

Palestinian Solidarity Groups in Madison, Wisconsin: An Overview of Active Organizations and Initiatives

Executive Summary

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the organizations actively supporting Palestinians in Madison, Wisconsin. The landscape of solidarity is characterized by a robust network of student, faith-based, peace, and social justice groups. These entities engage in a wide range of activities, including direct action, humanitarian aid, cultural exchange, public advocacy, and educational initiatives. A significant trend observed is the high degree of collaboration among these organizations, which amplifies their collective impact and reach. Campus activism, particularly at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, serves as a prominent hub for the movement, although it has faced considerable institutional pressures. The report highlights how Palestinian solidarity is frequently integrated into broader social justice agendas, such as queer liberation, anti-militarism, and immigrant rights, demonstrating a holistic approach to advocacy within the Madison community.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive overview of the organizations and initiatives actively supporting Palestinians within the Madison, Wisconsin, area. It seeks to identify key actors, their missions, primary activities, and collaborative efforts. Palestinian solidarity efforts in Madison are part of a broader national and international movement advocating for Palestinian human rights, self-determination, and an end to occupation. The local context is marked by a diverse coalition of groups employing various strategies to raise awareness, provide aid, and influence public policy. The recent surge in global attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has galvanized local activism, leading to increased visibility and coordinated actions.

2. Key Organizations Actively Supporting Palestinians in Madison

This section details the individual organizations, their specific missions, and their primary activities related to Palestinian solidarity in Madison.

Table 1: Overview of Key Palestinian Solidarity Groups in Madison, WI

Organization Name	Primary Focus/Mission	Key Activities (Examples)	Key Affiliations/Collaborations (Examples)
Madison-Rafah Sister City Project (MRSCP)	Humanitarian aid, cultural exchange, advocacy for Rafah	Water well projects, craft sales, BDS advocacy, Rachel Corrie Commemoration	U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights, Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice, Mennonite Action Madison, CODEPINK
Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) UW-Madison	Justice, human rights, and liberation for Palestinians, decolonization of Palestine	UW-Madison encampment, protests for Mahmoud Khalil, educational events	Wisconsin Young Democratic Socialists of America, Madison-Rafah Sister City Project
Wisconsin Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA) UW-Madison	Building progressive movements for social change, establishing socialist presence	Co-organized UW-Madison encampment	Students for Justice in Palestine UW-Madison, Democratic Socialists of America
Madison Area Democratic Socialists of America (DSA)	Empowering working people through political and activist organization	Queer Liberation March (including Palestinian solidarity), advocacy for Mahmoud Khalil	Trans Resistance Action Committee, Socialist Alternative Madison, Jewish Voice for Peace
Mennonite Action Madison	Faith-based nonviolent resistance	Local solidarity actions, "Week of	Madison-Rafah Sister City Project, Jewish

	to Christian Nationalism and U.S. policy in Palestine	Action" for Gaza aid, "Longest Night" vigil, fundraising for MECA	Voice for Peace, CODEPINK, Interfaith Peace Working Group
Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP)	Grassroots, multiracial, anti-Zionist Jewish movement in solidarity with Palestinians	Advocacy for ceasefire, protests against military aid, "Judaism Beyond Zionism" events, Liberation Shabbat	Madison Area Democratic Socialists of America, Mennonite Action Madison, CODEPINK, Interfaith Peace Working Group
CODEPINK Madison	Ending U.S. warfare and imperialism, advocating for peace and human rights	Palestine Solidarity Fair, Queer & Trans Community Potluck, anti-war campaigns	Madison-Rafah Sister City Project, Palestine Partners, Playgrounds for Palestine, Mennonite Action Madison, Jewish Voice for Peace, Interfaith Peace Working Group
Interfaith Peace Working Group (IPWG)	Educating on nonviolence, advocating for peace, demilitarization, justice, and creation care	Co-sponsoring Palestine solidarity actions, "Longest Night" vigil, providing speakers on nonviolence in faiths	Mennonite Action Madison, Madison-Rafah Sister City Project, Jewish Voice for Peace, CODEPINK
Palestine Justice Working Group (PJWG) of the Wisconsin Conference UCC	Providing educational and advocacy resources for justice for Palestinians within UCC congregations	Promoting "Resolution of Witness" for a just peace, developing educational resources, supporting congregational study	Wisconsin Conference UCC congregations, UCC Palestine Israel Network

