

“Our main concern is making sure our children don’t go hungry”

San Diego workers speak out as hunger and homelessness surge

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The cutting of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for 42 million people in the United States has propelled vast sections of the working class into desperation, as millions struggle to feed themselves and their children. The ongoing government shutdown is being exploited by the Trump administration to eviscerate what remains of the tattered social safety net in the United States.

On Friday night, the Supreme Court allowed Trump to continue withholding \$4 billion in food aid, expressing the ruling class’s deep hostility and disdain toward the masses. After more than a week of cuts, food banks across the country are reeling as they struggle to meet the growing hunger of the population.

In Southern California’s San Diego County, food banks have reported a spike in demand over the past week following the cutoff of federal SNAP (CalFresh) benefits. The county is home to more than 400,000 recipients, whose assistance was abruptly halted at the start of the month.

At a single drive-through event, the nonprofit Feeding San Diego distributed more than 60,000 pounds of food—enough for over 50,000 meals. Staff said turnout was among the largest since the pandemic. Such scenes have become increasingly common across the county, reflecting the devastating impact of the war being waged on the living standards of the working class.

WSWS reporters spoke with several people waiting in line for food assistance at distribution sites across San Diego. Among them was Ricky, a freelance videographer, who arrived with his partner at the Abundant Grace Christian Center. Although both work full time, they are still forced to rely on food assistance.

Ricky said that while their refrigerator was not yet empty, they were trying to get ahead of the massive lines they expect in the coming weeks. “We’re trying to stock up before things get worse. In a few weeks, these lines will be three times as long.” He added that SNAP officials told him to simply “reapply” after his benefits expired, but noted,

“there’s no guarantee there’ll even be any funds left.”

He denounced the government’s priorities: “How do you take away SNAP and health benefits, then send billions overseas for wars like in Ukraine? That doesn’t help all the people out here on the streets. It’s ridiculous.” Ricky warned that continued benefit cuts would drive up desperation and crime. “If they don’t bring the benefits back, the streets are going to be way worse.”

He concluded by saying that working people are being left to fend for themselves while the wealthy live comfortably in utter indifference. “We should all get free food,” he said, scoffing at the idea that basic social rights like free food and healthcare are considered “radical” or “insane.”

Another food recipient, a father who had just picked up food with his wife and two infants, spoke to the WSWS about how the SNAP cuts had affected his family. Despite both he and his wife working six days a week, and despite it being the start of the month, he said they had already run out of food. “It’s kind of disappointing,” he said with clear frustration, adding that while he and his wife can manage, “our main concern is making sure our children don’t go hungry.”

He explained that SNAP assistance had been essential for feeding their kids. “We care more about them than we care about ourselves,” he said. “We could always figure things out, but they depend on us. I’m more upset about it for my kids than anything.”

The food crisis in San Diego is part of a broader social catastrophe gripping the United States. Alongside the slashing of food assistance for 42 million people, skyrocketing living costs—especially in regions with the highest housing prices—are driving growing numbers of families into homelessness. The situation has become so dire that school districts are now intervening to find temporary shelter for their rising populations of homeless students.

The San Diego Unified School District, the second largest in California, has approved the opening of a temporary “safe

“parking lot” at the now-closed Central Elementary School. Homeless families of district students will be allowed to sleep in their cars overnight at the site. Although planning for such programs dates back years, this one is scheduled to operate for only a year, after which the property will be converted into “affordable housing” for district employees.

Nearly 20,000 students in San Diego County are homeless, up from about 18,000 last year. In the San Diego Unified School District alone, some 8,000 students have experienced homelessness. Even these figures are a vast undercount. Statewide, the official homeless population in California stands at roughly 187,000 people.

San Diego—one of the most expensive cities in the country—has long faced a deepening housing crisis. A recent report by United Ways of California found that about 307,000 households in the county, or 31 percent, struggle to meet basic living costs. While the federal poverty line for the area is set at \$30,900 a year, the study’s “Real Cost Measure” estimates that a family of four must earn \$116,000 annually to cover essentials such as housing, food and childcare. This figure exceeds the county’s median household income of \$108,000, forcing many families to take on multiple jobs just to survive. Unemployment in San Diego has also risen to its highest level since 2021.

The social crisis in San Diego is not an isolated event, but part of a broader assault on the working class across California, the United States and the world. The fascist Trump administration’s “Big Beautiful Bill” represents one of the greatest attacks on living standards in modern history. The legislation cuts more than \$1 trillion from Medicaid and SNAP while handing \$3 trillion in tax breaks to the corporate and financial elite.

It has stripped nearly 12 million low-income and disabled workers of medical coverage and 11 million people—including 4 million children—of food assistance, while diverting an additional \$300 billion to the military and domestic repression. This brutal redistribution of wealth from the working class to the rich has intensified hunger and homelessness nationwide.

This austerity program is bound up with the massive military buildup in preparation for a new world war and the advanced plans for establishing a presidential dictatorship in the United States. The fascist Trump administration is preparing a military invasion of Venezuela, continuing the genocide against the people of Gaza and engaging in nuclear brinkmanship at levels not seen in decades. At home, the White House is deploying the military for “law enforcement” operations in American cities, shredding basic democratic rights and wielding starvation as a political weapon against the working class.

The Democratic Party is fully complicit in this social

catastrophe. Even as the federal government slashes over one trillion dollars in social spending, the Democrat-controlled California legislature has voted to cut billions more from healthcare and other social programs. The 2025–26 fiscal year has also seen the elimination of the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program, leaving hundreds of thousands of workers—particularly the undocumented—without access to healthcare, housing and other necessities.

California, the world’s fourth-largest economy, has a GDP of \$4 trillion and nearly 200 billionaires. There is no shortage of wealth to end this crisis. But the Democratic Party, as the political representative of the capitalist oligarchy, is compelled to plunder the working class in an effort to resolve the deepening crisis of American and global capitalism.

The desperation gripping the nation exposes the rot and bankruptcy of the capitalist system. Although enough food is produced globally to feed everyone on earth, the United Nations reports that as of October 2025, some 673 million people live in hunger. This reality makes clear that the global food crisis is not caused by environmental factors or natural disasters, but by the capitalist system and its subordination of all human needs to private profit.

Only the socialist reorganization of society on a world scale can guarantee food, shelter and healthcare for all. What is urgently required is the building of independent organizations of working class struggle, armed with a socialist program for the conquest of political power. The Socialist Equality Party calls for the formation of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) in every workplace, school, and neighborhood to organize resistance to the fascist austerity program of the Trump White House and its Democratic enablers. Only the international working class, independent of all capitalist parties and armed with a scientific socialist perspective, can end the forced starvation and imperialist war produced by the decaying capitalist system.



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