



The arrest of pro-Palestinian students peacefully demonstrating against American financial support for Israel exposes the hypocrisy of the United States' self-proclaimed stance as a staunch defender of free speech.



US longstanding history of student protests against war and racism

Student-led protest rallies in American universities have a rich history spanning several decades. In the 1960s, students vehemently opposed America's involvement in the Vietnam War, organizing massive demonstrations and calling for a change in the government's stance. The apex of these protests occurred on May 4, 1970, at Kent University, where Ohio National Guard soldiers opened fire on thousands of protesting students, resulting in four fatalities and nine injuries. This incident catalyzed wide-

spread protests and strikes across numerous American universities.

Presently, over 50 years later, progressive American lawmakers have drawn parallels between the recent police suppression of anti-war student rallies and the deadly response to Vietnam War student protests, urging President Joe Biden to avoid repeating past mistakes. Criticism surrounding the student crackdown mounts as analysts caution that Biden's reaction to student an-

ti-war demonstrations "could morph into Biden's Vietnam."

Students participating in pro-Palestinian freedom protests on campuses nationwide have consistently referenced the legacy of student resistance and government suppression at pivotal moments in American history. They assert that universities should serve as venues fostering rational discussions around contentious topics while encouraging dialogue "even across painful and divisive issues."

Demands of pro-Palestinian students

The ongoing protests stem from a series of demands made by pro-Palestinian students. They call for American universities to sever financial ties with Israel and companies involved in the Gaza war, urging their academic institutions to join the global Boycott, Divest-

ment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement to end the atrocities in Gaza and secure Palestinian rights. Additionally, students demand that the US government and Congress cease their unwavering support for Israel. Other key demands include terminating academic collab-

orations with Israeli institutions, disclosing universities' investments and rejecting university research funding from Israel.

In response to police brutality against student protesters and disciplinary cases imposed on them, amnesty for penalized or dismissed stu-

dents and faculty members has been added to the protesters' list of demands. These demonstrations began as the US House of Representatives recently approved a \$95 billion foreign aid package, which includes assistance to the Zionist regime.

University crackdown on anti-Israel student protests

From the onset of these gatherings, university presidents escalated tensions by requesting police presence on campus, transforming peaceful assemblies into violent conflicts. For instance, New York police appeared at

Columbia University during the early stages of student protests, leading to numerous arrests and hours-long detentions. Participating students now risk suspension, student card confiscation, expulsion from dormitories,

and even university dismissal. According to the Associated Press, almost 3,000 individuals have been arrested during anti-Israel student protests across the United States.

Professors join anti-Israel protests, face potential backlash

Only days after anti-Israel student rallies commenced at American universities, Columbia University experienced a significant professors' strike in solidarity with arrested student protesters who erected protest tents. While the exact number of participating university

professors remains unclear, The Guardian reported "hundreds of university faculty protested."

New York University faculty members also participated in demonstrations at their campus, leading to multiple arrests. Affected

professors included Christopher Brown, Columbia's History professor; Hilary Callahan, Barnard's Biology professor; Julie Crawford, Columbia's English and Literature professor; Elizabeth Bernstein, Barnard's Women's Studies professor; Carolyn Follin, Economics

professor; and Noelle Mack Afi, Emory University's Philosophy department head.

The professional future of many of these professors is now threatened by university financial sponsors, groups, and politically influential individuals.

Prominent figures react to US student protests

Robert Kraft, the American billionaire and New England Patriots owner, declared his refusal to provide financial aid to Columbia University following campus riots and police intervention. As a Columbia alumnus and founder of the Kraft Columbia Center for Jewish Student Life, Kraft expressed his disappointment on Instagram, asserting that "Columbia can

no longer protect its students and staff."

Gerald Nadler, a Columbia graduate and the oldest Jewish member of the House of Representatives, emphasized the university's responsibility to safeguard students and maintain a conducive educational environment.

Columbia University professor Howard W. French, in a For-

eign Policy article, argued that American politicians labeling protesting students as threats are misguided.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres advocated for freedom of speech and peaceful demonstrations in response to questions regarding the suppression of student protests in America.

