

# UAW enforces judge's strikebreaking order against University of California academic workers

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On Sunday night, United Auto Workers Local 4811 called off the strike by tens of thousands of University of California academic workers in an abject surrender to the strikebreaking order issued by an Orange County Superior Court judge last week.

The strike started on May 20, when rank-and-file graduate students, teaching assistants and other academic workers demanded action after Zionist thugs attacked protesting students at UCLA and police destroyed an encampment set up to protest the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza.

None of the issues academic workers struck over have been resolved. As this is being written, platoons of police officers have been deployed to the UCLA campus to violently disperse anti-genocide protesters.

Although the UAW apparatus tried to limit the strike to one or two campuses, threats by rank-and-file workers to carry out wildcat strikes forced the UAW to expand the strike to six out of the university's 10 campuses last week, involving 30,000 of the UC system's 48,000 unionized academic workers.

Fearing that the UAW was losing control, Judge Randall Sherman issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) to halt the strike at the nation's largest public university system until a June 27 hearing. Since the UAW already agreed to end the strike by June 30, the TRO effectively ends the strike.

In a letter sent to UC workers late Sunday night, UAW Local 4811 President Rafael Jaime ordered: "All striking academic workers should return to work Monday morning, in compliance with the court order."

The UAW bureaucracy is acting as the enforcer of the judge's totally illegitimate compulsory labor order. The Republican-appointed judge's claim that the strike has

done "irreparable harm" to UC students is a fraud. Far more harm has been done by the UC administration's suspension of the First Amendment and its decision to allow police to beat up and arrest students.

In an effort to cover over the UAW bureaucracy's unilateral decision to capitulate, the Local 4811 president's letter tries to blame workers themselves. "Unions have sometimes chosen to defy court orders, and over the weekend members on every campus have held department and campus-wide meetings to discuss how our union should respond. Based on these conversations, the Joint Council, made up of elected rank-and-file members from every unit and campus, met this evening to chart our path forward and voted to comply with the court order."

There was not the slightest democratic character to these proceedings. Academic workers who spoke with the WSWS said the local meetings were poorly attended, and union officials made it clear that anyone defying the court order would not have any union protection against victimization. The fight, they claimed, would be continued, through impotent appeals to the Democratic Party-controlled Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) to find UC guilty of labor violations for ordering the police crackdowns.

The union local is circulating an open letter to the university to "convey that we will continue to organize and fight against UC's unlawful behavior, up to and including another strike if necessary—once our right to strike over serious unfair labor practices is affirmed by PERB and the courts."

The truth is that the UAW apparatus, which has endorsed Biden's reelection, welcomed the court's intervention.

As one UC San Diego worker told the WSWS:

The union told us to go back to work starting Monday. Basically, this means the union wants us to proctor final exams this week (since this week is finals week) and grade them as usual. I don't think there are any plans to go back on strike. Personally, I think the union is using the TRO as a convenient way to duck out of a political struggle they never wanted to support anyways.

The intimate connections between the UAW bureaucracy and the Biden administration were further revealed last week when *Bloomberg* reported that US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan pressed the German government to investigate allegations of union suppression at a Mercedes Benz plant in Alabama at the "direct request of the United Auto Workers president."

According to the report, "Sullivan asked German officials in a call preceding last month's union vote at the Vance plant to examine complaints filed by the UAW under a law aimed at preventing German companies from violating labor standards abroad," the two sources said.

"They said he did so at the personal urging of UAW President Shawn Fain in the run up to the crucial election, which the union lost. ... The request shows how close the White House and the UAW have become as the 2024 election nears," Bloomberg noted.

The UAW apparatus has emerged as a critical instrument of Biden's blood-soaked administration, which is relying on the discredited labor bureaucracy to hold back opposition to US imperialism's wars for global domination, which stretch from the Middle East to the US-NATO proxy war in Ukraine and in the Pacific against China.

The decision by UC workers to strike over explicitly political demands to protect their students and oppose the US-backed slaughter of the Palestinians was an initial signal of the entry of the working class as the central social and political force to stop war and dictatorship.

But the struggle immediately confronted the sabotage of the UAW apparatus and the repression of the

capitalist courts and police. This raises the need to break the grip of the pro-war and pro-capitalist union bureaucracies through the building of rank-and-file committees to link up academic workers with workers in the auto, aerospace, weapons and other industries.

It will be the workers and their children who die in the wars; it will be public education, Social Security and other vital programs that will be gutted to pay for these wars; and it will be the democratic rights of the working class that are destroyed to suppress all forms of opposition to these wars. The fight against capitalist exploitation must be combined with the fight against imperialism through the building of a mass anti-war movement based on the working class and the fight for international socialism.

Lazarus, an academic worker, told WSWS reporters:

No matter how many students are protesting, no matter how many workers are protesting, it continues. That's why I think the connection to the workers, the worker strikes, that is needed. It needs to expand. It needs to escalate, because that's the only way we can possibly be heard. The only thing they look at is money and production.

A UC Irvine grad student worker majoring in biology added:

The grad students' strike was bringing up the genocide against the Palestinians and free speech. They're taking away somebody's freedom of speech. I completely support all the protests and everything that's been going on, especially those who have lost family and it's deeply near home. It's not right.



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