

# HOSTILE

**How Universities Target Anti-Genocide Protesters While Enabling Anti-Palestinian Racism and Islamophobia**

FROM '68 TO '24  
END ALL  
U.S. BACKED  
WARS!



**CAIR**

Council on American-Islamic Relations

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**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:** This report was authored by Research and Advocacy Coordinator Farah Afify and Research and Advocacy Intern Aleemah Williams. Research and Advocacy Director Corey Saylor and Research and Advocacy Intern Daniel McNulty contributed to revising and copyediting.

**Design:** Kamila Barbour

This report text was completed on May 13, 2024 and reflects developments up to that point.

Cover image by Areej Qadeer. Back cover image by Sehar Shaikh. Other photo credit to: Madeleine Robichaux (CAIR-San Diego), Hussam Ayloush (CAIR-Los Angeles), and Koshu Kuni-Unsplash.com.

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← ONE WAY

USE PED SIGNAL

- The White House
- Smithsonian: Renwick Gallery
- St. John's Church
- Decatur House
- 15th Street Bike Route
- Farragut West

A TIME COMES  
WHEN SILENCE  
IS BETRAYAL  
-MLK

POLICE POLICE

Photo by Koshu Kunii on Unsplash

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Council on American-Islamic Relations is releasing a new analysis on the disturbing role of universities in targeting students protesting against the Israeli government’s ongoing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. Rather than strive to ensure the safety of all students, university administrators have not only enabled anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobia on their campuses but have also sought to silence Palestinian, Muslim, Arab, Jewish, and other students speaking in support of Palestinian human rights. **It is urgent that university administrators act immediately to reform their approach, which has put students in danger and threatened the very existence of the university as an institution for free speech and discussion.**

For over six months, the Israeli government has been engaged in heightened military operations in Gaza that have threatened the very existence of the Palestinian people. As of May 2024, the Israeli government has killed over 34,500 Palestinians since October 2023.<sup>1</sup> As early as October, hundreds of scholars of international law, conflict studies, and genocide studies have warned of the “possibility of the crime of genocide being perpetrated by Israeli forces against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.”<sup>2</sup> In January, the International Court of Justice, the UN’s principal judicial body, declared that South Africa’s charge of genocide against the Israeli government was plausible.<sup>3</sup> Since the ruling, the Israeli government’s disregard for Palestinian human rights has become increasingly evident, as reports emerge detailing sexual assault of Palestinian women,<sup>4</sup> forced starvation of Palestinian civilians,<sup>5</sup> massacres of Palestinians at designated sites of humanitarian aid,<sup>6</sup> and mass graves on hospital grounds.<sup>7</sup> In May, the United Nations warned that the Israeli government’s planned military assault on Rafah, where over one million displaced Palestinians are currently seeking refuge, would place hundreds of thousands of people “at imminent risk of death.”<sup>8</sup> On May 11, the U.S. State Department released a report that “described incidents in which Israel’s military campaign in Gaza has likely been ‘inconsistent’ with humanitarian law ‘or with best practices for mitigating civilian harm.’”<sup>9</sup>

In response, students have taken to their university campuses to take part in a long American tradition of peaceful civil disobedience. Across the country, students, particularly Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims, organized

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clear, legitimate, and popular demands in response to the dire conditions facing Palestinians in Gaza. They have gathered in peaceful protests, invited experts to discuss the assault on Palestinians in Gaza, and used democratic means, such as their institution's student council, to spark discussion on the university's role in investing in companies that profit from the Israeli government's ongoing genocide, as well as apartheid and occupation of Palestinian land.



Student calls for divestment at the University of California, San Diego. Photo courtesy of Madeleine Robichaux.

