

Protesters halt Rose Parade in California, demanding ceasefire in Gaza and end to U.S funding of genocide



Photo: Courtesy Latino and Muslim Unity

Pasadena, January 2 (RHC)-- Protests and vigils that have been launched for weeks throughout Southern California and around the world echoed at the Rose Parade on Monday, January 1st. Dozens gathered outside a popular Pasadena Rose float exhibition on Monday, where the glare of the Tournament of Roses became a platform in a vigil for peace.

“What do we want?” “Ceasefire.” “When do we want it?” “Now”, the group of about 65 people called out in the afternoon event, which organizers called a “Free Palestine Vigil,” at the Rose Parade Floatfest.

The event, organized by a group of Pasadena interfaith communities, was peaceful, though by late afternoon police had set up a barricade.

The vigil ran outside a popular post-parade exhibition of floats, with little apparent interaction between those in the vigil and those coming to see the floats. But those in the vigil amplified a call heard for weeks, and indeed, earlier in the day – during the parade: An immediate cease-fire in Gaza.

“Every week we’ve been holding vigils, and it’s grown beyond our church community to be this huge group of people,” said Katerina Gea, pastor at Pasadena Mennonite Church. “We felt moved to come here and pray at the Rose Bowl because we can’t fully celebrate a new year until a ceasefire resolution is signed and the occupation is ended of Palestine.”

“We’re calling on public officials, like Judy Chu, to sign the ceasefire resolution,” she said, referring to the area’s local congresswoman. “And to end U.S. military funding to Israel, which is funding the bombs that have killed over 20,000 people now, including over 10,000 children.”

Holding a vigil in front of an event such as Rose Parade’s Floatfest is for families walking by to see that there are also other families and children standing together to demand a ceasefire.

“We want people to be moved by how their families, their children are impacted,” Gea said, “that we’re all connected with the children of Gaza because our tax dollars are actually funding the weapons of Israel.”

One leader of the protest, Palestinian-American Rida Hamida, who is executive director of Latino and Muslim Unity, said: “We are demanding that our government does not spend another tax dollar in occupying and massacring families and generations. ... This Rose Parade is a celebration of a new year, when there is nothing to celebrate while there are people that are being massacred on our tax dollars.”

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