2.1. Madison-Rafah Sister City Project (MRSCP)

Founded in 2003 by concerned citizens, the Madison-Rafah Sister City Project (MRSCP) aimed to establish person-to-person relationships with Rafah, Palestine.¹ Despite being denied "official" Sister City status by the City of Madison in 2004, the organization has continued its work as an unofficial sister city group, demonstrating a deep and sustained grassroots commitment to Palestinian solidarity in Madison that is resilient to official political setbacks.¹ This persistence highlights that support for Palestinians in Madison is not merely reactive to current events but rooted in a long-standing dedication to human rights and cross-cultural connection.

MRSCP's core work has evolved to focus on five main areas: providing solidarity and humanitarian assistance to citizens of Rafah and elsewhere in Gaza and the West Bank; increasing understanding of Palestinian daily life, society, culture, and history, including how U.S. and Israeli policies have created a devastating situation; selling Palestinian crafts and products to support Palestinians; joining with like-minded groups for public advocacy to hold Israel and the U.S. accountable for human rights violations; and working to uphold rights to protest and engage in Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) activities.¹

The group's humanitarian aid efforts have included raising funds for projects directly benefiting Rafah citizens, particularly children. Past initiatives have contributed to rebuilding water wells destroyed by Israeli bombing, providing professional materials to the Gaza Community Health Programme, establishing a playground in Tal Al Sultan, implementing Maia Project clean drinking water systems in five schools, furnishing a library, funding medical care for a Gaza child injured in an Israeli attack, supporting the Samira Project for traumatized children, providing Gaza-made rechargeable household systems, and organizing "Back-to-School Backpacks for Rafah Children".¹

Beyond direct aid, MRSCP engages in cultural exchange and education by staffing information and crafts tables at events, participating in Madison's Fair Trade Holiday Festival and Overture International Festival to sell Palestinian crafts and olive oil, and sponsoring or co-sponsoring speakers and films throughout the year.¹ Their public advocacy includes participating in emergency demonstrations and campaigns as needed.¹ The organization is affiliated with the U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights and the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice, and it cooperates with many other local and national groups.¹ Annually, MRSCP sponsors a Rachel Corrie Commemoration, honoring the American peace activist killed in Rafah.¹ This multi-pronged approach, encompassing humanitarian aid, cultural exchange,

education, public advocacy, and support for BDS, indicates a sophisticated and comprehensive understanding of the conflict. It recognizes that effective solidarity requires addressing both immediate suffering and systemic injustices, suggesting a strategic depth that goes beyond single-issue activism, aiming for long-term, systemic change.

2.2. Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) UW-Madison

Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) at UW-Madison is a diverse group of students and community members dedicated to promoting justice, human rights, and liberation for the Palestinian people, as well as the full decolonization of Palestine.² As a university chapter of National SJP, the group focuses on educating students and community members about current abuses and historical injustices in Palestine.²

SJP UW-Madison played a central role in the 12-day pro-Palestine encampment on Library Mall from April 29 to May 10, 2024, co-organizing it with Wisconsin Young Democratic Socialists of America.⁴ The encampment called for university divestment from Israel.⁴ During this period, protesters organized daily free meals through the "People's Kitchen," hosted campus speakers, conducted prayer services, and held a "Liberation Shabbat," co-sponsored by Jewish Voice for Peace Madison.⁴ The campus environment at UW-Madison has become a critical arena where the right to free speech and assembly for pro-Palestine activism is actively challenged and defended. The institutional response, including police intervention, arrests, and subsequent disciplinary actions, suggests a broader national trend of universities facing pressure to curb such protests, potentially creating a "chilling effect" on student expression.⁴ This highlights the inherent tension between academic freedom and institutional governance in politically charged environments.

