

II. United States

Chicago City Council Strikes the Moral Nerve, Passes Gaza Ceasefire Resolution

by Anastasia Battle and Stewart Battle

Feb. 3—As the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled in no uncertain terms Jan. 26, Israel is in grave danger of causing a genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. Even without this monumental decision, this fact had already been clear for the world to see as Israel has continued to bombard defenseless civilians and liter-

American psyche. Indeed, this reaction has been reinforced by efforts of the military-industrial-financial complex and its defenders to censor, “dox,” and otherwise intimidate those speaking out. However, to the surprise of many, a contrary response is now taking place, and is even accelerating.



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During public comment time of the Chicago City Council meeting of Jan. 31, 2024, pro-Palestine activist Rama Izar (right) urged the Council to vote in favor of a ceasefire resolution in Gaza. Mayor Brandon Johnson (left, standing at rear) cast the deciding vote in favor.



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ally starve them and deprive them of the most basic essentials required for life. However, the most glaring aspect of the ruling was not merely that Israel’s actions are plausibly causing genocide, but that the most powerful and so-called “leading” nations of the world may soon be shown to be complicit in genocide.

With such an overwhelming situation, many are prone to feelings of helplessness and apathy, especially given the decades of moral and cultural decay of the

An explosive political environment has been unfolding in the United States, where citizens are increasingly pushing back against the environment of pragmatic complicity on the one hand, and intimidation on the other. From demonstrations to sit-ins to lawsuits, citizens have taken increasingly bold and determined actions to make clear that the Biden Administration’s military and financial support for Israel’s war of extermination does not have their approval—



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Rev. Jesse Jackson (front right), founder of Rainbow/PUSH, is introduced to applause at the Chicago City Council meeting, Jan. 31, 2024.

and it's working.

The wave of resolutions demanding a ceasefire in Gaza, being passed by city councils and other local bodies, is noteworthy. The third largest city in the country, Chicago, became the latest to pass such a resolution on Jan. 31. It was the result of an all-out brawl over the last couple of months, and shows the power that a determined and passionate group of organizers can wield. Titled "Uniting for Peace," the [resolution](#) was introduced by Alderman Rosanna Rodriguez-Sanchez and Alderman Daniel La Spata on Dec. 13, 2023. It simply asserts:

BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the members of the Chicago City Council, support the United Nations implementation of Resolution 377, known as "Uniting for Peace," which called an emergency session of the General Assembly which voted in favor of "immediate humanitarian ceasefire" in Gaza and

BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the Chicago City Council, do hereby call

upon President Joseph J. Biden, Jr. and the United States Congress to call for and facilitate a lasting Peace in Gaza starting with a permanent ceasefire to end the ongoing violence and to promptly send and facilitate the entry of humanitarian assistance including medicine, food, and water, into the impacted region....

A coalition of organizations across the country met in Chicago Jan. 12–13 for an emergency summit hosted by Jesse Jackson's organization, Rainbow PUSH. The event brought together faith leaders, peace leaders, civil rights leaders, and other organizers to have a serious dialogue on how to actually achieve peace in Gaza, with this Chicago resolution as a highlighted focus. It was very clear that those who gathered were very determined, despite a snowstorm and below-freezing temperatures. Organizers in Chicago reported that tons of money was being pumped in to stop the resolution, and even worse, aldermen were being threatened with the withdrawal of funding from schools and local projects if they voted "yes" for a ceasefire.

Organizers' efforts went into high gear in the wake of the conference. Overall, 165 organizations in Chicago participated in organizing for the resolu-



Block Club Chicago/John Vondruska

Hundreds of students from more than 15 schools walked out of classes Jan. 31, to demand that the Chicago City Council pass a resolution supporting a ceasefire in Gaza.

tion, representing a broad array of the city’s population. This included student organizations; teacher associations; community organizations; Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faith-based organizations; organizations representing various nationalities; and more. It was obvious that this effort truly did represent a mass-mobilization across Chicago’s diverse communities, determined to unite for a common cause.

The vote was scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 24, but was postponed one week due to “Holocaust Remembrance Day,” which had never before been acknowledged or cared about by the city, according to the organizers. But the organizers didn’t get discouraged and instead used the extra time to approach Chicago’s Mayor, Brandon Johnson, who subsequently came out publicly endorsing the ceasefire resolution. Two letters were also circulated to all the aldermen, one signed by over 1,000 Jewish

Chicago citizens demanding a ceasefire and calling upon the best of humanity to prevail for peace, and the second, a personal letter from Jesse Jackson endorsing the resolution.

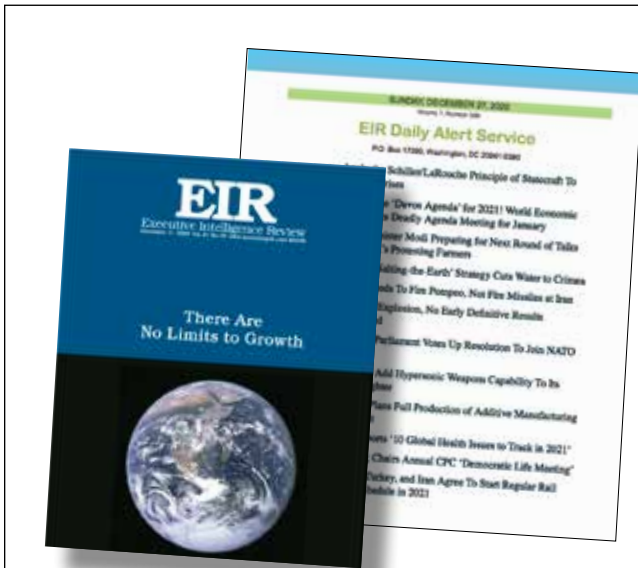
Young people, especially highschoolers, turned out in force, with 10 schools organizing a walk-out in support of the ceasefire resolution today. One thousand students lined up early in the cold Chicago morning before City Hall even opened, having marched from their schools. Organizers reported that, by their count, there were at least 5,000 people assembled outside and inside City Hall, waiting for three hours to hear the news of the vote. In the lobby, protesters were chanting “Ceasefire now!” and directed calls at Alderman Silverstein—the main opponent of the ceasefire resolution, saying: “Silverstein, you can’t hide, you’re supporting genocide!”

After a long debate and many passionate testimonies, the votes were cast, one by one. It came down to a tie! Twenty-three in favor, and 23 opposed. Mayor Johnson cast the tie-breaking vote, pushing the resolution over the threshold to pass. Chicago, a city of 2.75 million people, thus became the largest city in the United States, so far, to pass a ceasefire resolution. Mayor Johnson, in speaking to his remarkable tie-breaking vote, asserted,

I condemn the actions of Hamas. But at this point now, I believe we’re at 25,000 Palestinians that have been killed during this war, and the killing has to stop.... Yes, we need a ceasefire.

According to [Reuters](#), there are now 48 cities in the U.S. that have passed similar resolutions. Given the significance of the Chicago resolution and the energy that went into its passage, this vote promises to add to the momentum sweeping the country and the world, as pressure builds for the U.S. to change policy. As an example, the news was picked by *Arab News*, one of the leading Saudi newspapers, which titled a Feb. 1 article: “Chicago’s Mayor Casts Tie-Breaking Vote to Ensure Passing of ‘Humanitarian Ceasefire’ Gaza Resolution.”

Most importantly, however, the Chicago resolution serves as proof that history is not pre-determined or fixed, but can be seized upon by those willing to commit themselves to making it.



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