Tens of thousands are being laid off or leaving the profession due to exhaustion. Even worse staffing problems are in the offing, as Wall Street seeks to offload the heavy indebtedness of US healthcare—due to mergers and acquisitions, not patient care—onto the backs of medical professionals.

Many of the universities conducting crackdowns, such as the University of California, are associated with major hospitals networks and medical schools. This underscores the fact that students and medical workers face the same fight.

Next week's strike vote by UC graduate students from United Auto Workers Local 4811 is extremely significant because it shows there is growing recognition that the fight against genocide requires the class struggle. Healthcare workers, especially in the UC Health System, must give this action the widest support.

Students have taken a courageous stand. Their struggle is only the beginning and must be the spark that ignites an even more powerful movement of the working class. The fight against genocide and imperialist war cannot be resolved on the campuses, but rather in the hospitals, factories, warehouses, railroads and docks. The working class is the most powerful social force on earth, as long as it is properly organized and has a strategy based on a realistic understanding of its friends and enemies.

Among its enemies is the trade union bureaucracy, which worked with management to impose sellouts. On the West Coast, groups like the United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals and the Alliance of Healthcare Unions have worked to block or limit strikes to only a day or two. They have rammed through deals which contain no real improvements to staffing, but millions in corporate funding for the unions themselves.

The UAW bureaucracy is attempting to do the same to the graduate students. They are isolating the strike vote and have delayed it as long as they can. They have said their goal is not to strike at all, but to reach an agreement with the UC administration to shut down the protests in exchange for toothless divestment pledges, like the betrayal at Northwestern University.

The UAW bureaucracy itself refuses to even divest its

own holdings in Israel, and is joined at the hip with “Genocide Joe” Biden. To get in front of the protests, they approved a “ceasefire” resolution in December, only in January to endorse Biden and even work with riot cops to shield him from protests when he visited them in Detroit.

Officials in other unions, such as the Transport Workers Union and American Federation of Teachers, have even joined the slander of the students as “violent” and “antisemitic.”

Both Democrats and Republicans want to put American society on a war footing, and Biden sees in the union bureaucrats a way to impose “labor peace.” That is why he and UAW President Shawn Fain crow about the so-called “Arsenal of Democracy” during World War II, declaring that workers today, as then, must build “aircraft carriers and tanks.”

The fight by workers against the war must be connected to a fight against the bureaucracy. Healthcare workers can take the initiative out of the hands of bureaucrats by organizing rank-and-file strike committees to countermand their attempts to rein in the anti-war movement.

The fight against war is a class issue. The same ruling elite attacking protesters are carrying out mass layoffs and starving healthcare and other social programs. An end to the genocide in Gaza and the unfolding third world war can only be enforced by the working class.

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