SJP UW-Madison also organized a walkout and protest on March 11, 2025, in support of Mahmoud Khalil, a Columbia University pro-Palestine protest leader arrested by ICE.⁸ They characterized his detention as an "illegal abduction" and an "attempt to criminalize political protest" and a "direct assault on freedom of speech".⁸ This action, along with their local divestment calls, demonstrates a strategic integration of local and national issues. By linking local demands with national concerns, SJP leverages national narratives and solidarity to bolster local activism, and vice-versa. This approach suggests a sophisticated understanding of movement building that recognizes how local actions contribute to a larger national struggle against perceived

repression and for Palestinian rights.

In response to their activism, SJP UW-Madison and its members have faced significant disciplinary actions and investigations from the university, alongside warnings from the Department of Education.⁷ The Committee on Student Organizations found SJP in violation of five organizational rules related to the encampment, imposing a 10-month disciplinary probation.¹⁰ Individual members have also faced disciplinary hearings.⁷ The group has actively pushed back against these actions, characterizing them as attempts to silence pro-Palestine movements.⁷ Beyond protests, SJP organizes educational and awareness events, such as film screenings and cultural resistance celebrations, and advocates for students facing discipline for pro-Palestine actions.⁵

2.3. Wisconsin Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA) UW-Madison

The Wisconsin Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA) UW-Madison chapter serves as the student section of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), which is the largest socialist political organization in the United States.¹¹ YDSA aims to build progressive movements for social change and establish an openly socialist presence in American communities and politics.¹¹ The organization operates under the belief that both the economy and society should be run democratically to meet public needs, rather than to generate profits.¹¹

YDSA UW-Madison played a pivotal role in the 2024 pro-Palestine encampment on Library Mall, co-organizing the 12-day protest alongside Students for Justice in Palestine.⁴ This involvement highlights their significant contribution to campus-based direct action for Palestinian solidarity. The ideological framework of YDSA, which advocates for democratic control of the economy and society to meet public needs, naturally aligns with supporting marginalized groups and challenging perceived injustices. This makes Palestinian liberation a congruent cause within their broader agenda. Their participation in the encampment demonstrates how broader socialist principles translate into specific solidarity actions, particularly within a student context where mobilization is often high. This indicates that Palestinian solidarity is integrated into a wider progressive and anti-capitalist agenda on campus.

Following the encampment, YDSA UW-Madison also faced an investigation by the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards regarding its alleged role. Its

interim suspension was lifted in August 2024 after the investigation was completed.¹⁰

2.4. Madison Area Democratic Socialists of America (DSA)

The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) is the largest socialist organization in the U.S., boasting over 80,000 members and chapters across all 50 states.¹² As a political and activist organization rather than a traditional party, DSA members employ a variety of tactics, from legislative efforts to direct action, to advocate for reforms that empower working people.¹² The organization operates with a decentralized structure, granting significant autonomy to its local chapters.¹³

Nationally, DSA has seen an increase in membership, gaining at least 2,400 new dues-paying members since October 2023, largely attributed to its pronounced pro-Palestinian stance during the Gaza war.¹³ Their platform includes specific foreign policy positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹³ In Madison, the local DSA chapter was a key planning committee member for the inaugural Queer Liberation March. This march explicitly expressed solidarity with "our Palestinian siblings" and rejected "pinkwashing," a term used to describe attempts to use accusations of homophobia to justify actions against Palestinians.¹⁴ This demonstrates an intersectional approach to social justice, recognizing that various forms of oppression, such as homophobia, transphobia, and the oppression faced by Palestinians, are interconnected and require unified resistance. By weaving Palestinian solidarity into broader social justice movements like queer liberation, DSA expands the base of support for Palestinians beyond traditional advocacy groups, making the movement more robust and inclusive. Additionally, DSA nationally released a statement advocating for the release of Mahmoud Khalil, the Columbia University activist, indicating their support for his case.¹²

