

UAW bureaucracy limits “stand up” strike against police crackdown to one campus, UC Santa Cruz

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Earlier this week, 48,000 academic workers across the University of California system voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike against the police crackdown on peaceful Gaza protesters. But on Friday, United Auto Workers Local 4811 announced it would actually call out workers at only one campus out of ten, UC Santa Cruz. The strike is scheduled to start Monday.

The announcement was made on Friday morning on the local’s Twitter/X account, declaring that, “On Monday, May 20th, UC Santa Cruz is Standing Up,” while workers at other universities are merely on “stand by.” The end of the strike has been limited in advance to no later than June 30.

The UAW has committed to the most minimal action it could have taken short of no strike at all. UCSC is the third-smallest school in the system by enrollment, located outside of any major metropolitan region, 45 minutes to the south of the Bay Area. The UAW has not called out any of the campuses where the biggest assaults have taken place, including UCLA, where police worked with Zionist mobs to assault protesters, and UC Irvine, where police attacked students earlier this week.

Nevertheless, the situation at UCSC is explosive. Students have held an encampment for the past week and organizers have warned in recent days that a police assault is likely imminent. Talks between students and the administration and California Governor Gavin Newsom have “cratered,” they said, due to the latter’s refusal to negotiate.

The UAW’s declaration that it is patterning the UC strike after last year’s so-called “stand-up strike” in the auto industry is the clearest sign the bureaucracy is organizing a betrayal. That strike, affecting only a handful of plants, never put a dent in production. It ended with a joint rally with UAW President Fain and “Genocide Joe” to promote a contract which is now being used to lay off thousands of workers.

That UAW announcement confirms the warnings made by the *World Socialist Web Site* that the bureaucracy is doing everything it can to limit this struggle. In a perspective Friday, the WSWs warned that “If it calls a strike, [the UAW] has made clear that it will try to limit it to a so-called ‘standup strike’ involving only a fraction of the membership.”

In opposition to this, the statement concluded, “Academic workers must now impose their democratic will through the formation of rank-and-file strike committees to mobilize for immediate, system-wide work stoppages. Against the attempts by the bureaucracy to limit their struggle, they must turn out to the autoworkers and the entire working class for support, establishing lines of communication to prepare for joint actions.”

Such a broad defense in the working class is all the more necessary in light of the punitive measures being taken by the university. Those who have been identified as protesters are being banned from campuses, including their dormitories, on threat of arrest and international students are being threatened with deportation. Even professors are being attacked by the university for providing support to the protests.

On Friday afternoon, the UC system announced it had filed an Unfair Labor Practice grievance against UAW 4811 in response to the strike authorization. They are threatening strikers not only with their jobs, but with legal action, in addition to the police violence already unleashed.

“The rank and file must act now to countermand this violation of their strike vote,” Will Lehman, a socialist autoworker in Macungie, Pennsylvania who ran for UAW President on a platform of abolishing the union apparatus and putting the rank-and-file in control, said Friday evening on Twitter/X. “They voted to launch a political strike against genocide, not a toothless stunt.”

“Workers need to spend the weekend and beyond organizing independent strike committees. They must mobilize the entire membership for a strike, first in local 4811 and then the entire UAW.”

He continued:

Leaving it up to the UAW bureaucracy to organize a fight will go nowhere. They endorsed Genocide Joe Biden. He is working hand-in-hand with the Republicans, is responsible for the genocide and directing the police crackdowns.

The decision to limit the strike comes not from the local but from the White House. There can't be any doubt that UAW president Shawn Fain, who is a regular guest at the White House, is on the phone with Biden discussing how to deal with the pressure from below.

The UAW bureaucracy is acting as auxiliaries to the police, helping to isolate and shut down the struggle. This under conditions where police are continuing to attack encampments and the UC administration has threatened to retaliate against any strike!

The fight has to be brought into the working class, especially in the factories. Autoworkers are fighting against mass layoffs after last year's so-called standup that the UAW is modeling this strike on.

Autoworkers will support grad students to the extent that they know what is happening. There must be direct communication between autoworkers and students to prepare joint actions.

Liz, a healthcare worker from Southern California, issued her own statement calling for healthcare workers to defend the protests. "Nurses, healthcare workers and the entire working class must come to the defense of the students democratic rights and the right to free speech," she said.

On social media, UC academic workers expressed outrage over the limited character of the strike. One commenter wrote, "The stand-up strike model is a piss-poor strategy in the context of higher ed. Why did we merge all three unions [in the UC system] with 48,000 workers if we're going to undercut our power with this model? How is this 'maximizing chaos and disruption'?"

Another noted, "UC can outlast a one week strike, especially in the summer, pretty easily no matter how many grad students go on strike. Outlasting a 3 month long strike, into next school year? Much harder. Strike fund is only so large so this naturally extends the life of the strike!"

The *World Socialist Web Site* also spoke to a front desk worker at an urgent care near UCLA, who witnessed the injuries suffered by protesters in the police-abetted Zionist attack last month. "There was a young guy that came in who needed a CT because he got injured the night that the cops were tearing down their tents. He came in, and he had like 14 staples in his head and needed imaging. But we couldn't help him because of his insurance. He had Kaiser, and we couldn't accept that."

"That night was the night before the police came in. We got a girl the next day that had a laceration because somebody was hitting her hand while she was pulling up barriers. We were able to see her."

"I think it's awful," he said. "I wish what's happening in Palestine wasn't happening. I don't think anybody deserves what's happening there. I'm so sad by what happened to the

Israeli people that became hostages in the beginning because obviously they were just innocent bystanders in that situation, but that doesn't warrant the hundreds of thousands of other innocent people that are now dead, displaced. They're being wiped out for something they have no part of."

The bloodiest stage in the genocide in Gaza is now unfolding. Every hospital in the territory has either been leveled or made unusable and the entire population is at risk of famine. The Israeli military has begun its assault on the southern city of Rafah, where a million people have been forced to flee.

The UAW bureaucracy claims that limited strikes can convince the UC administration to bargain with students. That this is a lie is proven by the fact that the administration is preparing to attack the "standup strike" itself. But even if it were true, any agreement limited to the UC system exchanging toothless pledges to divest for the shutdown of the protests, would do nothing to stop the genocide.

The antiwar movement is confronted with a political struggle against American imperialism. The Biden administration claims it is the "lesser evil" to Trump but joins hands with outright fascists in the Republican party to rip up the right to protest against genocide.

Integrated with the White House is the union bureaucracy, which acts deliberately to disrupt and disorient the growing movement from below.

The working class, the source of all wealth, which is being forced to sacrifice for profit and to die in wars abroad, must emerge as the basic political force against the war. Rank-and-file committees formed independent of and against both the corporate parties and the pro-corporate union bureaucracy, must be established at workplaces throughout the United States to prepare industrial action to halt the genocide.



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