US media, officials acknowledge democratic decline

The arrest of pro-Palestinian students, peacefully demonstrating against American financial support for Israel, exposes the hypocrisy of the United States' self-proclaimed stance as a staunch defender of free speech. This blatant disregard for the right to peaceful protest stands in stark contrast to the vocal condemnations they level against countries they

deem "authoritarian".

In response to the protests, senior Republican senators urged the Biden administration to deploy Federal Police (FBI) forces to suppress student demonstrators. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and his deputy, John Toon, labeled the protesters as "anti-Semitic" and "terrorism sponsors" in

a letter addressed to Attorney General Merrick Garland and Education Secretary Miguel Cardona.

As a result, the blockade of these student protests not only raises serious constitutional concerns but also undermines the very democratic principles the United States claims to uphold. By disregarding the constitutional

obligation to provide "advice and consent" on the president's choice, the Senate has effectively abandoned its duty to act on behalf of the American people. This alarming disregard for democratic norms only serves to reinforce the growing perception of America's decline as a bastion of democracy and free speech.

Republicans swayed by Zionists

House Speaker Mike Johnson, a Republican, has advocated for the dismantling of pro-Palestinian solidarity campaigns at Columbia University, sparking outrage among students. Johnson's stance aligns with his approval of a \$26 billion aid package supporting Israel.

Backed by the heads of six House committees, who possess significant influence over grants, research funding, visas, and tax codes for universities, Johnson has vowed to use all "avail-

able tools" to exert pressure on universities where protests against Israel and the Gaza war are taking place. House Republicans are also investigating federal funding for these universities, suggesting they may impose tighter congressional oversight and potentially revoke federal research grants and government support.

In a related development, 21 Democratic representatives have written to Columbia's Board of Trustees, demanding the dissolution of the

pro-Palestinian camp on campus or the resignation of the board. This letter reflects a broader debate within the United States about freedom of speech and the rights of pro-Palestinian activists, who have long claimed they face targeted harassment. The recent police crackdowns on protests at various universities, including New York University, have further complicated matters, raising questions about the institutions' commitment to protecting free speech.

Suppressing student protests under the guise of 'Anti-Semitism'

The US authorities often label student protests as "anti-Semitic" even though many Jewish students actively participate in these anti-Israel demonstrations. These students assert that Judaism is distinct from Zionism, highlighting their belief in Judaism's inherent opposition to oppression and genocide.

In a bid to counter the student uprising and stifle free speech, main-

stream American media outlets have dubbed pro-Palestinian students "rioters," "disruptors of order," and "anti-Semitic." By doing so, they attempt to sway public opinion against these protests, which fundamentally oppose Israel and condemn America's support for its crimes. A Foreign Policy report challenged this propaganda, emphasizing that the student demonstrations within university campuses embody civility, with the students even adopting an

admirable code of conduct. This code prioritizes cleanliness, refrains from using drugs or alcohol, respects others' privacy, and avoids confrontations with opponents.

Ultimately, the report maintains that the student protests stem not from anti-Semitic sentiments but from the deep shock and horror sparked by the appalling, indiscriminate violence perpetrated by the Zionist regime in Gaza.

Biden's opponents capitalize on anti-Israel protests

The New York Times analyzed the impact of anti-Israel student rallies on the Democratic Party and Biden administration, suggesting that campus chaos could pose political risks in the upcoming election year. The paper discussed the challenge of balancing support for free speech and Gaza with concerns about anti-Semitism among some American Jews.

CNN attributed the student protests partly to opposition against Biden's support for

Israel, noting that the demonstrations reflect broader discontent among American youth regarding the administration's handling of multiple issues, especially the Gaza crisis. This poses a significant threat to Biden's campaign against Donald Trump.

In a surprising move, the College Democrats of America, representing students within the Democratic Party, released a statement condemning university administrators for suspending students and requesting police

intervention during protests. The New York Times called this an unexpected critique from a historically cooperative organization.

As election campaigns gear up, senior Biden administration officials are increasingly worried about the spreading student protests against the Gaza war. Democrats hope that a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas could mitigate some of the political damage caused by the domestic conflict.