

CAIR-NJ Condemns Jackson Township Mayor s Hostile Treatment of Planned Pro-Palestinian Peaceful Protest

Impact News Service

May 16, 2024 Thursday

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Length: 347 words

Body

Washington, D.C: Council on American-Islamic Relations has issued the following press release:

The New Jersey chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-NJ), the nation ' s largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization today condemned Mayor of Jackson Township Michael Reina ' s hostile reaction to a planned pro-Palestinian peaceful protest.

MayorReina ' s statement on the protest is as follows:

"We have several agencies looking into the origin of this online message. I can assure everyone that we did not authorize any parade or gathering, nor was a permit issued. At this time, we are not aware who the creator(s) are, but that will not stop us from being vigilant. "

Furthermore, a Jackson Township counter terrorism officer visited a resident ' s home on May 14 to tell them that they will need a permit for the rally scheduled for Sunday, May 19.

CAIR-NJ condemns Jackson Township and its mayor ' s hostile treatment towards individuals wanting to exercise their first amendment rights. Their treatment of protestors as threatening and dangerous is harmful and puts them at risk. By telling the community to remain vigilant in the face of peaceful assembly creates the harmful rhetoric that pro-Palestinian protestors are dangerous, violent and even implicitly criminal. The mayor calling upon agencies and sending a police officer, specifically one designated for counter-terrorism to the home of a presumed organizer is superfluous.

CAIR-NJ urges Jackson Township to aid in providing a safe space for individuals wanting to exercise their right to peacefully protest for any reason.

In a statement, CAIR-NJ Executive Director Selaedin Maksut said:

CAIR- NJ Condemns Jackson Township Mayor s Hostile Treatment of Planned Pro- Palestinian Peaceful Protest

“We condemn Jackson Township ’ s hostile stance toward free speech and assembly. The mayor ’ s hostile reaction to a peaceful pro-Palestine rallyby alerting “several agencies” and dispatching the Counter-Terrorism officer demonstrates a potential anti-Muslim or anti-Palestinian bias. ”

CAIR ’ s mission is to protect civil rights, enhance understanding of Islam, promote justice, and empower American Muslims.

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University of California Workers Authorize Union to Call for Strike Over Protest Crackdowns

The New York Times

May 15, 2024 Wednesday 00:36 EST

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Section: US

Length: 902 words

Byline: Jonathan Wolfe Jonathan Wolfe is a senior staff editor on the newsletters team at The Times.

Highlight: A union representing about 48,000 academic workers said that campus leaders mishandled pro-Palestinian demonstrations. The vote gives the union's executive board the ability to call a strike at any time.

Body

A union representing about 48,000 academic workers said that campus leaders mishandled pro-Palestinian demonstrations. The vote gives the union's executive board the ability to call a strike at any time.

Unions are known for fighting for higher pay and workplace conditions. But academic workers in the University of California system authorized their union on Wednesday to call for a strike over something else entirely: free speech.

The union, U.A.W. 4811, represents about 48,000 graduate students and other academic workers at 10 University of California system campuses and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. Its members, incensed over the university system's handling of campus protests, pushed their union to address grievances extending beyond the bread-and-butter issues of collective bargaining to concerns over protesting and speaking out in their workplace.

The strike authorization vote, which passed with 79 percent support, comes two weeks after dozens of counterprotesters attacked a pro-Palestinian encampment at the University of California, Los Angeles, for several hours without police intervention, and without arrests. Officers in riot gear tore down the encampment the next day and arrested more than 200 people.

The vote does not guarantee a strike but rather gives the executive board of the local union, which is part of the United Auto Workers, the ability to call a strike at any time. Eight of the 10 University of California campuses still have a month of instruction left before breaking for summer.

The union said it had called the vote because the University of California unilaterally and unlawfully changed policies regarding free speech, discriminated against pro-Palestinian speech and created an unsafe work environment by allowing attacks on protesters, among other grievances.

