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‘Free, free Palestine!’: Thousands march in New Orleans, shut down tourism district

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New Orleans Healthcare Workers for Ceasefire march with their banner. SLL photos: Gregory E. Williams

New Orleans, Dec. 10 – A coalition of some 20 organizations brought out some 3,500 protesters for Palestine, shutting down street after street in the Central Business District.

This was a busy Sunday evening because the New Orleans Saints were playing against the Carolina Panthers at home. The city's ruling class never welcomes

disruptions to the hotels and restaurants, so these demonstrations hit them where it hurts.

Imagine if the movement does this during the city's biggest cash cow: Mardi Gras. It comes early this year, Feb. 13, just saying.

This was likely the biggest New Orleans demonstration for Palestine so far and possibly the biggest protest for anything in the city since the 2020 national upsurge for George Floyd.



A truck displays videos of carnage in Gaza as well as excerpts from Biden's callous speeches.

After brief remarks and a poem by a local Palestinian activist, the marchers set off

from 333 Canal Place in front of a major shopping mall and a casino at the heart of New Orleans tourism. This was a battle-tested crowd, made up of people who have been in the streets week after week. The protest leaders knew what they were doing, and the crowd moved with purpose, strategically shutting down various streets.

The energy was pitched throughout, with few lulls – one exception being the time reserved for Muslim evening prayer. The marchers stopped for around 20 minutes in the middle of one street, with non-Muslims waiting respectfully.

As at other Palestine events, Palestinian youth led the way.

At times, I was overwhelmed with great sadness as I looked at local Palestinian elders, children, and even babies held in the arms of their loving families. Beautiful people just like them are dying every day. But I saw so much joy on people's faces, too. It's the joy that comes from solidarity and resistance.



A Queers for Palestine contingent keep the fighting spirit of Stonewall alive.

One notable change is the development of more organized contingents. In addition to known organizations that had endorsed the march, I noted different groups carrying banners, such as New Orleans Healthcare Workers for Ceasefire and Queers for Palestine. That was good to see. The working class has the power to thwart the imperialist war machine. And queer and trans people - who are victims of violence almost everywhere, including in Palestine, as U.S.-made bombs are falling on them - are and should be at the forefront of the anti-imperialist struggle.



Protesters shut down busy streets in CBD.

Organizers of this march also made creative use of props to raise awareness about Israel's genocide. One truck was draped with mock body bags covered in blood. Another trailer - not so unlike a Mardi Gras float - was covered in beautiful art and messages like "liberation is the future," "land back," and "ceasefire now." Yet another truck displayed huge video screens, showing images of carnage and

excerpts of Genocide Joe Biden's callous speeches.

Harvey, Louisiana, mosque Masjid Omar, was the lead organizing group of the march. Endorsing organizations included NOSHIP (New Orleans Stop Helping Israel's Ports), Jefferson Muslim Association, Jewish Voice for Peace, Workers Voice Socialist Movement, Freedom Road Socialist Organization New Orleans, and many more.



A truck displays mock corpses in body bags.



A truck trailer painted with movement slogans trailed behind the march.

