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People's Conference for Palestine closes with a pledge to mobilize against Rafah invasion

written by Natalia Marques
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The conference concluded with a commitment to intensify ending the genocide in Gaza and igniting a summer of struggle for Palestine



Photo: Palestinian Youth Movement

After three days of idea exchange and relationship building, the People’s Conference for Palestine ended with a bold call to mobilize: surround the White House on June 8 in protest of Israel’s ongoing offensive against Rafah.

“Biden said he had a red line, remember the red line? He said, if Netanyahu dares go into Rafah, that’s a red line, we the United States, will stop sending weapons to Israel,” said Brian Becker, executive director of the ANSWER Coalition, said during the plenary session entitled “How Do Movements Achieve Transformation?”

“Israel went ahead and invaded Rafah, and what did Biden do? He continued to send the bombs and the missiles to carry out the massacre in Rafah and throughout Gaza. Biden’s red line is a lie!” Becker declared.

Becker announced that on June 8, a date picked to mark the 57th anniversary of the

s-called Six-Day War, “we are going to be surrounding the White House with tens of thousands of people dressed in red, surrounding the White House and letting Biden know, and letting the world know, and letting Palestine know, that we will be the red line to stop the massacre in Gaza.”

The last day of the conference unfolded as Israel bombed hundreds of forcibly displaced Palestinians sheltering in tents in Rafah, martyring dozens of people. Horrific images and videos spread around the world of sheltering families burning alive. Rafah currently contains millions of Palestinians displaced by the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza.

As the horrific news unfolded, Mohammed Nabulsi, leader in the Palestinian Youth Movement, denounced the US government’s complicity in the genocide of the Palestinian people.

Nabulsi denounced “those who send humanitarian aid simultaneously as they send bombs.” Biden has made promises of aid to Gaza through the building of a temporary pier for the delivery of humanitarian goods.

“They think they can scare us with Trump... you know who was fighting during those four years of Trump’s administration? We were!” Nabulsi continued. “They say they want to save democracy, we want to save our people. To hell with their democracy.”

From May 24 to May 26, conference attendees from all sectors of the movement for Palestine met in Detroit, Michigan for the People’s Conference for Palestine, creating a space to build the movement for Palestine in [every corner of society](#). Not once did the thousands of attendees, representing hundreds of organizations participating in the global Palestine solidarity movement, forget that first and foremost, they are organizers of masses of people.

Also in the plenary session entitled “How Do Movements Achieve Transformation,”

historian and journalist Vijay Prashad outlined the significance of maintaining the struggle following the height of student Gaza Solidarity Encampments, many of which have by now been brutally suppressed by police. According to Prashad, university administrators might assume that “by the end of the spring semester, as is normal, things will taper down, students will go home in the summer, when they come back in the fall semester, they’ll forget what they did in the spring. It’s our responsibility to be the bridge for those students from the spring semester into the fall semester.”

“It’s our responsibility to deepen and carry on the kind of movements and things you’ve already been doing. It’s not what you should do, it’s what you have to do more.”

Life from a life sentence

Sana’ Daqqah, activist, journalist, and the wife of the martyred Palestinian prisoner Walid Daqqah, joined the conference program for the second time, following her [address](#) on May 25. Sana’ was part of a special plenary session on the Palestinian prisoners’ movement.

The movement for political prisoners is a key part of Palestinian political life. Before October 7, 2023, Israel was holding [5,200 Palestinian political prisoners](#) in its jails. This included 170 children and 1,264 administrative detainees held without trial or charge. The struggle to fight for the freedom of these thousands of prisoners is a demand that inspires people’s movements globally, including in the United States, where freedom fighters, principally those involved in the Black liberation movement, have been held as political prisoners for decades. Today it is estimated that over 8,000 Palestinians are being held in Israeli prisons.

“In the 60s the prisoners were placed in cells without the bare necessities for life. In this way, the occupation tried to bury the youth, the thousands of youth that entered

into the prisons. But instead the exact opposite happened and the resistance emerged within the prisoners' movement in the 70s through hunger strikes," Sana' Daqqah outlined. "Into the late 80s and 90s, the prisoners' movement played a critical role during the first Intifada. In fact, much of the First Intifada was administered from within the prisons themselves."

"We have to be proud of being part of a people that brings out a prisoner movement like this and creates heroes and fighters like ours," Daqqah affirmed. "The prisoners decided to create life from a life sentence."

Palestine and internationalism

Palestine as a cause has ignited the support of people's movements and governments across the world, a level of international solidarity that was reflected in the plenary session entitled "Palestine and Internationalism." A key speaker was Mandla Radebe, associate professor in the University of Johannesburg, and Chairperson of the South African Communist Party in Gauteng province.

Radebe outlined that because of the shared struggle between the South African and Palestinian people against apartheid, "South Africa's government felt strongly that we should take legal proceedings to the [ICJ](#)."

"We as South Africans have a unique perspective of having lived in almost similar experiences with the people of Palestine. What was happening at the ICJ, it was in a sense a cathartic moment for South Africans, many ordinary South Africans who experienced first hand the oppressive apartheid policies."

"International solidarity [is] one of the pillars of the struggle that helped us to defeat apartheid in South Africa," Radebe continued.

Mask Off Maersk

Fitting the theme of drawing on the wellspring of energy at the conference for mass mobilization, the Palestinian Youth Movement, one of the key conveners of the conference, announced a new transnational campaign entitled, “Mask Off Maersk” at the “Arms Embargo Now!” panel.

Mask Off Maersk aims to target one of the largest shipping companies in the world, while [68%](#) of Israel’s weapons are transported from the US. “Since October 7, we know that Maersk has shipped the most weapons to Israel out of any of the logistics companies,” said Aisha Mansour, an organizer with the Palestinian Youth Movement. PYM aims to utilize multiple sectors of society to target Maersk in this new campaign, including labor, media, and on college campuses. Organizers are demanding that Maersk cut ties with Israel. “We want to develop a multi-pronged and multi-regional strategy to pressure Maersk,” outlined Celine Qussiny of the Palestinian Youth Movement. “Since weapons are not the entirety of their business we believe this is winnable.”

Source: [Peoples Dispatch](#)

