



‘Stop Arming Israel’ Passover Protest in Brooklyn Harkens Back to 1969 Freedom Seder

Description

WORLD : Gathered around a banner emblazoned with the words “stop arming Israel,” thousands of protesters joined with Jewish-led peace groups in Brooklyn, New York, on Tuesday evening to attend a Passover protest that recalls the “Freedom Seder” held in the tumultuous year of 1969.

Organizers said they drew inspiration for Tuesday’s demonstration from ties forged between Jewish organizers and African-American civil rights activists to create a multiracial interfaith “Freedom Seder” on the first anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr’s 1968 assassination as the Vietnam War raged.

The Seder is a Passover celebration and ceremony that commemorates the story of Exodus – Moses leading enslaved Jews out of Egypt.

The event was organized by the left-leaning Jewish Voices for Peace and the If Not Now movement, who said they saw the Seder protests as part of Jewish tradition that they traced back to Rabbi Arthur Waskow, who held the first Freedom Seder.

War in Israel and Gaza

“Passover is our story of liberation, and we are commanded to tell it every year,” said Jewish Voice for Peace Executive Director Stefanie Fox, who flew in from Seattle to make the event at Grand Army Plaza. “We take our prayer and our ritual and our communal heart to the streets.”

The holiday, Fox said, urges us to think about “what are the issues of freedom in our day, and there is none more salient than what is happening to Palestinians right now.”

Protesters at the event were urging Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, the highest ranking Jewish member of Congress, not to back military aid to Israel.

The event saw young activists encouraged by elders, some of whom sat on lawn chairs and with canes. It also featured Syrian and Moroccan Jewish speakers who reflected on memories of sharing traditions with their Muslim neighbors during seders past.

Prominent author Naomi Klein addressed the crowd, speaking in support of the latest wave of U.S. university protests calling for an end to Israel's assault on Gaza that has killed over 30,000, saying it amounts to genocide, a charge Israel denies.

Hundreds of protesters were reported arrested while blocking the streets of Brooklyn's Grand Army Plaza.

Critics of the protests say demonstrators often ignore reports of antisemitism that have skyrocketed since the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks on Israel that killed 1,200 people and took over 200 hostage, sparking Israel's massive retaliation.

Rosalind Petchesky, 81, a distinguished professor emeritus of political science at CUNY and MacArthur Genius who was arrested last year during a protest at the White House, said she does not deny that there were Jewish students who have faced antisemitic remarks. But she added that it was important for Jewish students and individuals who speak up for Palestinian safety to be heard.

"Progressive Jewish students are very aware and they have learned about the indivisibility of justice," said Petchesky. "We know that all these struggles are linked."

By Reuters

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