

# Wayne State faculty, staff rally in defense of student anti-genocide protesters

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5 June 2024

On Tuesday, June 4, some 150 people attended a rally at Wayne State University (WSU) in Detroit, Michigan where faculty and staff members read an open letter condemning a violent university-ordered police attack on a peaceful anti-genocide encampment.

The week-long encampment on Wayne State campus, which professors described as “a welcoming place full of hospitality,” was organized around the demand the university divest from companies enabling and profiting from the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza. It was raided by police in riot gear at 5:30 in the morning on May 30. Twelve people were arrested, including six WSU students.

“Police tackled demonstrators, even as they complied with police orders,” a member of the WSU Honors College faculty explained at the rally. She noted that the police “in at least one instance, forcibly removed a woman’s hijab.” She added, “One student was hospitalized,” concluding, “We condemn this in the strongest possible terms.”

Professors and staff members read aloud an open letter addressed to WSU President Kimberly Andrews Espy and the Board of Governors condemning the attack. They issued a list of demands, including that any criminal charges against students be dropped and that no students be victimized by the university. As of Tuesday’s rally, the letter had been signed by 184 WSU faculty and staff members.

“The university administration thought that by arresting students and harassing them, they would be intimidating them, intimidating us,” said a professor from the School of Medicine. “They didn’t know that behind those brave students there are many that are here to say: Hands off our students!”

About a dozen faculty and staff members at the rally spoke in defense of the students’ right to free speech,

in addition to a representative from Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), a student group involved in organizing the encampment, as well as a WSU graduate student. Demonstrators then marched through the campus, chanting, “Hands off our students!”, “Free, free Palestine!” and “What do we want? Free speech! When do we want it? Now!”

At the rally, professors announced the founding of a new group called Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine (FSJP), and demanded that the University engage in dialogue with both the FSJP and the SJP.

Among those in attendance at the rally was Chloe Lundine, a staff member in the WSU Office of the Provost, who explained to this reporter:

I had some simple signs on my [office] door. One said, “Free Palestine,” with a bird on it, and one said “Free Gaza,” with a flower, and it said, “End the Occupation.” My boss, who’s an associate provost, told me to take the signs down.

She continued:

I took the signs down, I cut the words out, and I put them back up. Later, we had a meeting where I told him I felt my freedom of speech was being violated. He then asked for my letter of resignation. I had already contacted an attorney, and I told him I wasn’t resigning. It’s been hell ever since.

There were also many students at the rally, even though it's summer and there are relatively few people on campus. One student told the WSWs:

It's really great to have professors and students all united. I guess it really shows what Wayne State actually stands for, what Wayne State is. And it shows that Espy is the one who's trying to ruin it.

Members of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), which has a chapter at WSU, campaigned during the rally, selling copies of *The Logic of Zionism: From Nationalist Myth to the Gaza Genocide*, by David North, and collecting signatures on a petition to free Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk, imprisoned by the fascistic Zelensky regime for his political perspective of uniting the Ukrainian and Russian working class against the war.

IYSSE members also spoke to rally attendees about the need to unite the student protests against the Gaza genocide with a movement in the industrial working class against war and inequality and for socialism, a perspective warmly received by many in attendance.



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