"At the heart of this is our right to free speech and peaceful protest," Rafael Jaime, the president of U.A.W. 4811, said in a statement after the vote. "If members of the academic community are maced and beaten down for peacefully demonstrating on this issue, our ability to speak up on all issues is threatened."

A spokeswoman for the University of California president's office said in a statement that a strike would set "a dangerous precedent that would introduce nonlabor issues into labor agreements."

University of California Workers Authorize Union to Call for Strike Over Protest Crackdowns

“To be clear, the U.C. understands and embraces its role as a forum for free speech, lawful protests and public debate,” said the spokeswoman, Heather Hansen. “However, given that role, these nonlabor-related disputes cannot prevent it from fulfilling its academic mission.”

There are still several active encampments at University of California campuses, including U.C. Merced, U.C. Santa Cruz and U.C. Davis. On Tuesday, protesters at U.C. Berkeley began dismantling their encampment after reaching an agreement with university officials.

In a letter to the protesters on Tuesday, Berkeley's chancellor, Carol Christ, said that the university would begin discussions around divestment from certain companies and that she planned to publicly support “efforts to secure an immediate and permanent cease-fire” by the end of the month. But she said that divestment from companies that do business with, or in, Israel was not within her authority.

After packing up their tents, some of the Berkeley protesters traveled on Wednesday to U.C. Merced to attend a meeting held by the University of California governing board. More than 100 people signed up to give public comment, and nearly all of those who spoke about the protests criticized the handling of them by university administrations.

The strike authorization vote enables what is known as a “stand-up” strike, a tactic that was first employed by the United Auto Workers last year during its contract negotiations with General Motors, Ford Motor and Stellantis. Rather than calling on all members to strike at once, the move allows the local union's executive board to focus strikes on certain campuses or among certain groups of workers, to gain leverage.

Mr. Jaime, the U.A.W. 4811 president, said before the vote that the union would use the tactic to “reward campuses that make progress” and possibly call strikes at those that don't. He added that the union would announce the strikes “only at the last minute, in order to maximize chaos and confusion for the employer.”

The union said on Wednesday that its executive board would announce later this week if it was calling for strikes.

Tobias Higbie, a professor of history and labor studies at U.C.L.A., said that while striking for free speech was unusual, it wasn't unheard-of. The academic workers' union is also largely made up of young people, who have been far more receptive to organized labor than young people in even the recent past, he said.

“It points to how generational change is not only impacting workplaces, but it's going to impact unions,” Mr. Higbie said. “Young members are going to make more and more demands like this on their unions as we go forward over the next couple of years, and so I think it's probably a harbinger of things to come.”

Jill Cowan contributed reporting.

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PHOTO: Protesters at the University of California, Berkeley, dismantled their encampment after reaching a deal with school officials. (PHOTOGRAPH BY SANTIAGO MEJIA/SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS) This article appeared in print on page A18.

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Billionaires Funding Protests Donate Millions to House Dems

RealClearPolitics

May 17, 2024 Friday 5:00 AM EST

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Section: US POLITICS NEWS, US POLITICS NEWS & MIDDLE EAST NEWS

Length: 2413 words

Byline: Susan Crabtree

Body

For President Biden and congressional Democrats, the fierce party division over the campus protests and the war in Gaza is full of warning signs during the 2024 election year. The unrest is unlikely to stop when universities break for the summer; protesters are pledging to disrupt the August Democratic National Convention planned to be held in Chicago.

Most House Democrats have been reticent on the antisemitic protests and encampments roiling college graduations this month, while a handful have vocally defended or even celebrated the student protests as displays of protected free speech.

Rep. Ilhan Omar, a Minnesota Democrat, said she was proud of her daughter, a Barnard College student who was suspended for participating in illegal protests and who was among 100 people arrested after demonstrations at Columbia University in April. Throughout the months of campus protests, members of the progressive "squad," Reps. Rashida Tlaib of Michigan and Cori Bush of Missouri have applauded "courageous" anti-Israel student protestors while condemning efforts by university administrators and police to dismantle the encampments.

