

Bay Area May Day rallies show support for workers, Palestinians

Fox local

CHRISTIEN KAFTON

May 1, 2024 at 3:10 PM

SAN FRANCISCO - People around the Bay Area held demonstrations on May 1, a traditional protest day, where workers rallied for immigrant rights, and also to stand in solidarity with Palestinians overseas.

Hundreds were expected throughout Tuesday to march and chant from the [Mission in San Francisco](#) to City Hall, and then to the Ferry Building. There was a crowd with hundreds of people on the move in [Oakland](#) in the afternoon.

The workers say they're speaking out for immigrant workers' and undocumented workers' rights, as well as the right to organize labor.

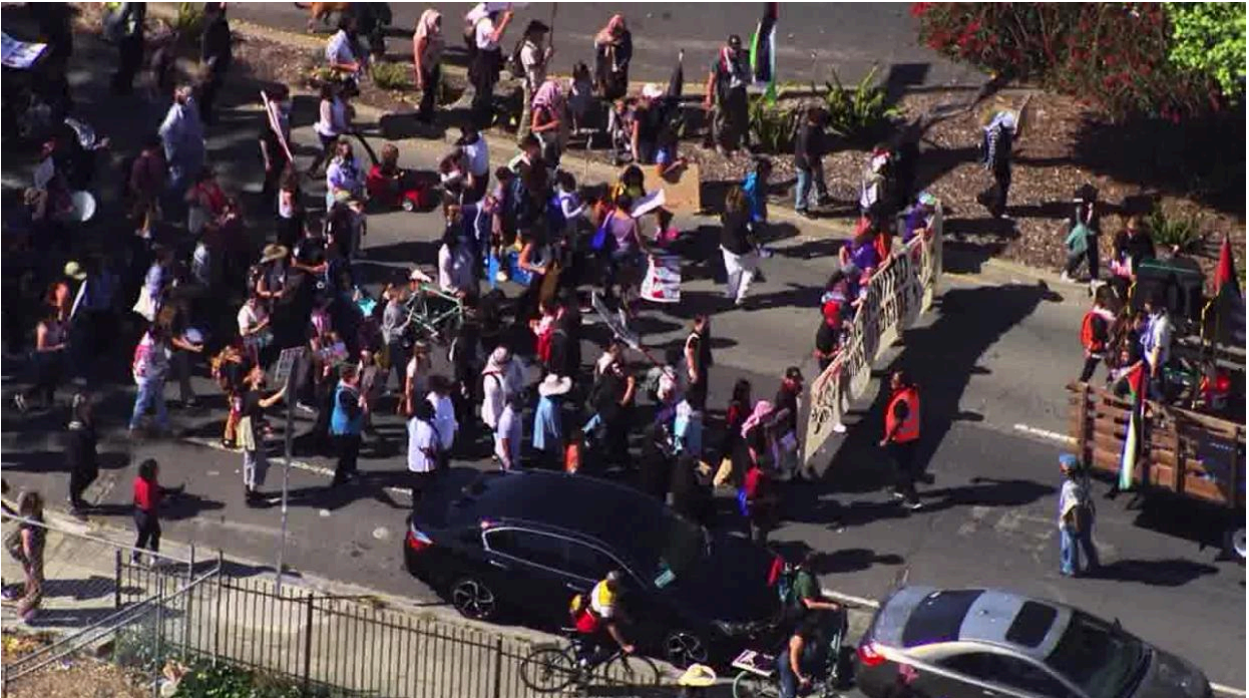
But this year, workers also say they are rallying and marching in solidarity and in sympathy with Palestinians they say are targeted by the war in Gaza.

"It's a day for us to really emphasize that this country, the Bay Area, runs only through the efforts and all the work of the workers," said Benny Zank, of the Bay Area Labor for Palestine. "That includes immigrant workers, undocumented workers. That includes all of us as city workers."

Workers say they are essential to the functioning of society and too often their contributions are overlooked. They say "May Day" is a globally recognized day for them to speak out, speak up and make their voices heard.

In [San Jose](#), labor unions and immigrant rights groups say they came together to bring attention to what working-class people are going through.

"I have to work two jobs to get the necessities for my family and to pay bills," Dolores Dominguez, Double Tree Banquet Server and member of Unite Here.



A crowd of several hundred demonstrators marched in Oakland on May 1, 2024.

"There are still workers around the whole state, the whole nation, getting their meal breaks stolen from them, they get hours stolen from them. They get overtime and not get paid," said Misrayn Mendoza, with Amigos de Guadalupe Center for Justice and Nonprofits.

'I work in San Jose' was this year's May Day theme and the day is internationally recognized as a day to recognize the struggles of workers. Multiple groups set up tables in the park, including the Wage Theft Coalition, South Bay Youth Change Makers, and the Communist Party, USA.

"We think it's important for the working class to be pushed to the front of this pro-democracy movement to best fight fascism in this country," said Alex Mao, a member of the Communist Party, USA.

Anti-war protesters and those who are against the war in Gaza also joined the rally, calling for peace around the world and for the U.S. government to stop financially supporting Israel.

"We see here that our tax dollars and everything should be prioritizing the American people because we have homelessness on the street, we have roads that aren't being built, schools that are being closed. So why are our tax dollars being prioritized on a war or even violence that we don't want," said Michael Paradela, with the San Jose Peace and Justice Center.

Some of the workers also told me that despite the higher minimum wage, making ends meet is still difficult, and they're concerned about being able to retire comfortably after working all of their lives.

A rally had been planned to block the Port of Oakland. But the plan was foiled because the port was shut today due to a monthly meeting of union workers, officials said.

