

# The political issues in the July 24 demonstrations against the genocide in Gaza

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On July 24, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed a joint session of the US Congress, receiving the applause of the assembled senators and representatives, Democrats and Republicans. Netanyahu's appearance in the midst of the genocide in Gaza demonstrated the total complicity of the American government in mass murder.

Outside the Capitol building, two demonstrations were held against Netanyahu's visit. One was organized principally by the ANSWER Coalition and was endorsed by the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), CODEPINK and other organizations that operate in the periphery of the Democratic Party. The other was organized by the Socialist Equality Party.

The rally organized by ANSWER, which is affiliated with the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), was typical of the demonstrations that it and other groups have held since the genocide began last October. There was a great deal of empty sloganeering and demagoguery, the play-acting typical of middle class politics, without any perspective to stop the slaughter. Or rather, their perspective is based on the belief that, if they shout loud enough, the Democratic Party or a section of it will listen. Their conception is that politics is essentially a problem of megaphones and acoustics.

None of the speakers offered anything approaching a political analysis of the origins of the genocide. There was no reference to the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, and the groups involved have no agreement between themselves on this question. Above all, none of the speakers connected the fight against war with the struggle for socialism.

PSL presidential candidate Claudia De la Cruz shouted about "people in the belly of the beast becoming fighters for liberation" and that "Gaza will free us all." Jill Stein, the presidential candidate of the Green Party, declared that the "people" do not want the genocide, that "we will stand together, and we will stop it."

And how will the "people" stop the genocide? Of this, nothing was said. In fact, the demonstrations involving millions of people in the US and internationally over the past

nine months have had no impact on the policies of the government. Behind the histrionics, a palpable mood of demoralization prevailed.

Many of the speakers hailed the "labor movement," by which is meant the trade union apparatus, for supposedly coming out against the genocide. This included United Auto Workers (UAW) Region 9A Director Brandon Mancilla, who is affiliated with the DSA. Mancilla cited the supposedly "historic" letter signed by the leaders of seven trade unions calling for a ceasefire. The letter is a plaintive appeal to Biden personally, calling for his administration "to immediately halt all military aid to Israel as part of the work to secure an immediate and permanent ceasefire in the war in Gaza."

The same union officials hailed by Mancilla and others have endorsed Biden, backed the Democratic Party, and supported the war against Russia.

Political tendencies reflect class interests. While many of those attending the ANSWER Coalition demonstration are no doubt sincere in their horror over the genocide in Gaza, the various organizations involved represent different strata of the middle class, oriented and tied to the parties of the capitalist ruling elite, particularly the Democratic Party. Their leadership consists of individuals well practiced in a form of political deception that is directed against the political independence of the working class.

The event organized by the Socialist Equality Party was of an entirely different character. The rally and subsequent meeting advanced a clear program and perspective upon which opposition to the genocide has to be developed.

While focusing on different aspects of the political situation, all of the speeches emphasized certain basic themes:

- The essential cause of war lies in the capitalist nation-state system, the global financial interests of the giant corporations, and the relentless drive of the American ruling class for world hegemony.
- The struggle against war requires the mobilization of the immense power of the American working class and its

political independence from the Democrats and Republicans, the ruling class parties of imperialist war.

- The movement against genocide and war must be international, uniting workers globally based on their common class interests.

The speeches not only indicted Netanyahu for the genocide, they explained the connection between the horrors in Gaza and the broader imperialist war of which it is a part. They connected the escalating global war to the growth of fascism in the US and internationally, the assault on democratic rights, and the social crisis confronting the working class.

The speeches took up critical political and historical questions that have to be clarified in the development of a movement against war. Will Lehman, a representative of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) and a former candidate for president of the UAW, exposed the fraudulent pretense of the claims—promoted by the ANSWER Coalition rally—that the union apparatus is opposed to war.

“[UAW President] Shawn Fain has made a few meaningless statements about opposing the genocide in Gaza,” Lehman said, “while he gives full-throated support to Biden and now Harris. Meanwhile, the UAW bureaucracy has kept production running at UAW plants that produce weapons and equipment for the Israeli occupation forces.”

Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Joseph Kishore reviewed what he referred to as the “rotten spectacle” of bourgeois politics, with one party, the Republicans, descending into fascism, and the other, the Democrats, focused entirely on the escalation of war. “The Socialist Equality Party and our election campaign,” he said, “insist that it is not a matter of appealing to the war criminals to change their course. No, we do not plead with the criminals to cease their crimes.”

Kishore drew particular attention to those like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez who “combine insincere criticism with absolute support for the Democratic Party.” He continued, “Trotsky referred to the priests of half truths, of quarter truths, that is the worst form of falsehoods.”

In his remarks to the rally, *World Socialist Web Site* International Editorial Board Chairman and SEP National Chairman David North drew on the historical experiences of the protests against the Vietnam War 55 years ago, which advanced a perspective of appealing to the conscience of the ruling elites.

“What lessons,” he asked, “must be drawn from the fact that here we are a half-century later protesting even greater crimes? The great problem we confronted then was the problem of historical knowledge, the ability to draw political

lessons from the experiences of revolutionary struggles throughout the world. That is the significance of the Trotskyist movement.”

“Nothing that is being said at other demonstrations,” North said, “attempts to put forward what we Marxists call perspective.” They are aimed at concealing the basic issues, which North summarized as follows:

The building of an antiwar movement requires the mobilization of the working class as an international force. It requires the establishment of the political independence of the working class. And it requires a perspective that has as its aim not protesting to the capitalists, appealing to them to adopt a peaceful policy, but explaining to the working class that if they want to put an end to these horrors, if they want to secure the future, they have to conquer power.

“Those who want to talk about ending war, without talking about ending capitalism,” North said, “would do best to observe silence and keep their ignorance from the rest of the world.”

The development of a movement in the working class against the genocide in Gaza, imperialist war, and capitalism is bound up with a struggle to undermine the political influence of all those organizations that tie the working class to capitalist politics. This requires the systematic fight to develop the political consciousness of the working class on the basis of the lessons of history, through the building of the International Committee of the Fourth International. The Socialist Equality Party rally on July 24 marked a critical step forward in this process of political differentiation and clarification.

*View all of the speeches delivered at the Socialist Equality Party’s rally here.*



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