

Democrats dominate second annual “People’s Conference for Palestine” in Detroit

Jacob Crosse
5 September 2025

The second annual “People’s Conference for Palestine” was held in Detroit, Michigan from August 29 through 31.

Organizers of the conference included the Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM), ANSWER Coalition and the national Students for Justice in Palestine. Among the endorsers were a broad range of organizations, including the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), CODEPINK, the National Lawyers Guild and Doctors Against Genocide, among others. The event was broadcast by *BreakThrough News*, the media arm of the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), which is affiliated with ANSWER.

This year’s event was headlined “Gaza is the compass,” and the keynote address was titled “Gaza is the center of the world.” Every panel featured discussion on the ongoing genocide in Gaza, which has claimed officially over 63,000 Palestinians, including nearly 20,000 children in less than two years.

Among attendees and participants, there are some genuinely opposed to the genocide in Gaza. Speakers included Dr. Ghassan Abu-Sittah, who spoke powerfully about conditions in Gaza and the deliberate efforts to destroy the healthcare system. Abu-Sittah was one of many speakers who were forced to address the conference over the internet after the US banned him from entering the country.

Dr. Abu-Sittah reported that as of today there are only “three partially functioning hospitals out of 39 and this is despite the fact that every time the Israelis have destroyed a hospital our Palestinian colleagues have reopened it.” On the systematic murder of healthcare workers in Gaza by the Israeli military, Dr. Abu-Sittah reported, “Over 1,600 have been killed, the most recent is the head of pediatrics at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis.”

Behind the various speeches and panel discussion, however, was one overriding perspective promoted by the organizers: an orientation to the Democratic Party, one of the parties of Wall Street responsible for the genocide. This corresponds to the Stalinist politics of the PSL, which is the guiding force behind the politics of the conference.

At this year’s conference, as at last year’s, the organizers blocked Mehring Books, the publishing arm of the *World Socialist Web Site*, and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, the student movement of the Socialist Equality Party, from having a table. This is because they wanted to prevent attendees from hearing any criticism of the Democratic Party.

Linda Sarsour, for example, a Democrat from Brooklyn, New York provided “Opening Remarks” for the event. As with so many

of the remarks, her comments were filled with abstract generalities and personal anecdotes, covering over a thoroughly conventional politics.

Near the end of her remarks, she called on conference attendees to “think of my beloved granddaughter” when “you are in these streets, when you are in those halls of Congress, when you are in the board rooms and on those college campuses.”

Sarsour reflects the upper-middle class Democratic Party politics welcomed at this year’s “People’s Conference.” She has been a member of the Muslim Democratic Club of New York for over a decade. In 2016, she campaigned first for Senator Bernie Sanders before seamlessly backing former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in the general election. She is heavily involved in the “Black Lives Matter” movement and a staunch supporter of Zohran Mamdani’s candidacy for New York City mayor.

Following the election of Trump in 2016, Sarsour diverted mass anger at the Trump administration behind the “Women’s March” which she co-chaired. During the Democratic Party’s convention in 2020, Sarsour participated in a subcommittee panel, declaring, “The Democratic Party is not perfect, but it is absolutely our party in this moment.” This as the convention prepared to nominate Biden, who was orchestrating and backing the genocide.

For the second year in a row, Michigan Democratic Rep. Rashida Tlaib was main speaker on the final day of the conference.

In her remarks, Tlaib made no mention of “capitalistic schemes” as she had in her Democratic Socialists of America speech earlier in the month in Chicago. In her speech Tlaib promoted a pledge to not accept political contributions from Zionist lobby AIPAC. “More Americans are now signing the take the AIPAC out of US politics petition.”

Similar to her DSA appearance, Tlaib encouraged attendees to ingratiate themselves in bourgeois politics. “And we’re going to use every single resource in our bodies, with our voices, with our legs, with our hands to make sure that again the power that we have in the streets and pushing these institutions is going to work and Palestine will be free.”

One of the more famous speakers at the convention was Mahmoud Khalil, a Columbia graduate student and legal US resident, who is still facing deportation by the Trump administration for the crime of peacefully opposing the genocide.