Angela Rayner's humiliation is a rare gift to Britain

The Telegraph

ANNABEL DENHAM

May 2, 2024 at 1:06 PM



Rayner's political currency is rapidly depleting - Eddie Mulholland

Perhaps it was only a matter of time before Labour's "New Deal for Working People" [went the way of its £28bn "Green Prosperity Plan"](#). Launched in 2021 to much fanfare – from the unions at least – it promised a revolution in workers' rights not seen in "decades".

[Now parts of the deal look set to be dropped](#). It's hard not to read this as confirmation that Keir Starmer has been itching to pare back the plan for some time, but faced a seemingly insurmountable obstacle in its author and champion Angela Rayner.

"Not with Keir and I at the helm," the deputy leader said defiantly last October, in response to rumours her deal would be watered down. At the time, Rayner pledged to "personally" table the legislation within 100 days of taking office.

Under the plans, zero-hour contracts would be banned, along with fire-and-rehire, while workers would be handed "basic rights" from day one. Union power would be entrenched by, among other things, making recognition easier, relaxing rules on

calling strikes, and allowing right of entry to the workplace – despite the dangers this would clearly present in a period of rising militancy.

But with Rayner’s political currency depleting as [the row over her tax affairs escalates](#), it appears Starmer is seizing the moment. Labour is expected to reveal that it has ditched plans for a legal “right to switch off” from work emails and calls out of hours. It will make clear that companies may still be permitted to fairly sack workers under its “day one” workers’ rights regime, while staff will be able to opt into zero hours contracts if they choose.



It appears as though Starmer has been itching to pare back the workers' rights plan for some time - Anthony Devlin/Getty Images

Though the party will struggle to spin this as anything other than a humiliating defeat for Rayner, it’s good news for businesses already buckling under the burden of employment restrictions.

British workers don’t need the “biggest upgrade of rights” in a generation. Our minimum wage is now the eighth highest in the OECD once adjustments are made for exchange rates and prices, despite concerns that it is pushing strained

businesses to the brink and dampening job prospects for younger workers. The Government closely regulates hiring and firing procedures, entry into pensions schemes, holiday allowance, sick pay, maternity pay, the number of hours that can be worked, and the statutory minimum length of rest breaks.

This year, the Tories introduced a right to request flexible working from day one on the job, despite research showing that it takes, on average, 28 weeks for a new staff member to get up to speed and become fully productive in a new role. How could employers possibly know whether a flexible arrangement is suitable on day one? The Equality Act has substantially expanded the concept of “protected characteristics”, meaning a tribunal or court could rule that discrimination is behind a huge number of firing decisions.

So if anyone needs more rights, it's employers. The array of costs and obligations on businesses is one of the reasons HR has expanded at breakneck speed since 2010. More rules means more people are required to interpret them, handing ever more power to bureaucrats in a self-sustaining cycle that helps explain why around 250,000 British workers now have personnel, industrial relations, training or human resources in their job title. How many could honestly say they are contributing to their company's bottom line or the nation's productivity?

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As for Rayner's insistence that businesses will “thrive” under Labour's new regime: if this is the case, why is compulsion needed? The answer must surely be that, for many employers, it will impose significant costs – even when they are ultimately passed on to consumers in higher prices or to workers in lower pay or reduced job opportunities.

What are Labour's employment proposals?

Labour has promised the biggest upgrade of workers' rights in a generation.

Proposals include creating a single status of worker that would mean that all staff regardless of contract type will be afforded the same basic rights such as sick pay, holiday pay, parental leave and protection against unfair dismissal.

It also wants to end the qualifying periods for those rights, which currently stands at two years. It means new recruits would be eligible from day one in a job.

The party also hopes to ban so-called fire and rehire practices. Zero-hour contracts would also be banned, meaning staff must be guaranteed a minimum number of hours, and Labour has promised a "right to switch off". This means workers wouldn't have to check emails or take work calls out of hours and bosses would not be allowed to pester them.

It's worth noting, too, that the problems are not just with the laws but with their interpretation. A Supreme Court ruling in the Asda equal pay case has reinforced the quasi-Marxist idea that men and women should receive the same wage for doing different jobs, despite the obvious point that many people would prefer to work behind a till than in distribution.

In 2021, meanwhile, it ruled that Uber must classify drivers as workers rather than self-employed, despite four-fifths of drivers in surveys agreeing with the statement: "Being able to choose my own hours is more important than having holiday pay and a guaranteed minimum wage."

This begs the question of who precisely Labour's plans are supposed to help. While the IWGB union on Wednesday warned of "extreme power imbalances between employers and employees in the UK", surveys have consistently shown that gig staff value control over so-called "rights". Those on zero hours are often second earners; around a third are aged between 16 and 24, and a sizeable minority are in full-time education.

The idea that today's workers are modern-day serfs is difficult to reconcile with our 900,000 vacancies: employment is for now a seller's market. And there is a risk that, while flexible working may benefit certain groups, employers will seek to avoid

taking on workers who are most likely to take advantage – mothers, older staff, those with health problems.

Advocates for greater regulation look to Belgium as the poster-nation for employee well-being. Its government recently introduced a raft of new labour market regulations – yet it has an employment rate around 5 percentage points lower than ours. France, which has a notoriously socialist attitude towards worker “rights”, has consistently struggled with a low employment rate and poor competitiveness.

Despite the Tories’ best efforts to shoot our golden goose, Britain still has a flexible labour market with a wide range of types of employment. Prior to the pandemic, nearly 1.5 million people had term-time only jobs. Over 100,000 had job shares. We already have a way of managing trade-offs between the needs of businesses and the preferences of their workers: the market economy.

It’s not enough for Labour to water down its plans – it needs to scrap them altogether. If Starmer’s track record is any indication, perhaps they soon will.

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