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PRO-GAZA PROTESTS RAGE ACROSS US CAMPUSES

■ HOUSE SPEAKER SAYS MILITARY COULD BE NEEDED TO QUELL PROTESTS ■ STUDENTS DEMAND END OF AMERICAN MILITARY AID TO ISRAEL ■ 34,305 PEOPLE KILLED IN GAZA SINCE THE WAR BEGAN OVER 6 MONTHS AGO

DUBAI
BY STEPHEN N. R.
Senior Associate Editor

Pro-Palestinian protests have intensified at leading US colleges, spanning from Columbia University in New York to Harvard, Yale, the University of Texas, and the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. The demonstrations, which began last week, spread to campuses nationwide, sparking reactions from prominent figures, including a senior Republican leader who suggested calling in the National Guard.

US House Speaker Mike Johnson made these remarks on Wednesday during a visit to Columbia University, the epicentre of nationwide student demonstrations against Israel's actions in Gaza. At Columbia's Manhattan campus, Johnson faced heckling and booing from protesters. "As Columbia has allowed these lawless radicals and agitators to take over, the virus of antisemitism has spread across other campuses," Johnson said, urging authorities to arrest violent protesters and threatening to cut federal funding to universities that fail to maintain order.

Johnson told reporters

that if the demonstrations were not swiftly contained, it would be "an appropriate time for the National Guard" to intervene.

The protesters have rallied around demands for colleges to divest from companies with ties to Israel, an end to US military aid, and a halt to disciplinary action against protesting students.

The escalation of protests resulted in the arrest of hundreds of demonstrators at various universities, including New York University, Brown University in Providence, the University of Minnesota, the University of Texas, and the University of Southern California.

The political ramifications reached the White House, where press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre emphasised President Joe Biden's support for free speech, debate, and nondiscrimination on college campuses.

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More than 200 protesters were arrested in a day at universities in Los Angeles, Boston and Austin, Texas where a fresh rally was scheduled for midday.



University of Southern California Public Safety Officers detain a pro-Palestine demonstrator on Wednesday in Los Angeles, California. AFP

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