

# GENU-UAW – A Statement of Solidarity from Your Union OC

At this difficult time there are several world crises, many ongoing, that the Organizing Committee (OC) of GENU-UAW wishes to address. On October 7th, Hamas committed mass murder of Israeli civilians, a clear war crime [1]. Since that day, the government of Israel has enacted a campaign of genocide against the people of Palestine in retaliation for Hamas's actions [2,3,4]. Also recently, the Pakistani government has begun the forced expulsion of so-called "undocumented foreigners", overwhelmingly targeting Afghan refugees regardless of actual legal status [5]. A considerable portion of these refugees fled Afghanistan during decades of U.S. occupation in Afghanistan and others were US aligned and fled after the 2021 withdrawal; many risk violence if they return [6]. The Azerbaijani government has also committed genocide against Armenians in the aftermath of the Nagorno-Karabakh War [7]. These crises of human rights call for solidarity from workers everywhere. We join a growing number of international and local unions in collectively standing in solidarity with workers and with all people around the world in condemning the forced displacement of and violence against civilians, and all other crimes predicated on hate and a disregard for the sanctity of human life [8].

**We call on Northeastern to protect its community members' rights to freedom of expression and especially to protect its community members from harassment, discrimination, and violence.** The OC doesn't always agree on current events, but due to the significance of these events and their effects on campus, the OC feels it is important that we speak out in support of our fellow grads. This letter was written with input from many unit members with a diversity of opinions and beliefs. We assure our members that they are not alone, and we call on the Northeastern administration to join us in protecting our fellow students, workers, and Northeastern community members who stand for global peace. We mourn with all people whose loved ones and communities have been harmed or are currently being

harmed, and we will stand up for our fellow students' and workers' rights to free expressions of mourning and peaceful protest. The **ACLU has recognized and called for a stop** to governmental oppression of students calling for peace, including by public universities, and we hold Northeastern to at least this same minimum standard.

**So far the administration has not responded adequately to any of these crises, and in regards to the crisis in Israel/Gaza, they continue to conspicuously ignore violence against Palestinians by attempting to silence and act against students calling for peace.** We cannot afford to be silent about imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, genocide, and all other forms of global oppression, especially as many members of our unit and the Northeastern community are facing the direct and indirect effects of a multitude of global crises, with little to no institutional support. On October 10th, Northeastern sent out a statement that called out violence on only one side, ignoring the violence committed against Palestinian people by the Israeli government – both presently, and over the past 75 years of occupation. They continue to fail to adequately address this: the administration's ongoing "series of conversations on the events in Israel and Gaza" under-represents the Palestinian perspective in the conversation. Moreover, Northeastern admins and police have taken overtly oppressive actions:

- On October 20th, law school administrators launched an investigation of the Student Bar Association merely for sending an e-mail on behalf of student groups to the broader community advocating for peace. Northeastern administrators have also threatened to open disciplinary proceedings against other students if they organized protests for peace.
- On October 23rd, NUPD officers Doug Comman (badge #30) and Mark Washington (badge #76) assaulted an NUSL student during a peaceful delivery of a letter to the Law School dean.
- On November 9th, a Muslim student reported being profiled by NUPD Officer Doug Comman (Badge Number 30). Officer Comman asked the student, who was wearing a Palestinian kuffiyah during this incident, to show their ID in order to enter the EXP building, where the student's research lab is located. The EXP building is explicitly stated to be a collaborative building serving hundreds of students daily and ID scanning is not required to enter the main entrance. This incidence of profiling by an NUPD officer with a history of violence contributes to an unsafe environment on campus for students expressing their rights to free speech.

Please stay aware of these officers, and we encourage anyone who has had similar experiences to notify the union as soon as possible. All of these oppressive actions are unacceptable attempts to silence our colleagues, and we will not stand for them. Additionally, the demonization of Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims in response to the conflict, including in responses from Northeastern University itself, has resulted in a rise of harassment, discrimination, and violence against Arabs and Muslims across the U.S. These same racially and religiously prejudicial tactics were used following 9/11 to enable calls for retaliatory indiscriminate violence, and we must do everything we can to prevent such widespread bloodshed from occurring again.

**Our labor movement transcends borders.** We will always have more in common with workers abroad than the bosses at home. Together, we can stand for peace, justice, and a better future for people everywhere just as U.S. labor always has. Similarly our Northeastern community also transcends borders. Many of us

have loved ones suffering as a result of these global crises. We are now under additional scrutiny due to our identities as a wave of hate-crimes gains traction against a number of communities – Armenians, Afghans, Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims, Jews, and others. And in a pattern sadly all too familiar to us: the peoples who struggle against the violence and oppression of the U.S. and its allies take the brunt of this violence here in the U.S. and are expected to do so in silence. Again, we support peace and justice everywhere, and are committed to doing everything in our power for our union members who are affected by ongoing violence.

**The OC identifies the following actions that unit members, and the administration can take now:**

1. The Administration of Northeastern University is to cease and desist threatening retaliation against students expressing their opinions on these matters, and the NUPD officers Doug Comman (badge #30) and Mark Washington (badge #76) who assaulted a peaceful protestor at a rally calling for a ceasefire in Palestine must resign.
2. The Administration of NU is to protect all students and employees, especially those disproportionately targeted by the inflammatory statements and policies already threatened by the administration. GENU-UAW stands with our campus community and will respond decisively to any and all retaliation against our members.
3. The Administration of NU is to relinquish all financial ties to parties responsible for crimes against humanity (e.g. the governing bodies of Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Hamas, and Israel), recognize apartheid as an international crime against humanity, and join us in calling on the U.S. government to push for an immediate ceasefire. We additionally call on Northeastern University to divest itself from the military-industrial complex and war profit-mongering, by ceasing all ties with RTX, Cognex Corporation, and all other corporations with ties to the university making a profit from the genocide of Palestinians.
4. In solidarity with requests from the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions we urge all unit members to stop all work that actively contributes to the slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. We urge all unit members to contact your representatives in the U.S. Congress and urge them to support **Representative Cori Bush's resolution** calling for a ceasefire.
5. Both administrators and unit members can donate to one of these charities for those affected:
  - For Afghans: **The UN Refugee Agency**
  - For Armenians: **All For Armenia**
  - For Israelis and Palestinians: **International Red Cross / Red Crescent**
6. Unit members should educate themselves on the histories of antisemitism and Islamophobia in the workplace, and be prepared to call it out when they see it. **If you are the victim of such violence please contact the GENU-UAW Organizing Committee (by replying to this email) to help get you the aid that you need.**

As Northeastern employees and union members, we recognize that every human being deserves to live a life of peace and dignity, regardless of where they live and where they work. Among the core values of GENU-UAW and the UAW broadly are that all are equal, that we fight for everyone – not just ourselves. This is instilled in Article 2 Section 5 of our UAW constitution: declaring as a core value for us “to engage in legislative, political, educational, civic, welfare, and other activities which further, directly or indirectly, the joint interests of the membership of this organization in the improvement of general economic and social conditions in the United States of America, Canada, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and generally in the nations of the world.” We must uphold these values even when they seem unpopular.

In the coming days, weeks, and months, we will continue to organize for the rights of all workers and all people alongside other workers in the Boston community.

## GENU-UAW Organizing Committee

 nugradunion

 November 21, 2023

 Membership Updates