A RealClearPolitics analysis of Federal Election Commission data shows one possible reason most Democrats are trying to avoid the campus fray: House Democrats' reelection campaigns have accepted \$6.5 million from three major political families, which have helped bankroll several student groups participating in the protests. The family members cut most of those checks over the last two years, although some of the donations to longstanding House members came over the last decade.

The names are well-known among Democratic funding circles: Soros, Rockefeller, and Pritzker. Yet before the anti-Jewish protests swept college campuses over the last few months, their financial ties to the student groups were not widely known. Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker, a member of the same wealthy Pritzker family, is not among the donors.

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Several investigative media reports over the last month have uncovered the extensive financial ties between these families and student groups involved in organizing anti-Israel protests and activism across the country predating the Oct. 7 Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel and in its aftermath and during Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza.

The donors to student groups include George Soros, a billionaire philanthropist and Democratic campaign contributor who helms the Open Society Foundation and his family members; the Pritzkers, the owners of Hyatt Hotels Corporation; and members of the famed Rockefeller family, including relatives of the wealthy American Banker and philanthropist David Rockefeller. The donations have either gone directly to student groups involved in campus demonstrations or to umbrella foundations and organizations, which have, in turn, channeled the funds to the protestors.

The House Democratic Congressional Committee and the House Majority PAC, which was founded by former Speaker Nancy Pelosi and is directly affiliated with the House Democratic leadership, collected most of those funds, nearly \$5.5 million by those two Democratic campaign entities alone, FEC records show.

Meanwhile, 30 House Democrats, including Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries and other members of the leadership, received a combined total of \$856,858 from the Soros, Pritzker, and Rockefeller families, while a dozen Democratic candidates in competitive races received a total of \$139,000. RCP did not examine Senate recipients.

The House members in competitive races who received funds from at least one of the three families include Reps. Mary Peltola of Alaska, Mike Levin of California, Yadira Caraveo of Colorado, Johana Hayes of Connecticut, Eric Sorensen of Illinois, Frank Mrvan of Indiana, Sharice Davids, Jared Golden, Hillary Scholten, Angie Craig of Minnesota, Don Davis, Chris Pappas of New Hampshire, Gabe Vasquez, of New Mexico, Susie Lee of Nevada, Steven Horsford of Nevada, Paty Ryan of New York, Marcy Kaptur of Ohio, Andrea Salinas of Oregon, Susan Wild of Pennsylvania, and Matt Cartwright of Pennsylvania.

Craig's campaigns have received the most of any other House member from the three families: \$96,490 since 2018. Lee's campaign received the second most: \$75,000 since 2017.

The Democratic candidates who accepted donations from at least one of the three families include Kirsten Engel in Arizona; Adam Gray, Rudy Salas, George Whitesides, and Will Rollins in California; Lanon Baccam in Iowa; Tony Vargas in Nebraska; Lauren Gillen, Mondaire Jones, and Josh Riley in New York; Ashley Ehasz in Pennsylvania; and Michelle Vallejo in Texas.

Neither the DCCC nor any of the House members and candidates responded to RealClearPolitics' questions about whether they had any concerns about the financial ties between the Soros, Pritzker, and Rockefeller families to these student groups.

Several organizations have played key roles in pro-Palestinian student activism and protests and have received donations from Soros, Pritzker, and Rockefeller family members. The U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights, a pro-Palestinian advocacy group, has received at least \$700,000 in Open Society Foundation grants since 2018 and \$355,000 from the Rockefeller Brothers since 2019.

In 2023, the USCPR had three fellows - Nidaa Lafi, Craig Birkhead-Morton, and Malak Afaneh - all of whom have figured prominently in the nationwide protests, the New York Post reported in late April. The group provides up to \$7,800 for its community-based fellows and between \$2,880 and \$3,660 for its campus-based fellows for spending at least eight hours a week organizing campaigns led by Palestinian organizations.

While all were involved in student protests over the last several months, the University of California at Berkeley's Afanah, co-president of Law Students for Justice in Palestine, made the most headlines. Afanah commandeered a microphone during a graduation dinner at the law school dean's home to speak out against Israel's war in Gaza. She claimed a First Amendment right to disrupt the gathering and then accused the dean's wife of assaulting her when she forcefully asked her to leave.