2.5. Mennonite Action Madison

Mennonite Action Madison is a grassroots group that mobilizes Mennonites and other Christians, alongside interfaith allies, to speak out against Christian Nationalism and U.S. policy in Palestine.¹⁵ Formed after October 7, 2023, the group is compelled by its faith, which teaches that God's love is manifested through taking action for justice

and standing with those who suffer.¹⁵ Rooted in a 500-year history of nonviolence and resistance to Christian nationalism, Mennonite Action champions principles such as nonviolence, simple lifestyles, and "separation from the world"—a nonconformity to a society deemed sinful.¹⁵ They view U.S. political support for Israeli violence against Palestinians as a sinful societal act.¹⁵ This demonstrates how deeply held religious convictions can serve as a powerful and sustained motivator for social and political activism, particularly in advocating for human rights and peace. This moral imperative drives their engagement, representing a deeply resilient form of activism.

Mennonite Action Madison has actively participated in local solidarity actions, co-sponsoring various initiatives in Wisconsin with groups like the Madison-Rafah Sister City Project, Jewish Voice For Peace, CODEPINK, and Interfaith Peace Working Group.¹⁵ In March 2024, they held a "Week of Action" to demand humanitarian relief for Gaza, constructing symbolic displays of aid, including 1,400 pairs of children's shoes and piles of non-perishable food items.¹⁵ In December 2024, they participated in an interfaith "Longest Night" vigil for a cease-fire in Gaza, which drew over 75 attendees despite cold weather.¹⁵ The Madison chapter also engages in ongoing participation in monthly Anti-War Cafes, War Tax Resistance workshops, Madison farmers markets, and the Palestine Solidarity Fair.¹⁵

Their current campaign, "God's Love Knows No Borders," explicitly expresses solidarity with Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, college students protesting the ongoing genocide, and migrants in the U.S. facing deportation by ICE.¹⁵ The campaign affirms that Christian nationalism and Christian Zionism are "twin evils" and "two sides of the same coin".¹⁵ By connecting Palestinian suffering to issues of immigration and domestic political ideologies, Mennonite Action Madison is actively working to broaden the appeal and understanding of Palestinian solidarity beyond a singular geopolitical conflict. This expands the potential base of support by framing it within a larger struggle against interconnected forms of injustice and ideological extremism. Additionally, the group engages in fundraising, collecting donation items for a summer silent auction whose proceeds benefit the Middle East Children's Alliance (MECA).¹⁵ Nationally, the group has grown to over 8,500 members with at least a dozen chapters, and its origins include organizers like Adam Ramer, who grew up in the Madison Mennonite Church.¹⁵

2.6. Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP)

Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) is recognized as the largest progressive Jewish anti-Zionist organization globally.¹⁶ The organization mobilizes a grassroots, multiracial, cross-class, and intergenerational movement of U.S. Jews in solidarity with the Palestinian freedom struggle. Their vision is guided by principles of justice, equality, and dignity for all people.¹⁶ Core values include accountability to Palestinian partners, a commitment to Jewish communities (resisting Zionism out of love for Jewishness), and racial justice.¹⁶ JVP asserts that antisemitism is incompatible with collective liberation and actively combats it as part of broader struggles against oppression.¹⁶ This stance represents a significant internal Jewish voice challenging mainstream Zionist narratives. Their activism redefines Jewish identity and values in relation to Israel/Palestine, demonstrating that support for Palestinians can be rooted in Jewish ethics and traditions rather than being inherently anti-Jewish. This adds a crucial layer of complexity to the discourse, countering claims that pro-Palestinian activism is inherently antisemitic.

