

Ten months of the Gaza genocide: The way forward in the fight against war

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (US)
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As millions of students are re-entering their classrooms in schools and on college campuses across the United States, a blunt warning must be issued: The threat of world war and fascism is greater today than at any point since the 1930s.

In the Middle East, the genocide in Gaza is intensifying, as Israel and the US continue to provoke a broader war with Iran. In Europe, the proxy war by US and European imperialism against Russia in Ukraine has cost the lives of an estimated half a million Ukrainians and tens of thousands of Russians. The recent invasion of Russian territory by NATO-armed Ukrainian troops raises more directly than ever the prospect of a direct clash between NATO and Russia, which threatens a nuclear war.

In the US 2024 presidential elections, the fascistic coup-plotter Donald Trump is pitted against Joe Biden's vice president Kamala Harris, who has been deeply implicated in the genocide, the war in Ukraine and the war preparations against China. Meanwhile, the ruling class has engaged in a war on public health, allowing the COVID-19 pandemic—now in its 9th wave—to rip through the population, while new viruses like Mpox are spreading.

These political shocks have already begun to radicalize a new generation of youth and workers. Since the beginning of the genocide in Gaza, millions of people around the world and hundreds of thousands in the US have demonstrated against this historic crime.

Campuses have been a center of protests since the genocide began. Terrified that this movement could spread beyond the universities, both the Democrats and Republicans have responded with a campaign aimed at eliminating free speech on campuses and completely subordinating academia to the interests of US imperialism.

Based on the slanderous lie that opposition to war and genocide is “antisemitism,” they have initiated the most

far-reaching attack on free speech since the McCarthy period. Several university presidents were forced to resign, and, for the first time since 1968, riot police were called upon by university administrations to violently suppress student protests.

As the new semester begins, the ruling class has escalated this campaign. Encampments are now banned at the University of California, the California State University system, Rutgers University and Columbia University. The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, has imposed particularly far-reaching restrictions on free speech, effectively abolishing the right to due process and fair hearings with faculty oversight, while severely curtailing freedom of speech and expression. New York University has effectively banned any criticism of Zionism.

The coming semester is set to see renewed and potentially even larger protests. But this raises the critical question: What way forward?

The protests of the past 10 months have failed to bring about either an end to the genocide or the attack on democratic rights. This is because, so far, they have been dominated by middle class forces like the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), which functions as a “left” faction of the Democratic Party, and the Party of Socialism and Liberation (PSL). While appealing to the anti-imperialist sentiments of youth with radical rhetoric, they have advanced a perspective that threatens to derail and demoralize the protests.

First, they have limited the protests to attempts to pressure the Democratic Party, the principal enabler of the genocide, and university administrations, which are tied by a thousand threads to Wall Street and the war machine.

Second, they have attempted to separate the genocide in Gaza from the war in Ukraine and the history of decades of wars by US imperialism. This has served to undermine

any understanding that the root cause of the Gaza genocide lies not in the choice of individual governments or politicians, but in the objective crisis of world capitalism and the emergence of an imperialist redivision of the world.

Third, they have sought to preempt students and youth from directing their protests, not toward the ruling class but toward the principal revolutionary force in society that can stop the genocide: the international working class.

The tasks and the dangers facing young people and workers are immense. The genocide in Gaza is part of a far broader normalization of mass death by the ruling class, which began with the pandemic and the normalization of a potential nuclear war against Russia.

In the US, as in many other countries, the threat of fascism is very real. Trump is threatening mass deportations of immigrants and the arrest of political opponents, emulating the rhetoric of fascist regimes. Democratic rights, however, cannot be defended by supporting the Democratic Party. Harris is running to intensify the policies of global war of the Biden administration. In the attack on democratic rights at home, the Democrats have forged an alliance with the fascist Republicans who sought to overthrow the constitution on January 6, 2021.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the student and youth organization of the International Committee of the Fourth International, therefore calls upon youth and students to take up the fight to build a socialist, anti-war movement that is rooted in an entirely different social and political force: the working class. We propose the following principles as the basis of this fight:

- The struggle against war must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society. The union bureaucracies and the Democratic Party have worked feverishly to preempt any independent expression of working class interests and struggle. But a rebellion against the stranglehold of the union bureaucracies and the decades-long attacks on living standards is brewing among autoworkers, teachers, nurses and other sections of the working class in the US and internationally. This growing movement by the working class must be linked directly to the fight against war.

- The ruling class cannot wage war abroad without waging a war on the democratic and social rights of the working class at home. This is why opposition to war is being criminalized everywhere. In Ukraine, Trotskyist youth leader Bogdan Syrotiuk was arrested because he

fought to unify workers in Russia and Ukraine against the war. This underscores that the fight against war is inseparable from the fight to defend the social and democratic rights of the working class.

- The fight against war is a fight against capitalism and for socialism. There can be no serious struggle against war and the attack on democratic rights without a struggle to put an end to the dictatorship of finance capital and the economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war.

- This struggle must therefore be conducted in complete independence from all bourgeois parties. In the US, this includes, above all, the Democratic Party, which has been the chief instigator of imperialist violence around the globe for decades.

- The fight against war and the threat of fascism can only succeed as an international struggle. As the International Committee stated in 2016, “The permanent war of the bourgeoisie must be answered with the perspective of permanent revolution by the working class, the strategic goal of which is the abolition of the nation-state system and the establishment of a world socialist federation. This will make possible the rational, planned development of global resources and, on this basis, the eradication of poverty and the raising of human culture to new heights.”

Youth and students cannot wage such a struggle without taking up a serious study of history and Trotskyism, the Marxism of the 21st century. In the coming weeks and months, the IYSSE will be organizing public meetings on the fight against war and fascism, the 2024 elections, and the perspective of Trotskyism on campuses throughout the country.

We call upon all students and high school youth to attend these meetings. Contact us today to build a club of the IYSSE at your college or high school! Turn to a serious study of the history of the Trotskyist movement! Take up the fight for Marxist politics among workers and youth!



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