Billionaires Funding Protests Donate Millions to House Dems

The Open Society Foundations defended its funding of these groups and their right to "peacefully protest" in an April 26X.com post.

"We have a long history of fighting antisemitism, Islamophobia, and all forms of racism and hate, and have advocated for the rights of Palestinians and Israelis and for peaceful resolution to the conflict in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories," the Foundations said.

"Our funding is a matter of public record, disclosed on our website, fully compliant with U.S. laws, and is part of our commitment to continuing open debate that is ultimately the only hope for peace in the region," the organization asserted.

Jewish Voice for Peace and IfNotNow are two additional organizations deeply involved in the student protests and backed by the Tides Foundations, which is Soros-funded. Jewish Voice for Peace, which openly describes itself as anti-Zionist, has also received \$500,000 in funds from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund over the last five years. David Rockefeller Jr. sits on the Rockefeller Brothers' board. The group has separately provided grants to both the Tides Foundation and the Tides Center, asPolitico reported in early May.

The Pritzkers founded the Libra Foundation, which seeds smaller nonprofits, many of which have participated in pro-Palestinian marches, according to the same Politico report. One of them is the Climate Justice Alliance, which has labeled President Biden "Genocide Joe" for his handling of Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza.

Others benefitting from Pritzker largesse include Black Organizing for Leadership and Dignity, which has helped promote anti-Israel protests, and the Immigrant Defense Project, which participated in a protest in D.C. earlier this year in which police arrested a number of participants. The Pritzkers also help financially support the Tides Foundation, which funds other small left-wing groups, including Adalah Justice Project, a prominent participant in the Columbia University protests and encampment, which police disbanded in early May.

House Republicans have launched multiple investigations into the funding of the campus protests and encampments. Earlier this week, the chairs of two GOP-led House committees, the Education and the Workforce and the House Oversight and Accountability panels, sent Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen a letter requesting all suspicious activity reports, or SARs, connected to 20 organizations that have reportedly led, financed, and participated in the antisemitic protests on college campuses. SARs are documents that financial institutions and other professionals file with the Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network to flag law enforcement to potential instances of money laundering or terrorist financing.

"It's no coincidence that the day after the October 7 Hamas terrorist attack, antisemitic mobs began springing up on college campuses across the country," Rep. Virginia Foxx, who chairs the Education and the Workforce Committee, said in a statement. "These protests have been coordinated and well-organized, indicating that outside groups or influences may be at play. American education is under attack. It's critical that Congress investigates how these groups, who are tearing apart our institutions, are being funded before it's too late."

House Oversight Chairman James Comer pledged that his committee would follow the money trail and stressed that the antisemitism "thriving" on many college campuses "must not go unchecked."

Topping the list that Foxx and Comer sent Yellen is Students for Justice in Palestine, or SJP, which has close ties to several anti-Israel organizations. After the Oct. 7 attacks, Students for Justice in Palestine's national steering committee distributed a "tool kit" for activists that proclaimed, "glory to our resistance" and included a template for an advertisement showing protesters beneath a Palestinian flag. The image contained a paraglider, an apparent tribute to Hamas' use of paragliders who slaughtered 360 youthful concert-goers, raped others, and took 44 people hostage during the Oct. 7 attack. That tool kit drew criticism from the Anti-Defamation League, which accused it of "celebrating terrorism."

Students for Palestine has since been banned or suspended by Brandeis, Columbia, and George Washington University, among other colleges and universities. During his presidential campaign, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis banned the group from state campuses, referring to their alleged ties to Hamas.

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"We had a group of Students for Justice in Palestine," DeSantis said. "They claimed solidarity with Hamas. We deactivated them. We were not going to use tax dollars to fund jihad."

A 2016 report from the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis stated that having a chapter on campus is "one of the strongest predictors of perceiving a hostile climate toward Israel and Jews."