The Madison chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace is highly collaborative, listed as an endorser of the Queer Liberation March¹⁴ and a co-sponsor of Palestine solidarity actions with Mennonite Action Madison, Madison-Rafah Sister City Project, CODEPINK, and Interfaith Peace Working Group.¹⁵ Their advocacy extends to calling for ceasefires and actively protesting against military aid to Israel, as documented in their posts on the Madison-Rafah website.⁶ JVP Madison participates in large-scale public demonstrations, including an event where "Thousands shut down the Capitol to protest Israel's genocide".⁶

Educational events are a key component of their work, such as the "Jewish Voice for Peace High Holy Day Events" in October 2024, which promoted "Judaism Beyond Zionism".⁶ They also organize an "Antiwar Film Series" featuring titles like "A Bold Peace" and "Soldiers Without Guns".⁶ JVP Madison issues letters and statements in support of Jewish faculty, staff, and students at UW-Madison who are pro-Palestine.⁶ The organization also provides its perspective on Zionism, as indicated by their post "Jewish Voice for Peace: What is Zionism?".⁶ Furthermore, JVP Madison co-sponsored a "Liberation Shabbat" during the UW-Madison encampment, blending cultural and religious practice with political solidarity.⁵

2.7. CODEPINK Madison

CODEPINK is a feminist grassroots organization committed to ending U.S. warfare and imperialism, advocating for peace and human rights, and redirecting resources towards "life-affirming" programs.¹⁷ The organization was founded in 2002 with the specific aim of preventing the U.S. war on Iraq.¹⁷ CODEPINK operates under a strict commitment to nonviolence and embraces diversity, actively speaking out against various forms of oppression, including racism, sexism, homophobia, and anti-Arab racism/antisemitism.¹⁷

The Madison chapter of CODEPINK played a key organizing role in the Palestine Solidarity Fair on May 3, 2025, collaborating with the Madison-Rafah Sister City Project, Palestine Partners, and Playgrounds for Palestine.¹⁸ The fair's purpose was to connect individuals, facilitate learning and sharing, and foster continued commitment to Palestinian liberation.¹⁸ CODEPINK Madison also hosted a Queer & Trans Community Potluck on April 5, 2025, aimed at building community power and resilience by bringing together individuals from various Madison organizations.¹⁷ While this event was not explicitly Palestine-focused, it indicates CODEPINK Madison's broader efforts in social justice and community building that can intersect with solidarity movements. This approach to peace and anti-war activism is deeply intertwined with local community building and fostering resilience among diverse groups. By creating spaces for connection and shared strength, they build a broader base of support that can be mobilized for specific causes like Palestinian liberation, demonstrating that effective activism is built on strong local networks.

CODEPINK Madison has also co-sponsored Palestine solidarity actions with Mennonite Action Madison, Madison-Rafah Sister City Project, Jewish Voice For Peace, and Interfaith Peace Working Group.¹⁵ Nationally, CODEPINK engages in campaigns against war with Iran, for cutting the Pentagon budget, and for divesting from the war machine, all of which align with their anti-militarist stance that supports Palestinian liberation.¹⁷

2.8. Interfaith Peace Working Group (IPWG)

The Interfaith Peace Working Group (IPWG), established in 2017, comprises advocates from diverse communities of faith and conscience who are committed to justice,

peace, and the care of creation.²⁰ Their mission includes educating the public about the theory and practice of nonviolence and advocating for its application. They also work towards the demilitarization of society by advocating for the redirection of military expenditures towards urgent human needs.²¹ IPWG operates in coalition with other groups, recognizing the interconnectedness of peace, justice, and environmental issues.²¹

IPWG has actively co-sponsored various Palestine solidarity actions in Wisconsin, working alongside groups such as Mennonite Action Madison, Madison-Rafah Sister City Project, Jewish Voice For Peace, and CODEPINK.¹⁵ They participated in the "Longest Night" vigil for a cease-fire in Gaza.¹⁵ The explicit interfaith nature of IPWG, bringing together "communities of faith and conscience," highlights the significant role of cross-faith unity in strengthening the Palestinian solidarity movement.²⁰ Their co-sponsorship alongside diverse groups demonstrates their role in unifying different faith traditions around a common cause, presenting a united moral front. This suggests that religious communities, despite their differences, can find common ground in advocating for human rights and peace, lending a powerful ethical dimension to the activism. Furthermore, IPWG offers educational resources, including arranging speakers for local congregations on subjects such as the role of nonviolence in various faiths and its power as a tool for peace and justice.²¹

