

Joint US-Canada protest against Trump along Detroit River

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On Saturday, March 22, several hundred protesters held a joint rally of international solidarity on opposite sides of the US/Canada border. Crowds gathered in Hart Plaza in Detroit and at the Riverfront in Windsor, visible to each other across the Detroit River. The sentiments of the protesters was a sharp rebuke to the poisonous nationalism being promoted by the ruling classes in both countries.

President Trump has launched a barrage of trade threats and actions against Canada, including imposing a blanket 25 percent tariff on Canadian steel and aluminum products starting March 12. Further “reciprocal” tariffs are threatened for April 2. The Canadian government responded with their own 25 percent tariffs on \$29.8 billion of US-made products. This comes after Trump’s threats to unilaterally annex Canada as the “51st state,” with plans to build a Fortress North America to better position US imperialism against its global enemies. These tariffs threaten hundreds of thousands of jobs in the highly integrated economies of both countries.

The Detroit/Windsor border is the busiest international crossing in North America, with over \$323 million worth of products and materials crossing every day. Thirty percent of the trade between the two countries flows across the Ambassador Bridge, owned by billionaire Manuel Moroun, which was visible from the protest.

The economic warfare between the two countries was only one point on the minds of the demonstrators. Many spoke passionately against the rise of fascism, cuts to education and essential services, the US support of the Gaza genocide, and the Gestapo-style raids against immigrants and opponents of Trump’s policies like Mahmoud Khalil.

WSWS reporters spoke with attendees on why they

decided to attend.

A woman with a “We love Canada and Mexico” sign spoke on the Gaza genocide: “It’s horrible what’s going on over there. I can’t even watch it sometimes. It makes my heart break so much.” She went on to say it’s not the Jewish people in Israel but the Israeli government who are responsible: “They’re just like people here. I want people to know I do not support what our government has done. I do think about the people in Israel, a lot of them do not support what Netanyahu has done.”

A retired Wayne State University professor spoke on the state of the US education system: “What’s going to happen to that with the Department of Education being under [Education Secretary] McMahon? Who is going to be a teacher? I mean it’s already a profession you can’t survive on with a two-income household. The state surveys teachers after their first year, one of the questions they ask is whether or not they have another job! Then you have the Secretary of Health and Human Services ... yeah they’re all fascist. They have no support for science. There’s already people dying from measles in New Mexico.”

A Detroit high school student held a sign that read “There is always money for war, but not education.” She commented, “My sister is in college to be a special-ed teacher, so this affects her pretty heavily. A lot of the programs that she’s been included in have been shut down or defunded. It’s been really horrible. I mean, education is so necessary.”

When asked about the teachers and students being targeted for their speech against the Gaza genocide she said, “Protesting is our right as American people. I think it’s very important to be protesting and knowing your rights. It’s very unconstitutional to be deporting and going after those who are expressing their right to

freedom of speech and freedom to protest.”

When asked about the unity of the working class across borders, a Detroit woman answered: “Yeah, I’m a child of immigrants, and I think the more support we can galvanize across borders, the stronger the cause against this authoritarian dictatorship will be. There are people in my family whose citizenship is pending, and they’re scared to leave their houses. I’m not personally under attack at work or in other areas of my life, so I feel compelled to help other movements that need support.”

The protest was organized by Audrey Dubois, a teacher, who said within just a couple days, over a thousand people pledged to join on both sides of the border. “The idea of the joint protest with Canada came as an obvious thing. We are here in the Detroit/Windsor area. We are connected in so many ways,” she said.

When asked about the many signs demonstrators brought for Mahmoud Khalil, she said: “The illegal arrest of Mahmoud Khalil is extremely serious. This is a terrible attack on freedom of speech. This is no wonder that this current administration is attacking freedom of speech. If they didn’t think that our voice holds power, they will not try to silence us.”

Speeches were given during the protest. Socialist Equality Party member Matt Brennan spoke on the drive towards dictatorship, Trump’s historic break with constitutional rule, and the complicity of the Democratic Party. He stressed that it will be the unity of the international working class that will end dictatorship, war and capitalist exploitation, which was met by cheers from the audience.



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