The Foundation for Defense of Democracies' Jonathan Schanzer, a former Treasury official responsible for designating numerous terrorist financiers, said his organization has been watching the financial network behind Students for Justice in Palestine for several years. The group, he said, has an umbrella organization known as Americans Muslims for Palestine, or AMP, a nonprofit that was previously based in Chicago but more recently moved to Falls Church, Virginia. For the last several years, AMP has been embroiled in litigation, accusing it of being an "alter-ego" or shell organization for the Islamic Association for Palestine, or IAP, a disbanded organization linked to Hamas.

In 2023, Schanzer testified before the House Ways and Means Committee that IAP had received numerous checks and deposited them into Hamas' bank account, information uncovered during the litigation. In some cases, the deposits included the memo line "for Palestinian martyrs only," Schanzer noted.

Hatem Bazian, AMP's founder, was a frequent speaker at IAP forums, and Osama Abuirshaid, who edited IAP's newspaper, is now AMP's executive director, Schanzer said. In addition, Abuirshaid has published articles in English and Arabic praising Hamas, noting in them that he has communicated with Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzook.

AMP created Students for Justice in Palestine, which started with just a handful of schools and has now expanded to 200 U.S. campuses with chapters. The group is a loosely connected network of autonomous chapters with no named leader. The structure allows it to avoid registering as a nonprofit and filing tax documents. Bazian, who founded the first chapter 30 years ago at the University of California at Berkeley, has described the student organization as "a symbolic franchise without a franchise fee."

Bazian, who is now the chairman of American Muslims for Palestine's board and a lecturer at Berkeley, has downplayed its ties to the student organization. He says AMP has only provided printed materials and offered grants for students to attend conferences or host speakers but has no supervisory role or control over the Students for Justice in Palestine.

Schanzer, however, strongly disagrees. While he stresses that FDD has not produced any evidence of present criminal wrongdoing implicating AMP, he argues that AMP and its organizers deserve intense scrutiny from members of Congress. AMP, he said, has, over the last two decades, provided checks to students at Northwestern, DePaul, and Loyola universities, among others.

Last year, Bazian curiously criticized CNN's Jake Tapper's "racist" coverage of Rep. Tlaib, arguing in a post from his own X.com account that, "As Jews who believe in human rights and justice, we demand you do better." Schanzer notes that Bazian is Muslim, not Jewish, and the tweet has led to suspicion that Bazian thought he was logged into Jewish Voice for Peace's account but mistakenly tweeted from his personal account.

Nine Americans and Israeli survivors and victims of the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks are suing AMP and Students for Justice in Palestine, alleging that groups collaborated with Hamas to legitimize the Hamas attacks and provide public relations services for the terrorist organization. Meanwhile, the University of Florida chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine sued the state, challenging the Chancellor of the State University System's order to state universities to deactivate the student group.

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University of California Workers Push Union to Call Strike

The New York Times

May 17, 2024 Friday

Late Edition - Final

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Byline: By Jonathan Wolfe

Body

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The strike authorization vote, which passed with 79 percent support, comes two weeks after dozens of counterprotesters attacked a pro-Palestinian encampment at the University of California, Los Angeles, for several hours without police intervention, and without arrests. Officers in riot gear tore down the encampment the next day and arrested more than 200 people.

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The union said it had called the vote because the University of California unilaterally and unlawfully changed policies regarding free speech, discriminated against pro-Palestinian speech and created an unsafe work environment by allowing attacks on protesters, among other grievances.

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"It points to how generational change is not only impacting workplaces, but it's going to impact unions," Mr. Higbie said. "Young members are going to make more and more demands like this on their unions as we go forward over the next couple of years, and so I think it's probably a harbinger of things to come."

Jill Cowan contributed reporting. Jill Cowan contributed reporting.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/15/us/university-of-california-strike-authorization-palestinian-protest.html>

Graphic

PHOTO: Protesters at the University of California, Berkeley, dismantled their encampment after reaching a deal with school officials. (PHOTOGRAPH BY SANTIAGO MEJIA/SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS) This article appeared in print on page A18.

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