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Socialist Equality Party holds demonstration in Washington

D.C. against the Gaza genocide and imperialist war

On Wednesday, the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), *World Socialist Web Site*, International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) held a powerful rally and meeting in Washington D.C. to protest the address by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to a joint session of Congress.



Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Joe Kishore speaks at protest against Benjamin Netanyahu's address to Congress

Hundreds of class-conscious workers and youth took part in the SEP rally and meeting, while thousands protested throughout Washington against Netanyahu's provocative visit. His address to Congress took place just days after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled

that Israel's occupation of Palestine is illegal and weeks after *The Lancet* published an estimate that the true death toll in Gaza is at least 186,000.

The SEP rally coincided with Netanyahu's speech before Congress, in which the fascist war criminal gave a full-throated defense of the genocide, stating, "This is not a clash of civilizations. It's a clash between barbarism and civilization. It's a clash between those who glorify death and those who sanctify life."

Dripping with cynicism, Netanyahu denounced anti-genocide protesters as "Tehran's useful idiots" and absurdly claimed that "Iran is funding and promoting anti-Israel protests in America," including those which coincided with his visit.

The reality is that Netanyahu is the most reviled politician in the world, widely recognized as a war criminal. Millions of workers and young people throughout the world have protested against the Israeli government and its imperialist backers, who have shamelessly perpetrated the greatest war crimes of the 21st century.

The SEP rally was unique among all protests that have taken place against the Gaza genocide. Each speaker advanced a revolutionary socialist strategy, based on a Trotskyist program and fighting for the unity of the international working class. In contrast to the myriad protests which have been called by various pseudo-left political tendencies, the SEP rally provided a political perspective upon which to build a powerful anti-war movement to stop the genocide in Gaza, the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the developing Third World War.

The rally was emceed by Lawrence Porter, SEP (US) assistant national secretary, who began with a moment of silence to honor the memory of the countless Palestinians slaughtered by the Israeli government, with the full backing of the US and other imperialist powers.

Porter stated:

We are here to tell the truth. The struggle against genocide and war requires the mobilization of the immense strength and power of the working class and its political independence from the Democrats and Republicans.

Porter then introduced Jerry White, the SEP's vice presidential candidate in the 2024 US elections. White's speech highlighted the growing threat of an American fascist movement under Donald Trump, while connecting the struggle against war with the fight by workers to defend their jobs, wages and living standards.

White stated:

In opposition to the war criminals and corporate flacks in the US Congress who are welcoming the Butcher of Gaza to their blood-soaked chambers today, the Socialist Equality

Party is advancing a program to mobilize the working class to fight for peace, good jobs and democratic rights.

He concluded:

The global protests against the genocide in Gaza demonstrate that the working class is more unified than ever before. Today, there can be no national solutions to war, climate crisis, pandemic, inequality or poverty. These are world problems and require world solutions.

For humanity to progress, the working class must end the subordination of society to capitalist profit and the outmoded nation-state system and reorganize economic and political life on a rational, global and democratic basis. That is the fight for socialism.

White was followed by WSWS writer Andre Damon, who has written extensively on the Gaza genocide, the war in Ukraine and geopolitics more broadly.

Damon exposed the imperialist propaganda which repeats endlessly Israel's supposed "right to defend itself," stating:

Israel does not have the 'right to defend itself' against an imprisoned population whose land it occupies with the aim of seizing it by force. For this reason, as the International Court of Justice made clear in a ruling last week, the Israeli occupation of 'the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967' is 'illegal.'

Drawing parallels between the Gaza genocide and the Holocaust, Damon stated:

Adolf Hitler, addressing his generals before the launching of the war of extermination against Poland, asked, 'Who now speaks of the annihilation of the Armenians?' He urged his soldiers to emulate Genghis Khan and wage war without mercy against entire peoples.

As with Hitler's precedent in the Armenian genocide, American imperialism sees the extermination of the Palestinians as the example that must be followed in waging war without mercy—war in which it is willing to sacrifice millions, not just Ukrainians or Russians or Chinese or Taiwanese, but millions of American workers who would perish to forge American imperialism's 'new world order' out of blood and scattered entrails.

Today, we march to stop the wave of barbarism sweeping over the globe, flowing like a torrent from every imperialist capital. Today, we gather to wage war on war.

Socialist autoworker Will Lehman, who ran for president of the United Auto Workers in 2022, spoke next. As a leader of the IWA-RFC, he concentrated on the growing opposition to war among workers in the US and internationally, stating:

At my plant, and among the autoworkers with whom I speak, anti-war sentiment is common. Workers know the trillions of dollars poured into war should be used to meet urgent needs, like higher wages, housing, education and healthcare.

We have not forgotten the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which drained the country's resources, led to the deaths of over a million civilians and were used to justify unprecedented levels of surveillance and attacks on our democratic rights.

Lehman went on to expose the lies of the UAW bureaucracy, which has postured as being against the Gaza genocide while backing the Biden-Harris administration to the hilt. He commented:

The statement by the UAW was issued not on behalf of the rank and file but of the bloated apparatus of careerists and parasites who draw six-figure salaries on our dues money. They have been under federal court monitorship for years as a result of systematic corruption that has only worsened in recent years.

Shawn Fain has made a few meaningless statements about opposing the genocide in Gaza, while he gives full-throated support to Biden and now Harris. Meanwhile, the UAW bureaucracy has kept production running at UAW plants that produce weapons and equipment for the Israeli occupation forces. A movement must be built in the working class against genocide, war and capitalism.

The next speaker was Andy Thompson, a member of the IYSSE National Committee. Thompson focused his remarks on the impact of the genocide on young people, stating, "As part of its policy of ethnic cleansing, the Israeli state has targeted schools, universities, and cultural institutions. Indeed, they are attempting to annihilate an entire culture."

