

As California academic workers begin strike authorization vote, protests against Gaza genocide continue

Our reporters
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Despite police repression, including some 3,000 arrests in the United States in the last three weeks, student-led protests against the genocide in Gaza continued on colleges and in cities across the United States and internationally over the weekend.

At several colleges, students demonstrated or walked out of commencement addresses as soon as right-wing or pro-Zionist speakers began their speeches. At the Virginian Commonwealth University commencement Saturday, dozens of students walked out of the ceremony as soon as Republican Governor Glenn Youngkin began speaking. After walking out, students held an anti-genocide rally outside the Greater Richmond Convention Center.

In an interview with CNN host Dana Bash on April 28, Youngkin slandered student protests against Israel as “antisemitic” and confirmed he was working with the “attorney general, university presidents” and “law enforcement” to block “encampments.”

Dozens of students also walked out of the Duke University graduation ceremony on Sunday as soon as pro-genocide comedian Jerry Seinfeld took the stage to accept an honorary degree from the school.

In addition to his promotion of Zionism, students protested against Seinfeld because his wife, Jessica Seinfeld, according to the *Daily Beast*, “is funding a pro-Israel counterprotest at UCLA—where violence broke out Tuesday night after mob attacked demonstrators...”

At the University of California (UC), Berkeley, one of 10 campuses where some 48,000 academic workers in the UC system are set to vote to go on strike beginning on May 13 in response to the Zionist rampage at UCLA, hundreds of students demonstrated during Saturday’s commencement, with some holding signs that read “UC uses your \$\$\$ to bomb kids.”

The UC strike vote was announced by United Auto Workers Local 4811 over a week after police abetted a

Zionist rampage on the UCLA Gaza solidarity encampment on April 30 through May 1, which left dozens of students and UAW members injured, some severely.

In a statement issued on X/Twitter, Socialist Equality Party candidate for US president Joseph Kishore called on the 48,000 graduate students and academic workers to vote “yes” to authorize a strike.

In calling for a “yes” vote, Kishore noted that “the UAW apparatus is blocking a mass movement against the genocide.”

UAW Local 4811 delayed the vote, waiting nearly two weeks after students and members were assaulted before holding a vote. Now it is saying that any strike action would be modeled off of the “stand-up strike” organized by UAW President Shawn Fain for the auto strike last year.

The “stand-up strike” was deliberately designed to have as little impact on the auto companies as possible, with the vast majority of workers continuing to pump out profits. Fain and Co. then shut down the strike and rammed through contracts that have paved the way for mass layoffs.

The UAW apparatus has declared, “When the strike is authorized, if circumstances justify, UAW members at any campus, anywhere across the state could be called to stand up and walk off the job at any time.”

Kishore replied:

Graduate students are not voting to strike if “circumstances justify” nor to strike one campus or one department while everyone else continues to work. Grad students are voting to take collective

action to defend their democratic rights against brutal police repression.

The efforts of the UAW local apparatus to sabotage the strike are being carried out in careful coordination with Fain. Fain has endorsed “Genocide Joe” Biden and has appeared jointly with him in promoting the “arsenal of democracy”—that is, the subordination of the working class to the escalating global war.

How can a strike against police repression be organized by an apparatus that politically supports a government that is overseeing the police repression and has backed the genocide against which the protests have been targeted?

A real fight to defend democratic rights requires a rebellion against the UAW apparatus and the mobilization of the entire working class. The SEP campaign supports the demand by Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman, who ran for UAW president last year, for immediate strike action by the entire 400,000-strong UAW membership.

In calling for the mobilization of the entire working class, Lehman explained, “The same corporate interests behind the war in Gaza are carrying out mass layoffs to smash our resistance to exploitation. ... We have to combine the fight against war and attacks on our rights with the fight to defend jobs.”

In conclusion Kishore wrote, “The SEP campaign calls on all workers to come to the defense of the students who have been arrested for protesting the genocide in Gaza. It is the working class that has the social power to oppose the antidemocratic conspiracies of the ruling class and stop the war!”

In an interview with the *World Socialist Web Site*, over the weekend, Luke, a government worker from San Diego, said he was

closely watching protests that have grown across US universities with pride that students are taking bold steps to push back against a nationalist and bigoted political elite. But there is nothing like having been on campus to feel the energy of those who are thirsting for change in person. To now see armed thugs of the state come in and arrest and drag them to jail is disheartening, to say the least. It is now the role of workers to step away from their factories and desks and challenge the status quo of staying silent and realize the power they have as a

united class.

Steve, a community college worker, said:

[S]tudents ... are beginning to see that university administrators are not on their side. They are not going to hesitate contacting law enforcement and arresting any students who refuse to leave. Students and workers can look to Kent State and see similarities to our current situation and the similar roles that law enforcement and college administrators played.

Law enforcement is there to protect and serve the ruling class, the class that wants to support the Israeli government and war with Russia and China no matter how many students, young people, and working class must die. The blatant disregard for human rights and free speech in war, or preparation for war time, is very clear here.

Nakai, a graduate student worker at San Diego State University, told the WSWS:

Nationwide antisemitism is disgracefully being weaponized by the US capitalist ruling class to smear those who protest the political ideology of Zionism and imperialist wars. Both capitalist parties have locked arms in this political rhetoric in order to use brutal police suppression against any opposition to the bipartisan-backed genocide of the Palestinians by the Israeli government.

In solidarity and for the success of the student-led anti-war protests nationwide, we students must continue to protest the imperialist genocide and orient our voices to the power of the working class, to prioritize a working class shutdown of the transportation and shipment of US arms to Israel!



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