

Nottingham Philosophers Support Students Facing Repression for Palestine Protests

As members of the philosophy department at the University of Nottingham, we believe that the freedom to protest nonviolently is essential to our democracy and a basic human right that must be respected and protected, especially by institutions such as universities.

Currently, students are engaged in peaceful protest on university campuses throughout the US. We are concerned that the universities in question are not upholding these students' democratic rights. At Columbia University, for example, more than 108 student protesters have been arrested, suspended from their courses, and evicted from university housing, despite the fact they "were peaceful, offered no resistance whatsoever, and were saying what they wanted to say in a peaceful manner", according to NYPD Chief of Patrol John Chell.

We are in addition concerned for the safety of the students and faculty who have chosen to raise their voices in protest. Widely circulated footage from various campuses shows police using distressing levels of violence against students and members of staff who attempt to protect them.

We are also concerned that the responses seen in the US may be treated as a license to respond more harshly to protests by UK students. This would be unacceptable. Instead, the outcry against that violence should serve as a reminder of the necessity of protecting the right to protest.

As educators, we teach our students about ethical, political, democratic values. We would like our own students to believe, with justification, that their voices and their actions can make a difference. We believe universities should inculcate the values of empathy, care, and respect for others, and be engines for positive change. Police violence and authoritarianism should have no place on campus. This is why we stand with the student protesters and call on university management across the US to respect the basic human rights of their protesting students.

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