

MAINE | News

Activists hold State House die-in over Gaza, protest subsidies to General Dynamics

GOV & POLITICS | Feb 23, 2024 | 5:48 pm ET | By Evan Popp

SHARE



Activists with groups affiliated with the Maine Coalition for Palestine held a die-in at the State House on Feb. 22. (Via Maine Coalition for Palestine)

Activists held a demonstration Thursday in the State House urging Maine officials and lawmakers to not subsidize companies whose weapons have been used in Israel's attacks on Gaza.

Photos from the event show members of the Maine Coalition for Palestine holding a “die-in” in the State House to “call attention to Maine’s role in arming the genocide ongoing in Gaza.”

One of the primary targets of the protest was General Dynamics, an aerospace and defense company. Bath Iron Works is a subsidiary of General Dynamics, making the company one of the largest private employers in Maine.

Maine activists say General Dynamics has profited from the war in Gaza. According to the peace group American Friends Service Committee, General Dynamics is one of the companies that has provided weapons and military equipment that Israel has used in attacks on Gaza.

General Dynamics did not respond to a request for comment.

During an event hosted by the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, those with the Maine Coalition for Palestine held the die-in in front of a General Dynamics table in the State House and urged lawmakers not to support the company. According to the group Good Jobs First – which tracks subsidies – between 1997 and 2021, Maine provided over \$200 million in such funds to General Dynamics. And in 2018, state lawmakers approved a tax break package for Bath Iron Works that could add up to \$45 million over 15 years if the company makes a certain amount of investments.

Demonstrators on Thursday said legislators and Gov. Janet Mills should not provide support to companies like General Dynamics whose weapons have been used in Israel’s attacks in Gaza.

“These subsidies need to stop immediately lest the state be complicit,” said Lisa Savage, an organizer with the coalition and an independent candidate in Maine’s 2020 U.S. Senate election.

Kristen Salvatore of Maine Voices for Palestinian Rights added that the funds are particularly aggravating given the many issues facing the state.

“With the problems we have in Maine – housing and schools and infrastructure and students struggling to pay college loans, people struggling just to pay for basic needs – it’s ridiculous that all this money is basically enriching the weapons manufacturers,” Salvatore said.

The Maine Coalition for Palestine includes Maine Voices for Palestinian Rights, Students for Justice in Palestine, the Maine Party for Socialism & Liberation, Portland CONFRONT, Healthcare Workers for Palestine, and Maine Labor for Palestine.

The coalition’s demonstration comes as Israel’s attacks on Gaza have killed more than 29,000 Palestinians since Oct. 7, the Gaza Health Ministry said this week. Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said the assault will continue until the nation achieves “total victory” against Hamas, the Palestinian militant group whose Oct. 7 attack on Israel killed over 1,000 people, with hundreds taken captive.



A security officer looks on as people affiliated with the Maine Coalition for Palestine held a die-in at the State House on Feb. 22. (courtesy Maine Coalition for Palestine)

Last month, the United Nations' top court said accusations that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza should be investigated further and warned Israel to take steps to prevent such atrocities.

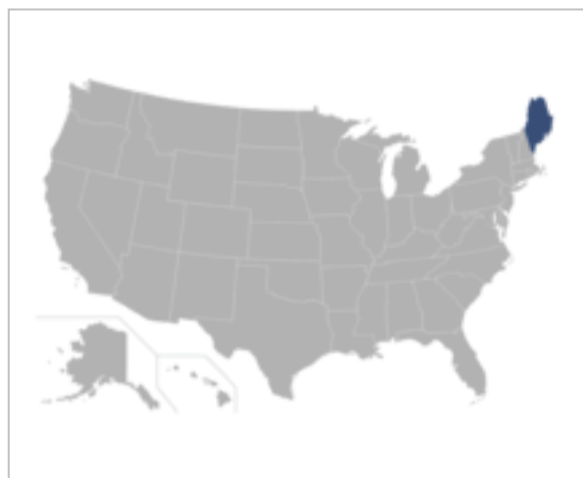
Furthermore, the leader of the U.N. Human Rights Office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has called the situation in Gaza a "humanitarian disaster," with about 75% of the territory's population displaced amid the assault. And the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification found that between Dec. 8 and Feb. 7, the entire population of Gaza was facing crisis levels or worse for access to food.

"Life for civilians in Gaza is miserable," Ajith Sunghay, head of the U.N. Human Rights Office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, said last month. "Thousands of people are constantly on the move from places they have been told are safe, living in constant fear."

Israel has further continued its offensive in Rafah, where an estimated 1.5 million people are packed together – many of whom fled to the city to escape the war. Attacks on Rafah have sparked protests, including in Maine.

Additional local demonstrations have been held, including a series of events this past week hosted by Bowdoin Students for Justice in Palestine and Maine Students for Palestine pushing for Sen. Angus King to join the call for ceasefire in Gaza. The student activists will continue their campaign with a vigil on Feb. 24 at 5 p.m. at the Maine Street Mall and Gazebo in Brunswick.

While King – in a letter signed by the Maine independent and 24 other senators – expressed support for the Biden administration's "ongoing diplomatic efforts to secure the release of hostages in tandem with a restored mutual ceasefire in Gaza," he has not called for an immediate ceasefire.



PUBLISHED ON

Maine Morning Star

Augusta, ME

[To republish this story, visit the Maine website](#)

RELATED NEWS



MISSOURI

Missouri treasurer fires back at critic of ads on unregulated slot machines

7:45pm ET