Following his release from a Louisiana detention facility earlier this year, Khalil quickly aligned himself with New York Rep.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Khalil's embrace of Ocasio-Cortez, who refused to vote to block arm sales to Israel this year, has drawn criticism from many opposed to genocide.

In his remarks, Khalil did not condemn the Democratic Party. Instead, like many other speakers, he addressed the theme of the convention, making clear that he understood that "liberation" for the Palestinian people is the creation of a capitalist state in the Middle East. "Palestine and Gaza are the compass means to me that we build a national liberation movement whose compass is the liberation of land and people."

Hasan Piker, the internet streamer who promoted the Tlaib and the DSA conference earlier in August also spoke at the "People's Conference." He encouraged attendees to "keep pushing" and to "keep up the pressure."

Overall, what is most notable is the absence of any serious analysis of anything. In place of concrete examination of what the genocide emerged out of and how it must be fought, is instead substituted abstract generalities about "freedom," personal anecdotes that have no real relevance to anything, and a lot of empty jargon and sloganeering.

All of this has the impact of deadening critical thought, of replacing careful consideration with moralistic bombast, which serves the basic purpose of covering up the fact that the political orientation is to the Democratic Party. It is the type of politics that the PSL specializes in, epitomized at the conference by the remarks of PSL member Eugene Puryear, which consisted of a string of slogans, with no real content, shouted out in rapid-fire fashion.

Overall, the genocide in Gaza was presented at the conference as an isolated event, which could be stopped through moral appeals and the resistance of the Palestinian people. The genocide in Gaza, however, is one front in the rapidly escalating Third World War. The fact that the same countries that are supporting genocide in Gaza, including but not limited to, Germany, United Kingdom and Canada, are the same that hail the Zelensky regime filled with fascists was not remarked upon.

None of the panels questioned the tactics and organizations promoted at last year's conference, including members of the "Uncommitted Movement," aimed at pressuring the Democratic Party, which have failed to stop the slaughter.

Last year's conference also promoted the US trade union apparatus, which has played a critical role in supporting US imperialism and Israel's genocide. There was no discussion of UAW president Shawn Fain's endorsement of "Genocide Joe" Biden. Instead, the conference featured "reform" union factions like Unite All Workers for Democracy (UAWD) and a lineup of current and retired bureaucrats

In the year since, both Fain and Teamsters President Sean O'Brien have openly endorsed Trump's trade war policies. Despite this, the trade union bureaucracies, including the United Auto Workers, whose president Shawn Fain campaigned vigorously for "Genocide Joe" Biden, then Kamala Harris, were presented as stalwart allies of the movement for "Palestinian liberation."

The entire perspective advanced by the main organizers of the People's Conference for Palestine has proven to be utterly

bankrupt. At last year's gathering, the Palestinian struggle was presented as a linear chain of "resistance" victories that would, perhaps in another "100 years," culminate in liberation. The *World Socialist Web Site* warned at the time:

To be blunt, the people in Gaza do not have another 100 years. The genocide in Gaza has already led to the deaths of over 36,000 people officially, a significant under-count, while hundreds of thousands are on the brink of famine.

One year later, this warning has been borne out with devastating clarity. The death toll has more than doubled, with estimates as high as 300,000, and last Friday the UN-backed Integrated Food Security Phase Classification confirmed that famine has officially set in Gaza City.

The reactionary politics of the Democratic Party have created the conditions for Trump's return to power. While the genocide in Gaza continues with the full backing of Washington, the Trump administration is moving rapidly to consolidate a presidential dictatorship, an essential component of war abroad and the war on the working class at home. Yet there is no opposition from the Democrats or any faction of the political establishment. The PSL and similar organizations function as a political shield for the Democratic Party, diverting anger into electoral maneuvers and blocking the emergence of a genuine socialist alternative.

What they fear above all is the independent mobilization of the working class. The central task today is the building of a movement of workers and youth against imperialist war, genocide and dictatorship, and the capitalist system. This can only be developed in opposition to the Democratic Party and all the agencies of the ruling class.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact