

US universities should respect right to protest

Impact News Service

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Body

Toronto: International Freedom of Expression Exchange has issued the following news release:

Pro-Palestine university campus protests have spread across the United States, with harsh crackdowns at some institutions, including Columbia University, the University of Texas, and Emory University. These include mass suspensions, evictions from university housing, and arrests of students, faculty, legal observers, and journalists covering these events.

Columbia University students set up tents on campus on April 17 to express solidarity with the Palestinian people. Student groups said they were protesting Israel's military campaign in Gaza, which has killed over 34,000 people and left well over a million displaced and starving. Protesters also demanded that the university divest holdings in companies profiting from the assault on Gaza and Israel's unlawful settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Also on April 17, Columbia's President Minouche Shafik testified at a congressional hearing on antisemitism. On April 18, she suspended the protesters, revoking their access to campus. In a letter to the New York Police Department, Shafik said Columbia "provided multiple notices and warnings and informed the encampment participants that they must disperse or face immediate discipline." Shafik said the protesters were violating Columbia's rules and policies, and raised safety concerns. She said the encampment posed a "clear and present danger" and asked the police to help remove the protesters.

The Columbia Law School Human Rights Institute, 54 members of Columbia Law School's permanent faculty, and the Knight First Amendment Institute, among others, criticized Shafik's decisions, with the Knight Institute condemning the "alarming decision to call on the NYPD to dismantle a student encampment."

The university previously suspended Columbia's chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace, after administrators claimed the groups "repeatedly violated University policies related to holding campus events." In response, the New York Civil Liberties Union and the organization Palestine Legal filed a lawsuit in March against the university for its "unlawful suspension" of these groups for "engaging in peaceful protest."

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Shafik told the US Congress that Columbia updated policies and procedures to address rising antisemitism on campus. She described as a central challenge “[t]rying to reconcile the free speech rights of those who want to protest and the rights of Jewish students to be in an environment free of harassment or discrimination. ”

There have been troubling reports of antisemitic incidents in and around Columbia University ’ s campus. Allegations of antisemitic acts and speech by individuals, as well as acts of Islamophobia and other forms of discrimination, should be investigated and addressed on the merits in a case-by-case basis, through fair and transparent processes.

As protests spread to campuses across the country, university administrations should be careful not to mislabel criticism of Israeli government policies or advocacy for Palestinian rights as inherently antisemitic or to misuse university authority to quash peaceful protest. Instead, universities should safeguard people ’ s rights to assembly and free expression.

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Campus protests across California remain peaceful

Big News Network.com

May 5, 2024 Sunday

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Massive protests and tent encampments opposing the war in Gaza are growing at universities across **California**, with classes canceled at the University of **California**-Los Angeles Wednesday, after tensions boiled over into violence there.

Police arrested 25 students at **California** State Polytechnic University-Humboldt Tuesday.

An organizer named Rithik from the Students for Gaza encampment at **San Francisco** State University recently spoke to Sonali Kolhatkar for her TV and radio show Yes! Presents: Rising Up with Sonali.

"Students everywhere are appalled at the current genocide occurring in Gaza that is being perpetrated by Israel and backed by the **United States**," Rithik stated. "We understand that our taxpayer money is not going towards our own education, but rather to fund this genocide and wars of aggression across the world."

At **San Francisco** State, students are demanding the **California** State University System divest any holdings in companies selling arms to Israel, assurances the student protesters will not be sanctioned by the school, and for the university president to make a statement opposing Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and declaring the war a genocide.

Pro-Israel groups argued the war is justified given the massacre perpetrated by Hamas, which kicked off the most recent violence. They also worry Jewish students will feel intimidated on campus. However, a Jewish student named Jacob at **San Francisco** State said it has not been his experience.

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"I don't think we've ever felt that any of the actions being taken in the name of anti-Zionism and anti-colonialism are antisemitic," Jacob asserted. "Never felt unsafe, never felt unwelcome in these spaces. Anti-Zionism is not antisemitism."

San Francisco State President Lynn Mahoney has emphasized the university's support for **peaceful protest** and said the university has already taken steps to divest.

This story was produced based on original reporting by Sonali Kolhatkar for Yes! Media.

California News Service

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End of Document

Pro-Palestine protests: University of California to resume in-person classes

The Times of India (TOI)

May 6, 2024 Monday

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NEW DELHI: The University of California is all set to resume offline classes from Monday after being shifted online due to clashes on campus between pro-Palestinian protesters and police, according to college authorities. Protests against Israel's attack on Hamas in Gaza have rocked US campuses for weeks, triggering crackdowns, mass arrests, and a White House mandate to restore order. "The campus will return to regular operations (on Monday)... and plans to remain this way through the rest of the week," a statement posted on Sunday on the university's website said. "A law enforcement presence continues to be stationed around campus to help promote safety," it added. The demonstrations are part of a broader push to protest what they see as injustices in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, aligning with wider protests across the country following Israel's offensive in Gaza triggered by a Hamas attack on southern Israel. Protests spread worldwide in solidarity with Palestine. As US universities echoed with the chants of "free, free Palestine", pro-Palestine protests spread to several countries. Student activists have organized protests at various universities, setting up temporary encampments on campus grounds. The protesters are calling for their schools to sever connections with universities in Israel and businesses that financially benefit from the ongoing conflict. In Paris, France, law enforcement personnel removed demonstrators who were participating in a sit-in at Sciences Po, resulting in the arrest of 91 people.

Law enforcement officials took action on Friday to remove demonstrators who had gathered near Humboldt University, situated in the heart of Berlin. In various Canadian cities, including Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver, students have taken to the streets to voice their opposition to the ongoing conflict in Gaza. More than 2000 arrests made so far. At least 200 individuals were detained at UCLA on Thursday, increasing the total number of arrests worldwide to more than 2,000 across dozens of college campuses since police removed an encampment at Columbia University in mid-April, according to an AP tally. Over the previous two weeks, more than 1,000 protestors have been arrested on campuses in Texas, Utah, Virginia, North Carolina, New Mexico, Connecticut, Louisiana, California, and New Jersey, some following clashes with riot police. "Not an example of peaceful protest": Whitehouse condemns violent protests. Calling it an "absolutely the wrong approach", Whitehouse condemned the standoffs at Columbia and California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt, where demonstrators took two buildings before officers with batons intervened overnight and arrested 25 individuals. Officials said that the total damage to the northern California school would be more than \$1 million. For Reprint Rights: timescontent.com

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