2.9. Palestine Justice Working Group (PJWG) of the Wisconsin Conference UCC

The Palestine Justice Working Group (PJWG) of the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC) is dedicated to serving Wisconsin UCC congregations by providing educational and advocacy resources and programs that support justice for Palestinians.²² The group aims to promote continued learning about the realities in Palestine, share insights regarding advocacy initiatives both within and beyond the UCC, and unite UCC churches within Wisconsin to foster a united front.²² They collaborate with ecumenical, interfaith, and justice organizations that share their goal of nonviolent efforts towards a just and genuine peace for Palestine and Israel.²²

A key initiative of the PJWG is their support for a "Resolution of Witness" to adopt the 2021 General Synod Resolution, "Declaration for a Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel," which was brought forth by the Board of Directors at the 2024 Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Conference UCC.²² This process involves local congregations studying and discussing the resolution, with a confirming vote scheduled for the

subsequent annual meeting.²² This demonstrates a more formalized and institutionalized approach to Palestinian solidarity within a specific religious denomination. Unlike grassroots groups, the PJWG leverages existing church structures to educate and mobilize its members, indicating a deeper integration of the cause into the denomination's justice ministries. This provides a stable, long-term platform for advocacy and education, reaching a potentially wider and more established audience.

To support this extensive engagement, the PJWG provides a wide array of educational resources, including study guides, Palestine Curriculum Resources for middle and high school students, and additional materials from the UCC Palestine Israel Network (UCC PIN).²² They actively encourage and support local churches in engaging with these issues, exemplified by Orchard Ridge UCC in Madison, which offered Sunday school sessions on Palestine to its youth.²² PJWG members are also available to provide direct support, guidance, and encouragement to congregations.²²

3. Collaborative Initiatives and Notable Events

The Palestinian solidarity movement in Madison is significantly strengthened by collaborative initiatives and notable events that bring together various organizations. This section highlights key joint efforts.

Table 2: Major Collaborative Palestinian Solidarity Events in Madison

Event Name	Date/Period	Brief Description/Purpose	Primary Organizing Groups	Other Participating/Endorsing Groups
UW-Madison Pro-Palestine Encampment	April 29 - May 10, 2024	12-day protest calling for university divestment from Israel	SJP UW-Madison, Wisconsin YDSA	JVP Madison, UW Faculty & Staff
Support for Mahmoud Khalil Walkout/Protest	March 11, 2025	Protest against ICE arrest of Columbia pro-Palestine activist, advocating for free speech	SJP UW-Madison, Advocates for Immigrant Rights	Madison Area DSA (national statement)
Queer Liberation March	June 28, 2025	March for queer liberation, explicitly including solidarity with Palestinians	Madison Area DSA, Trans Resistance Action Committee, Socialist Alternative Madison, WI Bail Out the People Movement, Madison Party for Socialism and Liberation	WI Poor People's Campaign, Freedom Inc., Families for Justice, Community Pharmacy Cooperative, Jewish Voice for Peace, WI Starbucks Workers United,

				Trans Advocacy Madison
Palestine Solidarity Fair	May 3, 2025	Community event to connect, learn, share, and commit to Palestinian liberation	CODEPINK Madison, Madison-Rafah Sister City Project, Palestine Partners, Playgrounds for Palestine	Mennonite Action Madison
"Longest Night" Vigil for a Cease-fire	December 2024	Interfaith vigil grieving for Palestinians and demanding a cease-fire	Mennonite Action Madison, Interfaith Peace Working Group	(Not specified beyond primary organizers)

3.1. UW-Madison Pro-Palestine Encampment (April 29 - May 10, 2024)

The pro-Palestine encampment on Library Mall at UW-Madison was a significant demonstration of solidarity, primarily organized by Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) UW-Madison and Wisconsin Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA).⁴ This 12-day protest, which lasted from April 29 to May 10, 2024, called for the university's divestment from Israel.⁴ The encampment represented a heightened form of direct action, moving beyond traditional protests to a sustained occupation.

