

Hundreds of protesters demanding ceasefire shut down California Capitol



Jewish Voice for Peace activists shut down the California State Capitol in Sacramento on January 3, 2023.

Sacramento, January 6 (RHC)-- Hundreds of Jewish progressives in California on Wednesday led the latest mass protest to reject “business as usual” amid Israel’s U.S.-backed slaughter of Palestinian civilians, shutting down the first day of the 2024 legislative session at the state Capitol in Sacramento to demand an immediate, permanent cease-fire in Gaza.

As residents of the state with the largest economy in the U.S., organizers with Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) noted, Californians pay more than \$609 million annually in federal taxes that go to military aid to Israel, enabling the Israeli government to continue its violent occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. Since October 7, their tax dollars have gone toward arming Israel’s latest bombardment of Gaza.

“I am the grandchild of Holocaust survivors and I know that part of the great tragedy of the Holocaust was that the world stood by and let it happen,” said Margo Goldstein, a member of the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Organization, which joined JVP and IfNotNow in organizing the protest. “I will not be a bystander as the Israeli military wages a genocide in Gaza that is fully funded by my own government.”

The state Assembly canceled its session for the day as about 500 Palestinian rights defenders disrupted the proceedings and displayed dozens of “poppies” made of tissue paper — each one representing 20 Palestinians who have been killed in Israel’s massacre — in the Capitol Rotunda. They also unfurled banners reading: “Jews Say Not in Our Name,” and, “Jews Say No U.S. Funding for Israel’s Genocide in Palestine.”

“Protesters came together in grief and anger to protest and pray as a community while disrupting business as usual in resistance to the Israeli military’s genocidal campaign against Palestine, which is backed by the U.S. government via significant financial aid as well as the sale of bombs and weapons,” said JVP.

The protest came less than a week after the Biden administration, for the second time in a month, bypassed Congress to approve an immediate arms sale to Israel, angering Democratic lawmakers and human rights advocates.

U.S. weapons have contributed to Israel’s air and ground attacks in Gaza, in which at least 22,438 people have been confirmed dead, including more than 8,000 children. Thousands more are feared dead under rubble.

A poll released in December by Data for Progress showed that 61% of Americans — including 80% of Democrats — support a cease-fire in Gaza, but the Biden administration has refused to back the international call for an end to the assault, even as support has grown for South Africa’s genocide case against at the International Court of Justice. On Wednesday, a State Department spokesperson said the administration is not concerned that the court will find that the U.S. has been enabling ethnic cleansing, despite South Africa’s exhaustive documentation of the massacre and statements by Israeli officials signaling their intent to wipe out or forcibly displace Gazans.

Jewish progressives have led numerous disruptive protests in the U.S. over the past three months, including sit-ins at Grand Central Station in New York and demonstrations that have blocked a freeway and the entrances to major airports.

“We as Jews demand an immediate lasting cease-fire and end to aid for Israel’s genocidal campaign,” said Tina Szpicek, a Berkeley resident, lawyer, and grandchild of a Holocaust survivor. “Our tradition calls upon us to stand in solidarity with Palestinians, to disrupt business as usual, and to say unequivocally: ‘Never again for anyone.’”



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