

Gaza protesters block entrance to Google conference over Israel contracts

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Hundreds of pro-Palestinian protesters chained themselves together in front of the entrance to Google's annual developer conference on Tuesday in protest of the tech company's ties to Israeli military projects. Thousands of attendees waiting to enter Google I/O were redirected to another entrance, and the event started on time. Groups including the No Tech for Genocide coalition and other groups from across the Bay Area held a sign reading "Google stop fueling genocide". They chanted "we won't stop til Nimbus gets dropped," referencing a \$1.2bn project supported by Amazon and Google that provides artificial intelligence and cloud computing services to the Israeli government. Speaking before the crowd, a protester said people have gathered in Mountain View to attend Google's highly anticipated annual conference, but that protesters were there to share "the real story". Google is slated to announce major updates to its products at the conference today, most of them focused on AI. "What you will not be hearing from today's speakers is that right now, as I stand here before you, the state of Israel is using Google technology to execute history's first AI-powered genocide," they said. A number of attendees were current and former employees of the company, including Ariel Koren, a former Google worker who says she was pushed out of the company in 2022 for speaking out against Project Nimbus. She said contracts like Project Nimbus have enabled "history's first ever AI-enabled genocide". Protesters oppose such technology, which they say is being tested in Gaza, but is likely to be replicated elsewhere in the future. "We are here to say that we cannot stand by while this company fuels this genocide and profits off of it," she said. "[Google] not only creates the infrastructure for the Israeli military to scale out their crimes against humanity, but these tools are being tested and trained in Palestine to be exported out to militaries around the world, who can then commit the same types of violence," she said. "We might be seeing the world's first AI-enabled genocide. But what Google is trying to do is to ensure that this is not the world's last." Dozens of additional protesters gathered further down the streets leading to the event, chanting: "Google you can't hide, you're committing genocide." They handed out pamphlets targeting Google employees, persuading them to speak out against the company's military contracts. Last month, Google fired over 50 workers for participating in a pro-Palestinian protest that saw them occupy Google campuses in New York City and Sunnyvale, California. In 2018, the company saw mass employee walkouts over its handling of sexual harassment.