



CONTACT

VP of Communications, Simone Meyer, abetternylag@gmail.com

September 10, 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

A Better NYLAG Workers to Picket Outside NYLAG Office Demanding an End to Anti-Free Speech Policy

A Better NYLAG represents attorneys, paralegals, financial counselors, and administrative staff who are on the front line of providing legal services to vulnerable New Yorkers. They fight every day to keep undocumented clients from being deported, keep vulnerable tenants in their homes, ensure New Yorkers are receiving the healthcare and public benefits they are entitled to, and get community members on track financially.

(NEW YORK, NY) - Legal service workers at the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG), unionized under the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys - UAW Local 2325 (ALAA), are preparing for a lunchtime informational picket to protest NYLAG Management's policy prohibiting the posting of materials in workers cubicles that denounce the ongoing genocide in Palestine. Members of A Better NYLAG (ABN) will be picketing Tuesday, September 17, 2024, outside of NYLAG's main office, located at 100 Pearl Street, New York, NY from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m., demanding that NYLAG Management rescind the anti-worker and anti-free speech policy that has been in place since May 20, 2024.

In May, after 6 months of hostility towards ABN members by NYLAG Management, NYLAG General Counsel, Randal Jeffrey, announced the unilateral decision that all posters or artwork depicting the "Israel/Gaza conflict" throughout the office, including in workers' cubicles, would be banned and removed. Since then, NYLAG Management has routinely cold-called members and ripped down posters they deem as violating the policy - everything from posters depicting the Palestinian flag, to pictures of watermelons. Rank and file members have continued to hold the line on this crucial free speech issue and their support for Palestine by repeatedly putting their posters back up.

While the ABN Executive Board has tried to work with NYLAG Management to discuss these issues, NYLAG Management has repeatedly refused to come to the table and discuss how this poster policy is negatively affecting its staff. On August 20th, ABN members invited NYLAG Upper Management, including Attorney-in-Charge, Lisa Rivera and General Counsel, Randal Jeffrey, to attend a Union-led town hall where over 100 union members and non-union staff attended and 20 spoke in opposition to the policy. Rivera and Jeffrey, as well as all other C-Suite NYLAG Management, refused to attend and hear their staff. NYLAG Management continues to twist the narrative and gaslight staff stating that the policy is necessary to create an "inclusive environment."

In the face of these tactics, rank and file members have continued to speak out and refuse to be silenced. As stated by Navruz Baum, a paralegal in the Tenants' Rights Unit, "We may sell our labor to NYLAG, but that doesn't mean they get to control how we think, or how we express ourselves!" ABN members have also voted to denounce the policy by a supermajority and have filed an Unfair Labor Practice charge against NYLAG with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).



While NYLAG staff are disappointed that an allegedly anti-racist social justice organization such as NYLAG has taken this position, the solidarity and leadership among NYLAG staff has been extremely encouraging to ABN members. “I am extremely proud of our members for not backing down from this fight,” says ABN President and Chapter Chair, Cameron Molyneaux, a Staff Attorney in the Tenants’ Rights Unit. “Our members will continue to organize for Palestinian liberation and against NYLAG Management’s repression of workers’ free speech against U.S.-backed Israeli genocide, occupation, and apartheid.”

ABN members will be holding this lunchtime informational picket to denounce NYLAG management’s policies and encourage all those in the labor community to show up in solidarity with their actions!

“ALAA stands in solidarity with ABN in its struggle against management repression.” said Lisa Ohta, President of ALAA. “Workers have the right to organize and speak freely on topics that concern the terms and conditions of their employment. ALAA is committed to ensuring those rights are protected.”

###

ALAA - UAW Local 2325 is the nation’s oldest labor union of public defenders and legal services workers. Encompassing almost 3,000 members, ALAA represents the workers of the New York Legal Assistance Group, the Legal Aid Society, Neighborhood Defender Service, The Bronx Defenders, Queens Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services, Appellate Advocates, The Office of the Appellate Defender, The Center for Appellate Litigation, and dozens more organizations.