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“And Now They Want Our Votes”



Eman Abdelhadi speaks at the Bodies Against Unjust Laws march in Chicago on Sunday, August 18. Photo by Steel Brooks

Eman Abdelhadi’s speech from the “Bodies Outside of Unjust Laws” demonstration on Aug. 18 in Chicago.

Chicago, we all know why we are here.

We are drowning, and our hearts are broken.

We are drowning in debt. In medical bills. In rising rents. In inflation.

We are under attack in this country. The Right has declared war on people of color, on trans people, on women. They are trying to dismantle our systems of education, trying to criminalize teaching Black history and the realities of racism, oppression and exploitation in this country.

They openly call for mass deportations and want to strip Black people of voter rights.



Demonstrators on the eve of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Photo by Steel Brooks.

Every year, the climate crisis kills more people of heat, of floods, of fires. Every year, the number of climate refugees at home and abroad climbs and climbs.

And in this moment of absolute disaster, of absolute crisis.

The American ruling class —the people descending on this city for the Democratic National Convention — have seen fit to spend our money on killing children in Gaza.

They have provided an infinite supply of bombs to destroy Gaza's homes, its schools, its hospitals, its playgrounds, its mosques, its churches, its croplands, its infrastructure.

As the most powerful country on earth, they have bullied the rest of the world in the name of protecting a far-right government openly committing a genocide.

And now ...

Now they want our votes.

They say they have earned them by showing a little more empathy towards those poor Palestinians they happened to kill.

Vice President Harris, we hear your shift in tone.

But ...

Your tone will not resurrect the dead.

Your tone will not shelter the living.

Your tone will not pull bombs out of the sky.

Your tone is not enough.

Genocide Joe would still be on the ticket if it were not for this movement, for all of us.

Our movement is one of the main reasons that you are now the Democratic candidate for President in the most powerful country on the planet.

You, Vice President Harris, get to run for office because we ousted your predecessor right here in these streets. But it was never just about him. It was about the 40,000 Palestinians he helped kill.

And now we are telling you that “Not the other guy” is not a platform.

We are telling you that you actually have to earn our votes.

And we are telling you exactly how to earn them.

We are telling you we want a weapons embargo.

We are telling you we want a permanent ceasefire.

And we are telling you that we want them NOW.

You keep telling us that democracy itself is on the line.

You keep telling us that fascism is knocking at the door.

You keep telling us that Trump would be worse.

But the majority of Americans, in poll after poll, say they disapprove of Israel’s actions in Gaza. Study after study shows that a weapons embargo would earn you more votes, would secure you this election.

Vice President Harris, why are you risking the end of democracy, the rise of fascism, the return of Trump to protect Netanyahu’s war on children?

You are not the protector of democracy.

We are the protectors of democracy.

If you want to see democracy, look to Chicago’s streets this week. We are democracy speaking back to power, saying we will not be ignored.

We want to house our unhoused.

We want to feed our hungry.

We want to heal our sick.

We want to guard our planet.

We want to build our future, not rob Gaza’s children of theirs.

You may think that the people who make it into the United Center today are the ones who get to shape the future of this country.

That’s not true.

We make the future of this country. We make it where we’ve always made it, right here on the streets.

Vice President Harris, you have a choice. You could join a movement for justice. You could make a place for yourself in history. You could be a leader who chose to listen to

her people rather than the interests of the war manufacturers. Or you could aid and abet a war criminal.

Vice President Harris, if you want Donald Trump to win, then say that. Otherwise, WE ARE SPEAKING.

Hear us. We will not be placated by tone.

We need you to act — and we will not leave the streets until you do.

This piece was published in collaboration with [In These Times](#).

Eman Abdelhadi is an academic, activist and writer who thinks at the intersection of gender, sexuality, religion and politics. She is an assistant professor and sociologist at the University of Chicago, where she researches American Muslim communities. She is co-author of *Everything for Everyone: An Oral History of the New York Commune, 2052–2072*.

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