**Rather than engage in uncomfortable conversation, a fundamental value in higher education, universities have chosen police batons and tear gas.**

Many university administrators have not only opted to ignore students' peaceful and popular calls for Palestinian human rights but have themselves explicitly sought to stifle them. They have canceled and censored voices calling for Palestinian human rights, introduced new university policies with the seeming intent of suppressing free speech, and even unleashed law enforcement on their own students. In some instances, universities have even sought to suppress the democratic voice of their own student body, condemning or even shutting down resolutions calling for divestment. Without protest, many important advancements in American history—ending child labor, voting rights for women, ending school segregation—may have never come to pass. **Rather than engage in uncomfortable conversation, a fundamental value in higher education, universities have chosen police batons and tear gas.**

As universities turn their back on their own students, these students have also become increasingly vulnerable to Islamophobic and anti-Palestinian attacks from external organizations, political leaders, corporate leaders, and even fellow classmates, staff, and faculty at their own institutions who have sought to justify the Israeli government's actions and suppress their advocacy. In 2023, CAIR received a total of 921

education-related complaints, which includes bullying and education discrimination, a 219% increase over the previous year. In 2024, 84% of Muslim students in higher education or in a trade/vocational program reported experiencing religious discrimination in the last year, according to a new report by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding. A vast majority of Muslim students (68%) reported facing discrimination for their religion by people in authority.<sup>10</sup> **In other words, many university campuses have, with the support of university officials themselves, become utterly hostile for Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims, and others in support of Palestinian rights and opposed to genocide in Gaza.**

Even as we author this report, students on university campuses are urgently facing extraordinary threats in response to their peaceful protests calling for Palestinian human rights — threats that arguably have not been witnessed in over half a century. University leaders have exchanged open discussion for police officers, who have resorted to pinning down, tasing, and arresting their own students and faculty. United States senators have openly called for President Joe Biden to send the National Guard to quell peaceful protests.<sup>11</sup> These calls can only be taken as incitement of potentially fatal violence against students, as we are reminded that, in 1970, when the National Guard was deployed against demonstrators at Kent State University, four were killed and nine students were wounded.<sup>12</sup> Other political leaders and even university administrators have sought to justify the use of law enforcement and distract from the overwhelmingly student-led, peaceful, and popular nature of these protests by pushing the narrative that “outside agitators” have infiltrated campuses, rather than acknowledge that students themselves are protesting against university and government support for Israel’s attacks in Gaza.<sup>13</sup>

**In other words, many university campuses have, with the support of university officials themselves, become utterly hostile for Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims, and others in support of Palestinian rights and opposed to genocide in Gaza.**

**This special report consolidates these incidents as both a recording of trends for allies and partner organizations and a warning for university leaders of the repercussions to their institutions should they continue**

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**In January 2024, students at Columbia University were reportedly sprayed with a hazardous, foul-smelling chemical agent by two individuals while at a protest in support of Palestine.**

**to defend a foreign state’s blatant disregard for human rights over the safety of their students and their commitments to free speech and open discussion.** It begins with an analysis of attacks directed toward Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students, as well as universities’ failure to support these students, before demonstrating how universities have themselves engaged in a nationwide campaign of suppressing free speech in support of Palestine and concluding with recommendations that universities must undertake to rectify their approach.

Due to the sheer number of incidents targeting Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students, as well as students practicing free speech to call attention to human rights issues, this report does not seek to be a comprehensive account. Instead, it is a sampling of experiences, intended to highlight key patterns across institutions of higher education in the United States.

## **UNIVERSITIES FAIL TO PROTECT STUDENTS FROM ANTI-PALESTINIAN, ANTI-ARAB, AND ANTI-MUSLIM ATTACKS**

Since October 2023, US politicians, media networks, and corporate leaders have deployed Islamophobic and anti-Palestinian rhetoric in order to justify the Israeli government’s indiscriminate violence against Palestinian civilians and shield the Israeli government from criticism. Students, particularly those who are Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim, seeking to call attention to the Israeli government’s violation of human rights in Gaza have been physically attacked, verbally harassed, and doxxed by external organizations, corporate leaders, and even peers, faculty and staff at their own institutions.

Rather than defend their students against such attacks and affirm free speech protections for discussion critical of the Israeli government, many universities have largely refused to protect Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students or even to outwardly condemn in broad terms the evident rise in Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism across the country. Below, we



capture some of the countless reports of harassment and discrimination that have emerged in recent months, as well as a number of instances in which universities have failed to protect their students.

