

Alabama teacher calls on workers to oppose Gaza genocide: “People don’t realize the power we have”

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On Saturday, the *World Socialist Web Site* hosted an online public meeting where workers around the country spoke out in support of the protests and called for action by the working class to end the war. Many made powerful contributions connecting the fight against war with the attacks on jobs and working conditions at home.

A particularly powerful contribution was made by Clare, a teacher formerly from Alabama, who connected the war policies with the reopening of schools during the height of the pandemic. The WSWS is publishing portions of her remarks below, edited for clarity and length.

I’m an educator. I’ve tried for years, especially during what we went through with COVID, to get teachers out of the mystification of believing that you can’t strike...

...What they did to us during COVID, making us come back early, ignoring all health concerns—when they made us come back, they gave us maybe a month’s worth of cleaning supplies and that was it. No training, no help. No plan of action for what happens if this happens...

They literally let teachers die. Left and right. In my own city we had eight teachers die. Four back to back, within a span of 48 hours. It wasn’t until the 8th teacher died that they let us go home...

...As the working class we need to understand they don’t care about our lives. They don’t even care about the law. The Constitution means nothing to them. Randi Weingarten

[American Federation of Teachers’ president]—she goes to Israel back and forth from money that is paying her salary to take care of schools.

And yet we have dilapidated, decrepit school buildings that should be shut down all over the country. But she’s using her money for travel overseas for nothing that has to do with education. And they wanna tell us what we can or cannot strike about?

...Those students who were protesting at universities, they were peaceful. They didn’t fight or cause any problems. They sent the police to aggressively arrest them. They will arrest you for disorderly conduct. And you’re no longer protected in your strike. That’s complete lies.

They keep us uneducated. They create another law to deny us our rights.

We stand with every strike. The media calls it “antisemitic.” We’re not antisemitic, we’re anti-war. There’s a big difference. I’m not anti-Israel, I’m pro-Palestine. There’s Israelis saying now that we don’t want this. There’s survivors of the Holocaust who said stop. But that’s not who’s being listened to. The media is just paid along to continue to write the narrative the way they want to. So business can continue to keep us under their control.

But we’re the working class. They cannot have control if we don’t let them have it. And if we don’t let them have it, that’s our power. People don’t realize the power we have. History has shown us what our power is.

I’m a member of the Socialist Equality

Party...We're standing to demand Free Bogdan Syrotiuk [an anti-war socialist imprisoned by the Ukrainian government]. There's a statement I made [on the petition to demand his freedom] I just wanted to read quickly.

Teachers in the US need to realize that the system is feeding the war in Ukraine the same way that it is making it impossible to live here. Money that will be used to resolve education and budget cuts is being directed to war. Funding that we should be receiving for better schools, better pay, a better economy is being diverted.

When we stand with Bogdan we are standing for ourselves too. They're holding him in prison for crimes that are not real. He was just reporting on what they saw. Just like our students here are processing what they are seeing in Gaza. And the rights of our students are being violated.

We have to learn that it's our right not only to strike. We have a right to strike when our rights are being violated or anywhere else. If we stand together as a working class, they can't stop us.

They can't fire us all. If nobody comes to work, there's nobody to run the school. If nobody comes to the auto factories, nobody can build the cars. And I feel for nurses and doctors. But we have to take a stand, they can't do anything. We have to learn what our power is. We have to stand together. It's not about our different industries, or even other countries. We all have to stand together to protest the capitalist system.



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