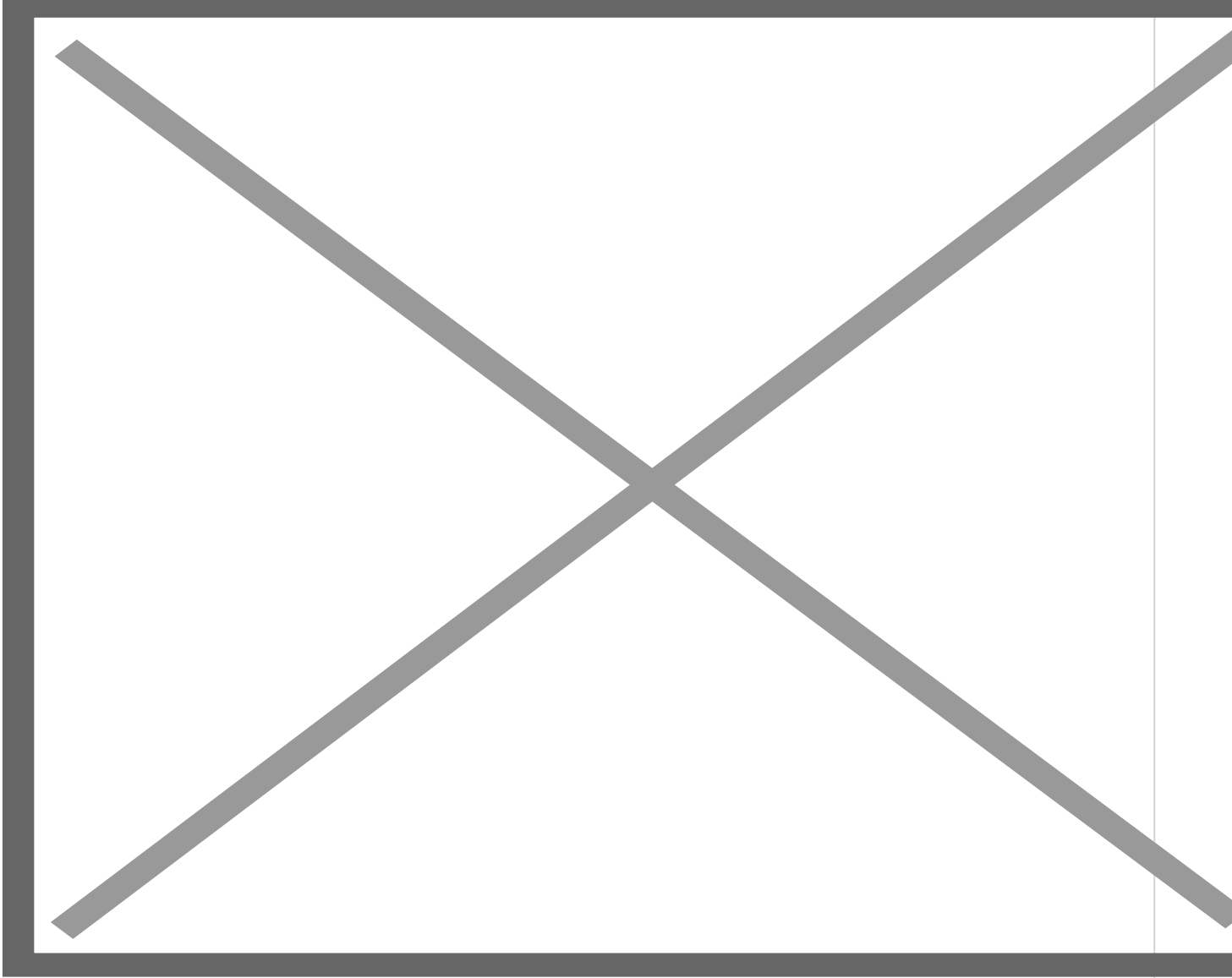


24-hour vigil highlighting the State of the Genocide in Gaza held in Chicago

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Chicago, March 9 (RHC)-- In the U.S. city of Chicago, a 24-hour vigil in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza came to a close on Friday morning, with hundreds of people from dozens of organizations calling for an end to Israel's genocide.

The event was held downtown at Federal Plaza. According to a press release from organizers of the event, participating groups included: the U.S. Palestinian Community Network; Chicago chapters of Jewish Voice for Peace; IfNotNow; American Muslims for Palestine; Dissenters; Chicago Educators for Palestine; CORE (Caucus of Rank and-file Educators within the Chicago Teachers Union); Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression; Tzedek Chicago; and Jewish Fast for Gaza.

Those who took part demanded that the U.S. stop sending billions of dollars in aid and weapons to Israel for its massacre, and called for the U.S. to forcefully push for a permanent Israeli ceasefire.

The vigil, which began at 8 a.m. on Thursday and lasted a full 24 hours, was purposely held to coincide with President Joe Biden's State of the Union address, which was given later that evening. As Biden was giving his speech, organizers gave their own speech, which they called the State of the Genocide.

"I won't be watching Biden's address over a comfortable dinner on March 7th; instead I will stand vigil with my neighbors," said Doni Weiner, a Jewish Voice for Peace volunteer, writing in Rampant Magazine ahead of the vigil. "As President Biden delivers the State of the Union, we will choose instead to stand for Gaza's dignity, and we will reflect on the state of the genocide."

Protesters committed to keeping the vigil going throughout the night, despite weather forecasts predicting rain and colder temperatures. Participants took turns reading off names of thousands of Palestinians who have been killed by Israel. Israel's brutal siege has killed over 31,000 residents of Gaza since October 7, with more than 4 in 10 of those killed being children. Thousands more are believed to be buried under the rubble of homes that have been bombed.

Organizers were only able to read just over 10,000 names of people who were killed, as it would have taken another 54 hours to complete the full list of known deaths.

Organizers said that it was important to show that Democratic leaders supportive of Biden are complicit in the genocide. Democratic lawmakers "must know that we hold them all responsible for this genocide," explained Hatem Abudayyeh, National Chair of the U.S. Palestinian Community Network (USPCN).

"Being anti-genocide is not antisemitic, it's pro-humanity," said David Stieber of the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE) within the Chicago Teachers Union. "We stand in solidarity with everyone around the world calling for a permanent ceasefire."

"Thousands and thousands of people — men, women, children — are dying," said Ashley Bohrer from Jewish Voice for Peace. "It is also important to say these are real human beings."

"The bare minimum is a ceasefire but we need so much more than a ceasefire. We need to end U.S. military aid to Israel so this can't continue," Deborah Adelman with Jewish Voice for Peace added.

On Friday morning, as the vigil was wrapping up, dozens of participants took part in a protest, disrupting rush-hour traffic in downtown Chicago. Protesters continued to give speeches as the demonstration unfolded, with many in the street holding a banner with the words: "End the Siege in Gaza Now."

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