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# UAW strike strengthens Gaza solidarity movement, labor joins fight against genocide

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May 26, 2024



Bay Area Labor for Palestine rally last December. Photo: UAW 4811, Instagram

May 24 — As the bloody Zionist/White House genocide against the people of Gaza continues, so do protests in solidarity with Palestine.

Since mid-April, university students, faculty, and staff across the U.S. and internationally have set up encampments, occupied buildings, and captured the attention of corporate media and social media alike.

Cops, private security companies, Zionist thugs, and other right-wing groups have been unleashed at Columbia University, at UCLA, and at many other colleges to try to end the encampments and demonstrations. But protestors have repeatedly regrouped.

Over the weeks, faculty and other college staff, as well as community members, have come out in support. Now, one of the United Auto Workers locals that represents graduate students at University of California (UC) campuses has initiated a series of “stand-up strikes.”

The power of 48,000 graduate students, teaching assistants, and researchers organized in UAW Local 4811 has strengthened the protest movement through rolling political strikes modeled after the historic victories against the big three automakers in 2023.

The series of actions is in response to the violence against the UC encampments. Two thousand striking UAW workers walked picket lines at UC Santa Cruz beginning on May 20, and the strike will expand to UCLA and UC Davis on May 28.

Local 4811’s potent intervention in the student Gaza solidarity campaign now has UC administrators grasping at straws. The main issue for the strikers is workplace safety. No one could argue with credibility that standing by while fascists attacked union members didn’t compromise the safety of these unionized workers.

Twenty-five students were sent to the emergency room while police stood by during the five-hour assault on April 30. Hoping to get an injunction, UC filed unfair labor practice charges with California’s Public Employment Relations Board. But

yesterday, May 23, the charges were rejected. There will be no injunction against the strike.

This foray into the fight against the Biden/Netanyahu genocide isn't the first by organized labor. The Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions called for support soon after the assault on Gaza began, and hundreds of union locals have responded.

UAW, United Electrical Workers (UE), American Postal Workers Union, American Federation of Teachers, and many others have released statements calling for a ceasefire or divestment. Smaller locals have organized teach-ins in support of Palestine, and rank-and-file efforts within some unions are pushing the leadership in those locals that haven't spoken up to do so.

### **Weapons to Israel blocked at Oakland dock**

In the first actual workplace union action to defend Gaza, on January 14, hundreds of unionists from the International Longshore and Warehouse Union joined by activists from the Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC) set up a picket line when a ship was scheduled to pick up weapons bound for Israel. Throughout the day, 200 dock workers from ILWU local 10 refused to cross the picket line to load the weapons onto the ship. Labor publications around the world reported the action at the Port of Oakland.

The January port action, the varied calls for a ceasefire or divestment by union locals, and the current UAW strike add a great deal of strength to the movement against the genocide in Gaza.

College administrations and mayors of major cities continue to unleash police and fascist attacks but are failing to achieve their goal of crushing the movement. New encampments and street demonstrations, recent disruptions of Genocide Joe Biden

and Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and heightened calls for disinvestment from anything that benefits the Zionist state are all testament to the determination of hundreds of thousands of students, community organizations and unionized workers.

The unionized labor element is not only a burst of strength in the immediate sense but also hints at the potential of a broad anti-imperialist movement. Consciousness about the role of the White House and Congress is growing as the U.S. military-industrial complex – the death merchants of imperialism – continues to build all of the weapons that are adding to the death toll.

A report in the publication of the All India Central Council of Trade Unions about the role of U.S. unions against the genocide quoted Gerry Scoppettuolo of Pride at Work Eastern Massachusetts and Executive Board member of the Greater Boston Labor Council, who said, “Organized labor in the U.S. has not been as united in this way since the 1980s when a majority of labor opposed the Reagan/Kissinger support of death squads in Honduras, fascist national police in El Salvador, and the Contras in Nicaragua.”

A January article [posted to Prismreports.org](#) quoted several unionists with Labor for Palestine, a network of activists across the spectrum of union locals in the U.S. Mary Jirmanus Saba of UAW Local 2865, which represents UC graduate workers said that activists in UAW are “looking for ways to support UAW workers in weapons plants and trying to disrupt those supply chains.”

Zachary Valdez of UAW Local 2110 in New York seconded Saba’s remarks when he said, “The labor movement has the power to disrupt supply chains. The UAW is uniquely placed within this system of oppression because ... UAW members are involved in the creation of weapons that are being sent to Israel and bombs that are being dropped on Gaza.”

Every victory in this struggle against genocide serves to isolate and expose the Zionist settler project and the U.S. imperialist war machine. Even just the mention of the power that workers hold over the means of production - in particular, the production of weapons being used in the genocide is nipping at the Achilles Heel of capitalism.

All out solidarity with Palestine! End the occupation!