### **'Living In Fear': Physical Attacks Against Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim Students**

1. In November 2023, Muslim and Palestinian students called on George Washington University to provide protection to students amid a rise in Islamophobic attacks on campus. Students have reported at least four instances in which Muslim students have had their hijabs ripped off. Other Muslim students have reported being spat on and confronted by other students. As a result, Muslim and Palestinian students report feeling unsafe on campus, leading them to refrain from attending events, posting online, or wearing clothing that expresses their Muslim and/or Palestinian identity. Students have argued that University President Ellen Granberg's public statements in October, which largely focused on condemning the attacks against Israel while refusing to acknowledge the Israeli government's attacks on Palestinian civilians, has contributed to creating an environment hostile to Muslim and Palestinian students.<sup>14</sup>

2. In January 2024, students at Columbia University were reportedly sprayed with a hazardous, foul-smelling chemical agent by two individuals while at a protest in support of Palestine. At least 10 students reportedly sought medical care.<sup>15</sup> Dozens of students reported symptoms such as burning eyes, nausea, headaches, abdominal and chest pain, and vomiting. A university spokesman reportedly made an initial statement seemingly blaming students for the attack, claiming that their protest was "unsanctioned and violated university policies and procedures."<sup>16</sup> Three days following the incident, a university administrator "announced that the alleged

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perpetrators had been banned – though not academically suspended – from campus while an NYPD investigation proceeded.”<sup>17</sup> At a congressional hearing in April, Columbia University President Minouche Shafik reportedly revealed for the first time publicly that the two individuals allegedly responsible had been suspended.<sup>18</sup> In May 2024, the U.S. Department of Education announced that Columbia was under investigation following a civil rights complaint filed by Palestine Legal, alleging discriminatory treatment of Palestinian students and their supporters.<sup>19</sup>

3. In January 2024, the Muslim Legal Fund of America filed a civil rights complaint on behalf of students at Harvard University, who “have been targeted with rampant harassment and racist attacks including doxxing, stalking, and assault simply for being Palestinian, Muslim, and supporters of Palestinian rights.” The students report having objects thrown at them and poured on them for wearing the keffiyeh. Students have also reported being spat at, stalked, and chased. The increase in verbal and physical attacks has caused students to feel unsafe on campus and report that they are “living in fear of being attacked while walking to class.” Students claimed that the university has done very little to support and protect them, denying their requests for help and even responding with threats to “limit or retract the students’ future academic opportunities.”<sup>20</sup> In February, the U.S. Department of Education reportedly announced that they had opened an investigation into Harvard following the complaint.<sup>21</sup>

4. In April 2024, Palestinian Muslim student Malak Afaneh was reportedly assaulted by UC Berkeley law professor Catherine Fisk during a dinner for graduating students at the home of Fisk and her husband Erwin Chemerinsky, the law school’s dean. At the school-sponsored function, Afaneh had reportedly stood up to greet the other attendees and speak of the importance of Ramadan to Palestinians and Muslims as well as the need for the university to divest from Israel’s ongoing genocide in Gaza. In a video, Fisk is seen placing her arm around Afaneh and attempting to drag the mic from her hand. The university reportedly declined to condemn the actions of Professor Fisk or offer support to Afaneh.<sup>22</sup> The university

expressed dismay at the use of a “person’s private residence as a platform for protest” but reportedly did not comment on the attempted use of force by a member of its faculty in order to censor Afaneh.<sup>23</sup> In May, the university reportedly launched a Title IX civil rights investigation following the incident.<sup>24</sup>

5. In April 2024, the Islamic Center at Rutgers University was vandalized on Eid ul-Fitr, one of the holy Islamic holidays. The individual reportedly smashed windows, destroyed artwork with Quranic verses, and stole a Palestinian flag from the center, causing around \$40,000 in damages.<sup>25</sup> The donation box belonging to the center was reportedly found at another location about a half mile away.<sup>26</sup> Students reported that, prior to the incident, they had felt unsafe on campus and had been asking for university protection for weeks, particularly after students had reportedly been verbally harassed and Islamophobic threats were left on personal property and vehicles. One student, for example, reports that they were being taunted for wearing the keffiyeh, a traditional Palestinian scarf, on campus.<sup>27</sup> In December 2023, Rutgers was reportedly placed under investigation over claims of antisemitism and Islamophobia.<sup>28</sup>