Thompson also condemned the escalating US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, which has killed hundreds of thousands and threatens nuclear Armageddon.

He drew attention to the arrest of Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk, a leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, which is affiliated with the IYSSE, stating:

The Zelensky government has imprisoned Bogdan for nothing but his ideas. For his conviction that Russians and Ukrainians and workers of all countries are brothers and that they should unite together in a movement against war. Bogdan has been arrested for being a fighter for revolutionary socialism, which is the biggest possible threat to imperialist war and the capitalist system.

WSWS writer Eric London, who has written widely on immigration and US politics, was the next speaker. Exposing the fraud of "human rights" imperialism, he asked pointedly, How can the ruling class claim to be spreading 'democracy' abroad when it has stamped out democracy at home? The toxic mixture of nationalism, xenophobia and jingoism has poisoned the political ecosystem. All the institutions of capitalist rule—the corporate media, the trade union bureaucracies, the Supreme Court and the two major parties—are totally

subservient to the interests of an oligarchic elite that excludes the bottom 90 percent from having any influence on state policy.

After detailing the ruthless bipartisan assault on immigrants and democratic rights, London advanced a socialist response, stating:

The defense of democracy and the rights of immigrants is inseparable from the fight against imperialist war. The Socialist Equality Party demands the liberation of all detained immigrants, the halting of all deportation proceedings, and the development of a network of committees in the neighborhoods, schools and workplaces to unite immigrant and non-immigrant workers against the threat of deportation, and to educate workers by exposing the classic fascist misdirection that immigrants, and not the corporations and two parties, are responsible for declining living standards.

After London, the rally was addressed by David North, chairman of the Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site* International Editorial Board. North began by quoting the opening statement of Robert H. Jackson, chief counsel for the United States to the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, given on November 21, 1945, in which Jackson stated:

It is hard now to perceive in these men as captives the power by which as Nazi leaders they once dominated much of the world and terrified most of it. Merely as individuals their fate is of little consequence to the world.

What makes this inquest significant is that these prisoners represent sinister influences that will lurk in the world long after their bodies have returned to dust. We will show them to be living symbols of racial hatreds, of terrorism and violence, and of the arrogance and cruelty of power. They are symbols of fierce nationalisms and of militarism, of intrigue and war-making which have embroiled Europe generation after generation, crushing its manhood, destroying its homes, and impoverishing its life. They have so identified themselves with the philosophies they conceived and with the forces they directed that any tenderness to them is a victory and an encouragement to all the evils which are attached to their names. Civilization can afford no compromise with the social forces which would gain renewed strength if we deal ambiguously or indecisively with the men in whom those forces now precariously survive.

North commented:

The fact is that every word said by Jackson 79 years ago can be said with no less force against the leaders of the United States, against those who are assembled just a bit further

down from where we stand today, and as a matter of fact the leaders of the ruling classes of Germany, France, Britain, the entire conglomeration of imperialist rulers.

He then drew parallels between the contemporary anti-war movement and that against the Vietnam War, in which he took part, asking:

What lessons must we draw from the fact that here we are a half-century later, protesting against even greater crimes? The lesson is, the great problem which we confronted then was the problem of historical knowledge, the ability to draw political lessons from the experiences of revolutionary struggles throughout the world. That is the significance of the Trotskyist movement. Nothing which is being said at other demonstrations attempts to put forward what we Marxists call perspective.

North emphasized the fundamental principles that must guide the building of an anti-war movement, stating:

The building of an anti-war movement requires the mobilization of the working class as an international force. It requires the establishment of the political independence of the working class. And it requires a perspective which has as its aim not protesting to the capitalists, appealing to them to adopt a peaceful policy, but explaining to the working class that if they want to put an end to these horrors, if they want to secure a future, they have to conquer power. That is the issue, and that is the message we put forward today.

The rally ended with a speech by Joseph Kishore, the Socialist Equality Party's presidential candidate in the US elections. Reviewing the historical background to the Gaza genocide, Kishore stated:

The present genocide is the outcome of more than three-quarters of a century of displacement, occupation and violence. It is the end point of Zionism, an ideology of extreme nationalism in an era of global economy. An ideology that in its origins was directed against the socialist and internationalist views shared by many Jewish workers and youth, and which formed the basis of a state that from its foundation has served as a bulwark of imperialism in the Middle East.

Kishore addressed the escalating political crisis in the United States, which reached a new stage Sunday after Biden ended his presidential reelection campaign, noting:

With Biden's resignation as the Democratic Party candidate, the torch is being passed from "Genocide Joe" to "Killer Kamala." Concerned about the popular outrage over Netanyahu's visit, Harris has fled the scene, electing not to preside over today's joint session of Congress. Her assurances to Netanyahu of American imperialism's continued support will be delivered in private.

The American ruling class is backing this crime not only because Israel has long served as a beachhead for American imperialism in the Middle East, but because they see the “final solution” of the “Palestinian problem” as a component part of a global war.

Kishore concluded powerfully:

In order to meet the challenges that we confront, it is necessary to bring forward the experiences of the past, to reappropriate the great traditions of Marxism, of socialism. These traditions are embodied in the history of the Trotskyist movement, the International Committee of the Fourth International. Nowhere else can the great answers to the great questions that millions of workers and young people face be found, for it embodies the great experiences of great struggles. Capitalism is driving mankind toward catastrophe. The working class must fight for a different social order.

After the rally, attendees took part in a critical discussion to further strategize on the building of an anti-war movement. Collectively, Wednesday’s rally and meeting hosted by the SEP marked a milestone in the development of a socialist anti-war movement in the center of world imperialism. In the days ahead, the WSWS will publish the full video of the rally and meeting, as well as further commentary on their political significance.

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