

Report on the pro-Palestinian demonstration in Seattle of October 13

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It was called by Samidoun Seattle (1), South Asian Resist, SUPER_UW (Palestinians United for Palestinian Equality and Return at the Univ of Wash.), Resist Seattle, and the All African Women's Revolutionary Union.

Briefly, the details of attendance: There were about 300 people, a mix of national minorities – Arabic people, some Asian people – and white people. Left groups represented were International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS), RCP, Workers Strike Back, Steve Leigh of Seattle Revolutionary Socialists, and some others. I didn't see several organizations represented who have been present at previous demonstrations: Freedom Socialist Party and Radical Women, Revolutionary Communists of America.

The politics: Among the masses, we distributed 100 of our leaflets. As a double-sided 8.5 x 11 sheet, it easily had the most analysis of the situation. As well, there were good messages put forward on the masses' signs. One man, Bennet Hayes, who has been present at most pro-Palestine demonstrations for the last year, holding his large signs saying "Google Nakba" and "Google Ben Gvir". These messages are clearly meant to give ordinary people passing something to look into to better understand why the demonstration is going on. This time he also had a sign saying that not everyone agreed with the pro-Hamas line.

From the leadership of the stage, as well as from established left groups, the politics were bad. First, the demonstration was part of an "Al-Aqsa Flood Month of Action" called by Samidoun. In slogans and speeches, the leadership led chants of "Long live October 7th!" gave speeches calling the October 7th attack led by Hamas as a breakout from prison without mentioning the civilians killed. They also led chants of "Yemen, Yemen make us proud, turn another ship around!" The stage was decorated with Samidoun posters hailing Sayyed Nasrallah of Hezbollah, and Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas, as martyrs, leaders recently assassinated by Israel. And speeches proclaimed the impending and inevitable liberation of Palestine and defeat of zionism. About half of the crowd cheered these slogans, while the other half didn't. There was much Islamic prayer and other religious talk from the stage as well. And the message from the stage had the sense that if one didn't support Hamas, this meant you were opposed to Palestinian resistance and liberation. This overt support for reactionaries is a new tack these groups are taking, though these allegiances may have been present before, just kept under wraps, and some taking this approach are going further: before this demonstration one comrade was denounced for passing out a leaflet critical of Hamas, and Hayes' sign declaring not everyone at the demo agrees with the leadership's line was ripped from his hands, and afterwards he was denounced as not to be trusted for some unspecified reason.

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Seattle Revolutionary Socialists has taken a different line. It starts with a good slogan: "What will it take to liberate Palestine? Intifada! Revolution!" However, the meaning they make of this popular slogan is problematic. In the text of the leaflet they say 1) "Palestine can only be liberated by an international revolution that brings down imperialism and capitalism", 2) "only a global struggle against capitalism united with a workers' revolution in the Arab nations of the region can overthrow zionism once and for all". So, on the one hand, they support struggle in Palestine – Intifada – but they hold out no hope that it will lead anywhere without international socialist revolution. Thus the call for Intifada take on a blunted meaning. And the meaning of the call for their direct audience, in the US, could easily be understood to mean that the situation in Palestine is hopeless, and that therefore we should turn our attention away from Palestine to other struggles. This is an extremely demoralized position, and it runs counter to international solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Overall, both the positions of Samidoun et al. and SRS reveal desperation, more and more retreating into false narratives. Samidoun says that if you don't give uncritical support for Hamas continuing to dominate the movement in Gaza, then you are for the genocide Israel is raining down on Gaza. And leaving the Palestinians to stew on their own until the advent of socialism in the region, as is implied by SRS's position, is a major betrayal of the interests of the Palestinians.

Notes

(1) Briefly some background on the organization Samidoun: Samidoun has taken part in sponsoring the pro-Palestinian demonstrations in Seattle at least, since the first demonstrations after October 7th last year. It describes itself as an international Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network, and it developed out of the Palestinian prisoner hunger strikes in 2011. It arose out of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). < >