### **‘Terrorist Scarf’: Verbal Harassment of Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim Students**

1. A group of Muslim students at the University of Texas-Austin were reportedly harassed by three men during a Palestine Solidarity Committee meeting on campus in October 2023. The men reportedly confronted the student organizers and repeatedly called them “f\*\*\*\*\* terrorists.” Before the event, the students had also reportedly received a hateful message to their Instagram inbox. In October, the university reportedly claimed that they believe there was no “criminal offense,” although they later noted that the men “could be subject to a criminal trespass violation.” In November, the university

**In October 2023, a graduate student at Harvard University was followed and harassed by an individual, who is heard on video calling the student’s keffiyeh, a scarf worn in solidarity with the Palestinian people, a “terrorist scarf”.**

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reported, however, that it had not yet been able to identify the men, even though both the students and NBC News have reportedly been able to identify them and noted that at least one of them is not difficult to reach online.<sup>29</sup>

2. In October 2023, a graduate student at Harvard University was followed and harassed by an individual, who is heard on video calling the student's keffiyeh, a scarf worn in solidarity with the Palestinian people, a "terrorist scarf". The individual was reportedly later identified as Eve Gerber, the wife of Harvard professor Jason

Furman.<sup>30</sup> In December, after the earlier video went viral, another graduate student came forward to report that he had recognized Gerber as an individual who also allegedly followed and harassed him in October "because [he] was wearing a Palestinian keffiyeh and [is] a visibly Arab man." The student reportedly filed a complaint with the University in December, claiming that he did not initially report the incident because he had "little faith that it would be taken seriously by Harvard, as evidenced by how the institution has treated similar cases of harassment against Palestinian, Arab, Brown, Black, and Muslim students."<sup>31</sup>



*Muslim students engage in prayer at the protest encampment at the University of Southern California. Photo courtesy of Hussam Ayloush.*

3. The University of Michigan's School of Information failed to punish a member of its Advisory Board who reportedly verbally assaulted and harassed Arab and Muslim students during a protest against the university's response to the genocide in Gaza. In October 2023, board member Carin Ehrenberg was recorded verbally harassing a student, asking "Are you going to send one of your terrorists after us?" During the interaction, Ehrenberg is also seen attempting to confiscate the student's phone and yelling "rapists and murderers" to students protesting nearby. A letter signed by over 100 faculty,

staff members, and students and sent to Interim Dean Elizabeth Yakel called for the dismissal of Ehrenberg from the Advisory Board and the removal of her name from scholarships. Dean Yakel indicated that she does not intend to take any retaliatory actions against Ehrenberg.<sup>32</sup>

4. In November 2023, Muslim and Palestinian student groups at the University of Connecticut reported receiving a series of racist, threatening, and anti-Muslim emails and voicemails. The messages contain violent language celebrating the potential deaths of Muslims. A former student, whose number was still listed on the site for the university's chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine, reportedly received a voicemail in which a man called her a "terrorist," used a racial slur, and said, "I can't wait to see you dead."<sup>33</sup> In mid-November, Muslim students at the university reported that they had not yet been approached by university administration to ensure the safety of the Muslim community.<sup>34</sup>

