

# OAKLAND POST: WEEK OF NOVEMBER 22 – 28, 2023

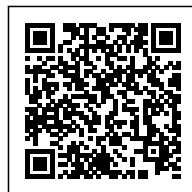
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By Ken Epstein

Several hundred people, including teachers, school staff, students, parents, and community activists, showed up at the Oakland Unified School District board meeting Wednesday night, most of them calling on the board to pass a resolution to support an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and end the killing of civilians, when school board President Mike Hutchinson refused to let them speak and abruptly shut down the meeting as they demanded to be heard.

At the start of the meeting, Hutchinson announced that a resolution proposed by Board member Valarie Bachelor, "Calling for a Ceasefire and Release of Hostages in Israel and Palestine," would not be discussed that evening and that there was no place anywhere on the agenda where attendees would be allowed to speak on the issue.

However, there was a moment of confusion when the parliamentarian, speaking over Hutchinson's objections, explained that there was one 30-minute period for people to discuss nonagenda items.

A chorus of boos filled the auditorium as Hutchinson attempted to move on. He quickly suspended the meeting, and he and several other board members left the room, though some board members remained.

One young woman shouted at Hutchinson. "You're having a tantrum, and we're talking about genocide."

People crowded around a bullhorn at the front of the room, and attendees held their own meeting.



Trending

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"You are on the right side of history – we'll be back," said a youth soccer coach, Maria Martinez.

A young woman named Lulwa said, 'I believe we all deserve our land, we all deserve our freedom, and we all deserve not to have our children bombed. The media is lying to us, and social media is bringing us together.'

Lulwa explained that she has been living in the U.S. and Oakland since the age of 9. "I was taken in by the community in Oakland, and I was loved."

Board member Bachelor was cheered as she spoke on the bullhorn, supporting the people of Palestine and the people of Israel.

"We have to stop killing children, we have to stop bombing hospitals, we have to stop killing UN workers; we have to stop the killing," she said. "We are a global community. The fight continues."

A woman who identified herself as a Jewish Oakland teacher said, "The school board does not speak for the teachers, Monday night, we (teachers) passed a very strong resolution demanding an end to the genocide in Gaza and an end to U.S. funding (for the war).

An Oakland man named Izzy said, "What did the school board do today? They walked out on our kids.... There's nobody to blame but Mike Hutchinson."

Jabari Shaw said that African Americans stand in solidarity with Palestine. "We know how it is to not be recognized as human beings," he said.

Since the executive board of the Oakland Education Association originally took a stand to oppose genocide and call for a ceasefire, the union has been under intense criticism both from mainstream media and an Oakland parents' group, which has been encouraging teachers to quit the union.

However, on Monday evening, union delegates from the Oakland schools upheld a strong position, voting 66 to 31 in favor of a ceasefire.

Hutchinson and board member Sam Davis, joined by school board candidate Jorge Lerma, have been working with the parent group in opposition to the teachers' union.

But another group of parents and community members supporting the teachers' union's stance just started a petition in the last couple of days and has already received over 300 signatures.

"As Oakland parents, caregivers, and community members, we are committed to the safety and well-being of all of our children," the petition said. "We are writing to express our solidarity with the families of Palestine and to express support for district leaders and the OEA for standing in solidarity with the people of Palestine."

**There are no comments yet.**