During the encampment, protesters engaged in various activities, including organizing daily free meals through the "People's Kitchen," hosting campus speakers, conducting prayer services, and holding a "Liberation Shabbat," which was co-sponsored by Jewish Voice for Peace Madison.⁴ The university's response included a police raid on May 1, 2024, during which most tents were confiscated.⁴ This intervention led to 34 arrests, with four protesters booked into the Dane County Jail.⁴ Both protesters and police officers reported injuries, although the gathering was largely peaceful apart from police intervention.⁴ The encampment concluded after an agreement was reached between protesters and university administration on May 9, 2024, to facilitate conversations with the UW Foundation and end protests before graduation ceremonies.⁴

In the months following the encampment, UW-Madison initiated disciplinary proceedings against several dozen students for nonacademic misconduct related to their involvement.⁷ SJP was found in violation of five organizational rules and placed on a 10-month disciplinary probation, and YDSA also faced an investigation.¹⁰ This indicates an escalation in both activist tactics and institutional resistance. The university's actions, potentially influenced by federal warnings, suggest a strong pushback against disruptive forms of protest, creating a challenging environment for student activists.

Following these events and disciplinary actions, UW-Madison students expressed concerns about a "chilling effect" on campus speech.⁴ This concern is explicitly linked to broader governmental actions against pro-Palestine campus activism, including threats to federal funding and the deportation of permanent residents.⁴ The institutional and governmental responses, perceived as punitive, are designed to deter future activism. This "chilling effect" could lead to self-censorship among students and faculty, limiting open discourse on sensitive geopolitical issues and potentially undermining academic freedom and constitutional rights on campus. This is a critical

long-term consequence of the crackdown.

3.2. Support for Mahmoud Khalil (March 2025)

In March 2025, the arrest of Mahmoud Khalil, a prominent spokesperson in Columbia University's pro-Palestine protests, by ICE agents without charges despite his status as a lawful permanent resident, galvanized solidarity efforts in Madison.⁸ UW-Madison Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and Advocates for Immigrant Rights swiftly organized a walkout and protest in response.⁸ Nationally, Madison Area DSA also issued a statement advocating for his release.¹²

The advocacy surrounding Khalil's case highlighted broader civil liberties concerns. Protesters characterized his detention as an "illegal abduction" and an "attempt to criminalize political protest," emphasizing the fundamental importance of free speech and assembly.⁸ They specifically called on UW-Madison to respect student rights and to resist complying with any directives to suppress protests.⁹ This incident allowed solidarity groups to broaden the narrative beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict itself, connecting it to fundamental civil liberties and immigrant rights within the U.S. By highlighting the potential for state overreach against activists, it sought to galvanize support from a wider base concerned with constitutional freedoms, thereby strengthening the movement's legitimacy and appeal.

3.3. Queer Liberation March (June 2025)

The inaugural Queer Liberation March, held in June 2025, exemplified strategic intersectionality in movement building within Madison. The planning committee for this event included Madison Area Democratic Socialists of America, Trans Resistance Action Committee, Socialist Alternative Madison, WI Bail Out the People Movement, and Madison Party for Socialism and Liberation.¹⁴ A broad array of organizations endorsed the march, including WI Poor People's Campaign, Freedom Inc., Families for Justice, Community Pharmacy Cooperative, Jewish Voice for Peace, WI Starbucks Workers United, and Trans Advocacy Madison.¹⁴

A significant aspect of the march was its explicit inclusion of Palestinian solidarity. The

organizers stated their solidarity with "queer people facing oppression across the globe – especially our Palestinian siblings – and reject the 'pinkwashing' that attempts to use accusations of homophobia to justify their genocide".¹⁴ This demonstrates a conscious effort by organizers to build an intersectional movement, recognizing that struggles against various forms of oppression are interconnected. The rejection of "pinkwashing" aligns with a critical perspective on geopolitical narratives that might attempt to use LGBTQ+ rights to deflect criticism from human rights abuses. This strategy broadens the base of support for Palestinian solidarity by integrating it into existing social justice frameworks and appealing to individuals who identify with multiple marginalized identities. It strengthens the movement by fostering alliances across different activist communities, making it more resilient and inclusive.

