

News

May Day protests in San Francisco focus on war in Gaza



A May Day march and rally for Palestine takes place on the streets of San Francisco on Wednesday, echoing protests that have taken place on college campuses across the country in recent days. | Jackson Stephens/The Standard

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By **Jackson Stephens**

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Chants of “free free Palestine,” and the pro-labor slogan, “Si se puede” (“Yes, we can”), rang out in the streets Wednesday as hundreds of May Day protesters marched through the Mission calling for workers’ rights and an end to the war in Gaza or resistance to Israel’s occupation.

The San Francisco march from the 24th Street Mission BART Station to City Hall echoed demonstrations that took place around the Bay Area Wednesday, as the annual tribute to workers melded with a raucous pro-Palestinian movement that’s erupted on college campuses around the country. Local union members stressed what they called the common struggle for human and workers’ rights around the globe.

Benny Zank of Bay Area Labor for Palestine said May Day “is a day for workers to be out in the streets. It’s a day for us to be out in solidarity with each other and connect as a community to feel our power together and show the city is for the workers.”



A May Day march and rally for Palestine takes place on the streets of San Francisco on Wednesday, starting at the 24th Street Mission BART Station and ending at City Hall. | Jackson Stephens/The Standard

Marchers waved dozens of Palestinian flags and carried signs calling for fair pay that could be seen for blocks as curious business owners and customers snapped photos from the sidewalk.

At times, protesters chanted about "intifada," an Arabic word for uprising that is offensive to some because of its association with violent attacks on Israelis during waves of unrest in the late 1980s and early 2000s.

Larry Bradshaw, a member of the Service Employees International Union Local 1021, said he was heartened to see so many of his union brothers and sisters demonstrating against the war.

“It tears my heart apart,” he said. “I had to be out here today.”

Police stood guard during the march, but the San Francisco Police Department said there were no arrests.



Demonstrators wave Palestinian flags and carry signs demanding a cease-fire. The annual day of demonstration was inspired by the 1971 May Day protests against the Vietnam War in Washington, D.C. | Jackson Stephens/The Standard

The annual May Day protests are inspired by the 1971 May Day Vietnam War protests that happened in Washington, D.C., and ended in the largest mass arrest in U.S. history.

Other pro-labor and anti-war actions to mark the day included a rally at the San Francisco Ferry Building and a demonstration targeting the Port of Oakland, scheduled for 4 p.m. According to a press release, protesters were set to demand an end to US economic and military aid to Israel.

Jackson Stephens can be reached at jstephens@sfstandard.com

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