

Residents of Toledo, Ohio demonstrate against Gaza slaughter

By Tom Hall
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Protesters gathered in Toledo, Ohio, Monday to voice their hostility to the ongoing war against the population of Gaza, part of a growing wave of demonstrations around the world against Israeli war crimes. Around 100 people attended the rally, which was held in the western portion of the city at the busy intersection of West Central Avenue and Secor Road. Demonstrators brought homemade signs reading “Free Gaza” and “Save Gaza’s children” and chanted slogans at passing cars.

The crowd was composed of a broad cross-section of the population, with many young people and families with small children. Many Arab-American workers came to express their outrage over the criminal policies of Israel, aided and abetted by the Obama administration. Although the rally site was chosen for its proximity to Arab American neighborhoods, workers and students from various ethnicities attended, demonstrating the broad support across racial and ethnic lines for the Palestinians amongst the American working class.

The demonstration won an enthusiastic response from drivers and passers by, as a constant stream of drivers honked their horns in approval.

Members of the Socialist Equality Party and its student wing, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, intervened at the rally to provide an international working class orientation for those seeking a way to counter the explosion of Israeli militarism. SEP campaigners explained that the assault on Gaza could not be understood separately from developments in the accelerating austerity drive in America and throughout the world since the economic collapse of 2008. They also explained the immense dangers that the growth of right-wing, fascistic forces in Israel pose for the Israeli working class, and argued

that Palestinian and Israeli workers must unite across state boundaries on the basis of a common struggle against the capitalist system.

SEP campaigners distributed copies of the statement of the International Committee of the Fourth International from July 18, “Oppose the Israeli invasion of Gaza” and the WSWs perspective, “The assault on Gaza: A historic crime”, published July 21. A passage in the ICFI statement argued, “The actions of Netanyahu’s regime testify to the complete moral disintegration of the defenders of Zionism and the utter dead?end of its reactionary perspective of carving out a sectarian Jewish capitalist state in the Middle East. The Zionist attempt to channel the immense class and social tensions within Israel into crushing the decades?long resistance of the Palestinian population has assumed genocidal dimensions.”

There was wide support among attendees for the call for the unity of the working class. Hasan Ajram, a student at University of Toledo born in Lebanon, told the WSWs, “I’m standing with my brothers and sisters, the Palestinians, to stop the crimes against innocent women and children. They are just bombing entire families, civilian houses, not Hamas. They’re trying to take over the land, the Israelis figure the more they kill the more land they can grab. The Palestinians are not going to accept this. We are standing here to tell Americans the truth.”

Jacob is an animator from Toledo. He expressed outrage over the lies being told in the media about the invasion. “I’ve been seeing it in the news all weekend and I wanted to do something. Some of the rhetoric being used in Israel is really horrible. It seems like ethnic cleansing, and if you speak out against it they call you a Nazi.”

When asked about the role of the Obama

administration, Jacob told campaigners, “I have mixed feelings about Obama. As far as I can tell he’s just appeased big corporations and expanded the use of drones.”

Wissam Youmis told the WSWS, “I have friends over there and their families are dying. All the governments of the world, and even the Arab governments, support Israel. Yesterday, there was a huge massacre in a civilian neighborhood. Two ambulance cars were attacked in that neighborhood. Gaza is the biggest open-air prison in the world, where can they go?”

Amal, a Palestinian, said “I think it’s really wrong that the news is constantly publicizing the deaths of five Israeli soldiers rather than the 500 Palestinian civilians as the real tragedy of this war.”

Edwan attended the rally with his two sons. He noted the historic irony of the fascistic policy being carried out by Israel. “It is genocide. How can Israeli Jews—who were the victims of the Holocaust—be doing the same thing now to Palestinians?”

“This is not a religious issue, this is about money, Arab countries are supporting Israel right now. I don’t care if my neighbor is a Jew or a Christian, we can speak to each other. Why can’t that be the case there [in the Occupied Territories]?”

Edwan spoke about the role of the United States in facilitating the conflict. “It seems like the Obama Administration supports the policies of Israel more than Jews themselves. They should support our schools and people here, why is there so much money going to Israel’s military?”

“I’ve been an American citizen now for 20 years, it is not the American people, they are good people, who may or may not know all that is going on outside of their country. They are not the ones that are making these decisions to support the bombings, it is our government.”

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