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Ann Arbor City Council candidate Dr. Mozghan Savabieasfahani (C) leads a crowd down South University St in support of Palestine and in protest of Santa Ono's statement on the Israel-Palestine conflict on October 10, 2023.
● LILA TURNER/MICHIGAN DAILY



● ALI HASSANPOUR/IRAN DAILY

People expect university professors to speak out against injustices and not to be chained by ties to Israel. Many professors in the US have indeed joined the students in the recent wave of pro-Palestinian protests. Why have some other professors stood against the protests?

Savabieasfahani: I think you are assuming a lot of things that are not true about the United States. You're assuming that the professors there are all selfless people who think we should take the high road and make this a better world. That's not true. People like me will never get to be the head of a university. They will kick you out long before you're able to do any of these things. Human rights activists have all been kicked out of university a long time ago. For example, at a party, you may see a donor say to the head of the department in which an outspoken professor, such as Norman Finkelstein, is coming up for tenure, "By the way, this Finkelstein is not going to get the tenure, right? Right?"

Those pro-Israeli professors are not getting paid directly by the Zionists at all, but they have gone through a long process of elimination to get selected. By the time they arrive at their jobs, they are neutered. These are the kinds of people who will not stand up for human rights because if they do, they will be forced by these Zionists to step down.

Coleman: However, because of this upheaval, a change has begun. For all these 20 years that Mozghan and I have been active, these professors were almost entirely useless. And now, a whole bunch of these professors are joining with the students. This is a new thing.

I have to say that we are all way too focused on university administrators, professors, members of Congress, and the police who are helping Israel. We are too focused on these levers of power because until now, these levers of power were powerful.

That's all changed. There's a new normal now. The new normal is you have thousands and thousands of students marching all over the place and that these levers of power don't work anymore. I'm not focused on these people. I'm not focused on how Biden is so bad and Trump is so bad. I'm focused on the students because they're not stopping.

Savabieasfahani: Just a year ago, the general atmosphere at the universities was like, "Oh, no, no, we're not political. Politics is bad." That was a good thing to them. They would be proud that they are not political. Today, university students have been politicized, and they are demanding huge things. They do not stop at just Israel. They are against the whole shebang: imperialism. They talk about it very eloquently. They talk about colonialism, imperialism, and other things that really kill the American political establishment.

In America and Europe now, students know what Imperialism is, and they're against it. If you're against imperialism, you would be against capitalism and against colonialism. You would be very radical since you want a major change in the system of governance of the world. It's a very, very good news that it's waking up. The general public and the general student body in Iran, however, do not know what imperialism is. Iranian students are extremely confused. They have to get up and go find out what is imperialism and why are students in America against imperialism.

You observed that American students are better learned about imperialism. However, videos have been circulating of interviews with a few American students who didn't seem to know or recall what they were gathering for, aside from showing solidarity with arrested students across the country. Is that enough to write off all the protesters?

Savabieasfahani: Not at all. The students who come to these protests have different levels of understanding about the depth of the situation, but they know what's going on. If they come, they will come to support you. Or, if they're Zionists, they would

come to beat you up.

Coleman: They're very, very few Zionists who are able and willing to come and beat people. The one example you're thinking of is UCLA. In UCLA, a Zionist gang was somehow recruited to come and beat the students at the encampment, among whom were Iranians, by the way. They had a hard time getting a sizable number of Zionists in that mob, but they got them together and attacked the pro-Palestinian students for four hours. The police sat and did nothing, but the pro-Palestinian students ended up winning. The Zionists were unable to break into their camp, and they were unable to force them to leave. The next day, hundreds of police came and forced the students in the Palestine camp to leave by force.

However, this has not happened generally on US campuses for the reason that there aren't enough hardcore Zionist students who are willing and able to get out there and try to harm the pro-Palestinian students. There just aren't. And all these levers of power like the Zionist federations and the Zionist institutions don't have the power to mobilize people because there aren't enough people who would agree with them in this holocaust against Palestinians.

They're not dueling rallies, for the most part. You don't see dueling rallies on these campuses. Mostly, you just see hundreds, sometimes thousands of pro-Palestinian students marching. The other side has nothing but pure racism and pure fascism. That is not something that attracts students on the campus.

This is a very inspiring situation. It's like the civil rights movement of the 1960s. But it's more widespread and it's bigger, louder, more determined, and spread across more campuses. Thanks to the internet, it's everywhere very quickly. It's even bigger than the Black Lives Matter Movement. In that movement, you would have episodes of a rally here and there. This current Palestine movement is not episodic. It's massive, it's every day, and it doesn't stop. Now, the anti-Vietnam War movement was big, but, again, it was not clearly anti-imperialist. And it was not something that had the kind of big staying