

University of California academic workers force expansion of Gaza strike after brutal police attack on UC Santa Cruz protest

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On Tuesday at 7 p.m. Eastern/4 p.m. Pacific, the WSWs is holding an online public meeting, “From Wayne State to University of California—industrial workers must oppose protest crackdowns.” Register for the meeting [here](#).

Early Friday morning, riot police launched a brutal crackdown on a student protest encampment at University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC). The operation continued into daylight, and approximately 30 people were arrested.

The provocative character of the raid at UCSC was underscored by the fact that the administration justified it on the bogus grounds that protesters were obstructing normal operations, even though the campus had switched to remote learning.

The decision to send riot cops to UCSC is meant to send a message to academic workers that neither the campus administration nor the White House and the two pro-war parties will yield in the slightest to popular pressure.

Academic workers at UC Santa Cruz have been on strike for nearly two weeks against the UC system’s brutal repression of student protests. Originally, it was the only campus called out on strike by United Auto Workers Local 4811, although UCLA and UC Davis have been on strike since the start of the week.

Also on Friday, President Biden claimed once again to be pushing for a “ceasefire” in Gaza. But this was another fraud meant for public consumption. In reality, US imperialism is a direct party to the genocide through its supply of limitless weapons without restriction to Israel.

The real policy of the White House is to continue and deepen the genocide. It is also escalating the proxy war

against Russia by authorizing Ukraine’s use of long range missiles to strike targets in Russian territory, a step which the Kremlin has warned could lead to nuclear war.

The militarized response to protests is only growing. At UCSC, at least one student was photographed in handcuffs with a bag placed over his head, recalling the infamous photos of the US military’s abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and countless other incidents during the “war on terror.”

The attack at UCSC also came only a day after a similar early-morning raid at Wayne State University in Detroit.

The attack also exposes the United Auto Workers union’s attempts to isolate and limit the academic workers’ strike. The bureaucracy originally tried to limit the strike to only UCSC, violating a clear mandate for a strike by all 48,000 members across all 10 UC campuses. The union was eventually forced to expand the strike to UCLA and UC Davis only once it became clear that academic workers at these schools were prepared to walk with or without the UAW’s approval.

On Friday afternoon, Local 4811 announced strikes at UC Santa Barbara and UC San Diego to begin next Monday, with UC Irvine scheduled to strike on Wednesday. Once again, the bureaucracy is getting out in front of rank-and-file anger, making a show of “organizing” strike actions which would have taken place anyway.

Earlier this week, a group of academic workers at UCSB issued a statement on Instagram that they would carry out a wildcat strike. “As an autonomous collective of graduate workers, we reject the UAW’s strategy of a standup strike with an end date,” the

statement declared. The group said it was “taking matters into our own hands regardless of what union leadership decides to do.”

With the addition of these three campuses, the strike would expand from 15,000 to 31,000 people and six out of 10 campuses, including all but two of the schools that are not yet in summer break. Of those two, only UC Riverside has a large student body, with around 27,000 students.

Joseph Kishore, US presidential candidate of the Socialist Equality Party, issued a statement on the crackdown.

Kishore said:

Both the Democrats and the Republicans are directing the massive crackdown on basic democratic rights, including the arrest of more than 3,000 people, mainly students. And the entire political establishment stands guilty of aiding and abetting the underlying crime, the genocide in Gaza.

He added:

All academic workers should be on strike! The attack at UCSC is the response of the ruling class to the courageous stand taken by workers. Workers must respond through a full mobilization of their collective power.

And it is necessary to break the isolation of the academic workers by taking this fight into the working class as a whole. The SEP campaign urges auto workers to form rank-and-file defense committees, independent of the apparatus, linking up with other sections of the working class to prepare actions against the war and in defense of the right to free speech.

It is the working class which has the power to defend democratic rights and oppose the genocide.

The fact that the latest attacks have taken place at UCSC, where the UAW claims to be leading a

“standup strike,” and in Detroit, the center of the auto industry, underscores the role of the UAW bureaucracy. It makes clear that the UAW, which claims its limited “standup strike” tactic is a tactical masterstroke aimed at keeping the administration off guard, is deliberately sabotaging the struggle.

The attack at Wayne State occurred only a few minutes drive from the UAW’s national headquarters, the misnamed Solidarity House.

Incredibly, Local 4811 still has not acknowledged Friday’s police raid on its social media accounts as of this writing. UAW President Shawn Fain has also said nothing about the strike at all, and there is no mention of it on the UAW website.

The UAW is also concealing knowledge of the strike from autoworkers, who would broadly support it and seek to tie the movement against war with their own fight against mass layoffs, which are being imposed through a UAW sellout contract.

Autoworkers are learning about it primarily through the efforts of the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter*. Earlier this week, officials from UAW Local 600 called security on *Autoworker Newsletter* campaigners seeking to publicize the strike among factory workers at Ford’s Dearborn Truck plant.

The fact that the UAW has been forced to expand the strike is a sign that the grip of the union bureaucracy over the situation is weakening.

But its hold is by no means broken. That will only happen once academic workers take full control of the struggle through rank-and-file committees, expanding the strike to all 10 campuses. There is no doubt that over the weekend the UAW will try to reach a deal to shut down the protests, which it is isolating to allow cops to invade the universities and to prevent the strikes and protests from impacting the genocide itself.

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