

The working class must organize to defeat injunction threat against the University of California Gaza strike!

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The request for a court injunction against the anti-genocide strike at the University of California is a major attack on the rights of the entire working class, which must mobilize to defend the academic workers.

On Monday, 2,000 workers at UC Santa Cruz, members of United Auto Workers Local 4811, launched a strike against the brutal crackdown on pro-Palestinian encampments, which included arrests of UAW members. The walkout followed an overwhelming strike vote last week among all 48,000 Local 4811 members across all 10 UC campuses.

As the WSWs explained, the strike is a “major step forward” in the anti-war movement because it “poses the entry of the working class into the struggle as the basic political force against war.” The attempt to ban the strike shows this “danger” is also recognized by the ruling class.

After filing a request for the court injunction Tuesday, the UC administration issued a press release claiming that the strike is illegal because its “goal is to pressure the University to concede to a list of politically motivated demands.” Last week, after a separate filing with a state labor relations board, a university spokesman said, “Particularly in today’s climate,” if workers can strike against genocide, then “the University—and every other public agency in California—would face constant strikes advancing political and/or social viewpoints.”

The UC administration is not just speaking for itself, but the entire ruling class, especially the Biden White House. The ruling class not only wants to defeat the insurgency of academic workers, who as a matter of fact have every legal right to strike in the wake of militarized police rampages throughout their campuses, violations of basic democratic freedoms across the board and a raging witch-hunt against all dissent.

They also want to utilize the strike to set a precedent that can be used against any organized activity by the working class that attempts to infringe on what the UC administration calls “non-labor issues.”

If an injunction is granted, it will have implications far beyond the current strike of academic workers. “Political strikes,” according to this legal theory, are categorically illegal—but all strikes are “political” in the sense that they represent a challenge of the working class to the policies of the capitalist oligarchy.

This legal theory would justify, for example, banning strikes by teachers demanding adequate funding for schools, or by nurses demanding funding for healthcare, both of which are being starved to pay for war and Wall Street profits. Wildcat strikes against “let it rip” pandemic policies, such as those which broke out in 2020 in the auto industry, could also be banned, according to this theory.

The attempt to ban the UC strike is the latest move aimed at ripping up workers’ basic rights. In 2020, then-President Donald Trump signed an executive order to keep the meatpacking industry open during the peak of the pandemic, as protests and wildcat strikes spread against the infection and deaths of tens of thousands of workers and community members. Two years ago Biden and Congress banned a strike by railroad workers on “national security grounds.”

The immense stake of the working class as a whole in this strike means the whole working class must mobilize to defend itself against attacks by the police and the state apparatus, whether or not the injunction is granted. Workers must organize broad actions, uniting the developing opposition to inequality and exploitation with opposition to war and the defense of democratic rights.

In the first instance, academic workers must respond by expanding the strike immediately across all 10 campuses. The rank and file must organize actions without waiting for “permission” from the UAW bureaucracy, which is deliberately isolating the strike, to do something that they already authorized.

It is especially important for autoworkers, who are also UAW members, to come to the defense of their brothers and sisters. Rank-and-file committees, completely independent

of the bureaucracy, must be formed to establish lines of communication and prepare coordinated nationwide actions.

Every right ever won by workers came in a struggle not just against management but against the class justice of “government by injunction.” As has always been the case, the issue will ultimately be resolved not in the courts but in the factories, railroads and other workplaces.

The move towards dictatorship is also a global issue. Yesterday, German police violently attacked pro-Gaza protesters at Humboldt University in Berlin, just a short distance away from where the Nazis burned books in the 1930s. Across Europe, America and around the world, fascism is being promoted by the ruling class in answer to the growing move to the left among workers and youth.

While the ruling class demands workers yield to the injunctions of capitalist courts, their own actions are dominated by complete lawlessness. Genocide and even nuclear war are being openly proclaimed as legitimate foreign policy tools.

Even while the injunction application was being filed, both Biden and the Republicans were reacting hysterically to the application for an arrest warrant in the International Criminal Court against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Not only have they said they would defy such a warrant, they have said they would retaliate against the ICC itself.

The genocide in Gaza is part of an emerging Third World War, in which the US and its imperialist allies are trying to offset their economic decline through unrestricted military violence in pursuit of world domination. Another even more dangerous front is the proxy war in Ukraine, which raises the danger of a nuclear holocaust. Biden’s decision to slap trade war tariffs on Chinese goods is a step towards opening a third front in the Asia-Pacific.

Such policies cannot be imposed democratically but only through dictatorship to force all of society on a war footing.

A key element in the fight against war is a struggle against the union bureaucracy. The Biden administration is using the pro-corporate bureaucracy, which has enforced sellouts for decades, to control the working class. This is also how the bureaucracy sees itself. In a Supreme Court case in 2018, a union lawyer argued the purpose of the unions was to prevent “an untold specter of labor unrest throughout the country.”

As with all the major trade unions, the UAW functions as an extension of the Biden White House. They are deliberately sabotaging the UC strike by limiting it to a single campus. They responded to the injunction by suggesting they might call out another campus on Friday—by which time the strike may already have been banned. The inescapable conclusion is that this is an outcome the

bureaucracy would welcome.

In the meantime, the UAW is working behind the scenes for an agreement with the university to shut down the protests, which would amount to an injunction in all but name.

The descent into world war and fascism can only be stopped by the independent intervention of the working class. In the first place, this requires the development of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). Workers must form new organizations—uncontrolled by the apparatus and not subordinated to the pro-war policies—which give them the ability to enforce their democratic will.

But this has to be connected to the deeper revolutionary movement against capitalism. Whether it is the kings and queens of old Europe, the “Slave Power” in the American South or the modern-day capitalist oligarchy, attacks on free speech and assembly have revolutionary implications. They are invariably carried out by bankrupt social orders incapable of dealing “peacefully” with the challenge from below.

Both the genocide and the lengths taken to defend it from popular opposition prove that capitalism cannot be reformed but only overthrown and replaced with socialism, where the world is run not for profits and war but human need. That is the task of the international working class.

On Saturday at 4:00 p.m. US Eastern Time, the World Socialist Web Site and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) are holding a public meeting, “Mobilize the working class to defend the University of California strike against genocide!” Register for the event here.



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