3.4. Palestine Solidarity Fair (May 2025)

The Palestine Solidarity Fair, held in May 2025, served as a key community engagement event. It was jointly organized by CODEPINK Madison, the Madison-Rafah Sister City Project (MRSCP), Palestine Partners, and Playgrounds for Palestine.¹⁸ Mennonite Action Madison also participated in the fair.¹⁵

The primary purpose of the fair was to provide a space for individuals to connect, learn, share information and experiences, and reaffirm their commitment to the continued fight for Palestinian liberation.¹⁸ This type of event, distinct from direct protests, focuses on public engagement, education, and fostering a sense of community around the cause. It provides a more accessible entry point for individuals who may not participate in direct action. The fair serves as a crucial mechanism for broadening public awareness and recruitment for the solidarity movement. By offering diverse ways to engage—from learning about organizations to purchasing Palestinian crafts—it cultivates a wider base of support and sustained commitment, demonstrating a multifaceted approach to advocacy beyond confrontational tactics.

3.5. Ongoing Interfaith and Community Actions

Beyond major, high-profile events, Palestinian solidarity in Madison is sustained through a variety of ongoing interfaith and community actions. These activities

represent a continuous, low-to-medium intensity level of engagement that maintains momentum and reaches different segments of the community. Examples include Mennonite Action Madison's participation in monthly Anti-War Cafes and War Tax Resistance workshops, as well as their outreach efforts at Madison farmers markets.¹⁵

An interfaith "Longest Night" vigil for a cease-fire in Gaza, co-sponsored by Mennonite Action Madison and Interfaith Peace Working Group, also took place.¹⁵ The Palestine Justice Working Group of the Wisconsin Conference UCC actively encourages and supports UCC congregations in studying and discussing the "Declaration for a Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel".²² Additionally, the Madison-Rafah Sister City Project annually sponsors the Rachel Corrie Commemoration.¹ These activities are less about immediate political pressure and more about long-term education, community building, and sustained advocacy. This demonstrates the deep roots and enduring nature of Palestinian solidarity in Madison. It is not merely a reactive movement but a consistent presence that integrates advocacy into daily life and various community spaces, ensuring ongoing awareness and commitment even outside of major crises.

4. Conclusion

The Palestinian solidarity movement in Madison, Wisconsin, is characterized by its remarkable diversity and strong interconnectedness. A wide array of organizations, including student groups (Students for Justice in Palestine, Wisconsin Young Democratic Socialists of America), faith-based communities (Mennonite Action Madison, Jewish Voice for Peace, Palestine Justice Working Group of the Wisconsin Conference UCC, Interfaith Peace Working Group), and broader peace and social justice advocates (Madison-Rafah Sister City Project, Madison Area Democratic Socialists of America, CODEPINK), actively contribute to the cause. This diverse composition allows for a multi-faceted approach to solidarity, encompassing direct action, humanitarian aid, cultural exchange, public advocacy, and educational initiatives.

Several key trends define the activism and collaboration within this movement. A defining feature is the frequent collaboration and co-sponsorship of events among these groups, demonstrating a unified front and amplifying their collective impact. This networked approach maximizes resources and reach. The University of Wisconsin-Madison remains a central and active site for protests and organizing, particularly through student groups, though this has increasingly led to institutional pressure and disciplinary actions, raising concerns about free speech. Furthermore, the movement frequently links Palestinian liberation to broader social justice issues, such as queer rights, anti-militarism, and immigrant rights, appealing to a wider audience and strengthening alliances across different advocacy communities. Beyond high-profile protests, ongoing educational efforts, community events, and faith-based initiatives ensure a consistent presence and long-term commitment to the cause.

The robust and adaptive nature of Palestinian solidarity in Madison suggests a resilient movement capable of responding to evolving political landscapes and institutional challenges. The integration of diverse perspectives and tactics indicates a sophisticated understanding of how to build and sustain a broad-based social movement for human rights and justice.

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