

# Students, faculty attend meeting to oppose attacks on pro-Palestinian protesters and democratic rights at the University of Michigan

Luke Galvin, Barry Grey  
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On Tuesday evening, the pro-Palestinian Tahrir Coalition hosted a public meeting at the University of Michigan (U-M) in Ann Arbor to address the growing attacks by the university administration on those opposing the genocidal war by US imperialism and Israel in Gaza and the free speech rights of the entire community.

The meeting was called in response to recent developments, including U-M's banning of the Students Allied for Freedom and Equality (SAFE), the local chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine; new charges brought against three protesters involved in a demonstration at U-M in August by Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel; and U-M's rollback of its "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" policies.

Reflecting popular opposition to the murderous drive to "ethnically cleanse" Gaza and growing resistance to Trump's attacks on immigrants and federal workers, billionaire Elon Musk's gutting of social services, and Trump's moves to establish a presidential dictatorship, over 150 students, workers and community members attended the meeting.

High school students are continuing to walk out in Los Angeles and other cities to protest Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids, and on Wednesday thousands across all 50 states rallied against the Trump administration's attacks on immigrants and democratic rights.

Attendees at the U-M meeting spoke to *World Socialist Web Site* reporters, expressing immense concern over the attack on SAFE, the charges brought against protesters and Trump's escalating ICE raids.

Students and workers reported seeing ICE agents around the campus, threatening thousands of international students and workers at U-M.

Members of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth section of the Socialist Equality Party, distributed an article from the WSWWS reporting on U-M's ban on SAFE and the latest round of charges against protesters. The IYSSE is demanding the immediate lifting of the ban on SAFE and all restrictions on its right to function as a student club, as well as the dropping of all charges against anti-genocide protesters.

The Tahrir Coalition organizers of the meeting had nothing to offer beyond more appeals to the Democratic Party-controlled U-M Board of Regents and Democratic Attorney General Nessel. The organizers presented a review, with slides, of the past year of protests against the Gaza genocide at U-M, which only substantiated the failure of their perspective of limiting the fight against war and genocide to the campus and to protest appeals to the very corporate forces and politicians who are responsible for the war crimes, first and foremost the Democratic Party and the Biden administration.

The result has been an intensification of university attacks on the democratic rights of the entire student body and university community. This is part of a nationwide crackdown on free speech on university campuses that was launched and directed by the Biden administration and is being intensified under Trump.

What was most striking was the insularity of their perspective. They barely mentioned anything beyond

the confines of the campus, including the national and international crackdown on pro-Palestinian protests, Trump's mass deportation drive against immigrants, his barrage of executive orders giving him dictatorial powers and preparing the mobilization of troops against his political opponents and the working class, and the wrecking operation being led by billionaire Elon Musk against federal agencies and federal workers, aimed at dismantling public health, education and basic social benefits.

Instead, they presented the attack on pro-Palestinian protesters as a racial issue, directed against Palestinians and blacks. In this connection they equated the attack on DEI with Trump's moves to deport non-citizen students who express anti-war, anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist views. In this way they covered up the class axis of both the imperialist war drive and the unprecedented attack on working people within the US, in which the Democratic Party is entirely complicit.

They sought to channel opposition to the attacks on democratic rights to state-wide elections to the U-M Board of Regents, presenting this as a means to force the university to divest from Israel.

The closing section of the meeting exposed Tahrir's complete prostration before the capitalist two-party system and support for the Democratic Party. After calling for mass attendance at upcoming hearings, Tahrir turned the issue over to the audience, asking who among those in attendance had individual connections to Nessel that could supposedly be used to pressure her to drop the charges.

During the meeting, Luke Galvin, a member of the IYSSE National Committee, spoke to provide an international socialist perspective to the attendees. Galvin characterized the attack on democratic rights as an attempt "to intimidate and suppress the growing opposition to genocide, war and the Trump administration."

He said the U-M Board of Regents was conducting its anti-democratic campaign against pro-Palestinian protesters "on behalf of the US ruling class, the Democratic Party and the fascist Trump administration, to which the Democrats are accommodating themselves."

He explained that students and workers at U-M confronted "not just an anti-Palestinian campaign, but an anti-working class campaign that isn't just a campus

problem, but an international class problem."

Before Galvin could complete his remarks, members of the Tahrir leadership attempted to silence him, but failed to stop him from speaking. Galvin turned to the audience and called for students and workers to build a rank-and-file campus committee at U-M as part of a national and international drive to form popular committees based on the working class and independent of the big business parties to defend democratic rights. These committees, Galvin emphasized, will facilitate connections between "students and workers across university campuses with the growing network of rank-and-file committees in every major industry, from auto to education, internationally."

Students, faculty and staff at U-M looking for a serious political perspective against the attacks on immigrants and democratic rights should join the IYSSE and the fight for socialism. The IYSSE is the only political organization at U-M fighting for an independent socialist perspective based on the international working class.



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