5. In a letter to Emory University in January 2024, CAIR-Georgia joined numerous community and civil rights organizations arguing that students with Emory Students for Justice in Palestine (ESJP) "are being severely and routinely intimidated and harassed by faculty, other students, alumni, and even parents and news media."<sup>35</sup> In one instance, a student reportedly asked an Arab student, "Are you a terrorist?" after which the student said, "I think all brown people are terrorists." The student then reportedly apologized and claimed that it was a joke. In another instance, Arab and Muslim students held a bake sale to raise humanitarian aid for Palestinian children. An Emory parent reportedly "verbally accosted a Muslim student," accusing them of supporting violence. When the student asked the university to intervene on the student's behalf, they were reportedly informed that "[the university's staff] could not stop the verbal harassment because of Emory's open expression policy." Despite incidents being reported to the University's bias reporting process, Emory University has reportedly failed to hold accountable the responsible students and faculty who have perpetuated racist and dangerous tropes against Palestinians, Arab, and Muslims.<sup>36</sup> In April, CAIR-GA

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and Palestine Legal filed a federal civil rights complaint on behalf of ESJP; in May, the US Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights opened an investigation into the university.<sup>37</sup>

**In one instance, a fellow student reportedly began appearing at protests held by Students for Justice in Palestine, playing a “speaker with a recording of the sounds of bombs,” attempting to “ram student protesters with an electric scooter,” and shouting “Kill all Arabs.”**

6. In April 2024, the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights opened an investigation into the University of Massachusetts Amherst following a 49-page complaint arguing that the university failed to adequately respond to harassment targeting Palestinian and Arab students on campus. In a complaint filed by Palestine Legal, more than a dozen students reported that they had been subjected to multiple instances of harassment, including racial slurs and death threats.<sup>38</sup> In one instance, a fellow student reportedly began appearing at protests held by Students for Justice in Palestine, playing a “speaker with a recording of the sounds of bombs,” attempting to “ram student protesters with an electric scooter,” and shouting “Kill all Arabs.” When students reached out to administrators for support regarding these incidents, including sending numerous emails and lodging formal complaints, the university was “extremely slow to take action.” Even as administrators began to engage with complaints over time, the university reportedly “never implemented any measures designed to effectively put an end to the hostile environment as a whole.”<sup>39</sup>

7. In April 2024, a federal civil rights complaint was filed against the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on behalf of students and faculty members who claim the university has “systematically discriminated against Palestinian students and their allies.”<sup>40</sup> In the complaint filed by Palestine Legal, they claim that, in one incident, a professor at the university reportedly shouted at students protesting for Palestinian rights at a rally, “calling them ‘Nazis.’” In an email

regarding the same rally, UNC Board of Trustees member Marty Kotis wrote that “some of the speeches today were given in Arabic” and that there was a “need to translate those to ensure there were not calls for or threats of violence.” The university reportedly failed to denounce Kotis or apologize to students for his racist comments.<sup>41</sup>

### **‘Too Little, Too Late’: Doxxing of Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim Students**

Since October 2023, student activists in support of Palestinian rights have also been subjected to intense forms of doxxing, a form of harassment in which personally identifiable information about an individual is published without their consent, frequently with malicious intent. Corporate leaders, for example, have sought to silence student activists by using their public platforms to threaten students’ career prospects.<sup>42</sup> Unknown actors have published websites with students’ personal information in a seeming attempt to intimidate and punish them.<sup>43</sup>

Among the most extreme forms of doxxing over the past several months is that carried out by the conservative group Accuracy in Media (AIM), which reportedly rented trucks displaying the names and faces of students who have been involved in or even affiliated with groups involved in Palestinian advocacy across multiple university campuses.

At Harvard University, for example, students were subjected to a doxxing campaign that displayed the names and faces of students, many of whom were Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim, who were suspected of signing an open letter critical of Israel in October 2023. Students’ personal information, including their extracurricular activities, hometowns, and class years, were also posted on various websites, some of which had reportedly been removed due to violating Google’s terms of service.<sup>44</sup> Cambridge residents have also reported that they received “unsigned mailers with no return address that doxxed 26 students allegedly affiliated with nine of the co-signing organizations.”<sup>45</sup> University administrators report that they had

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been in touch with students immediately following the attacks; however, students report that tangible resources to support students experiencing harassment were “too little, too late,” having been offered weeks after reputational damage had been done.

**Students also report that professors have “openly celebrated the doxing of Palestinian students at Harvard, as well as NYU law student Ryna Workman’s high-profile job revocation” from a corporate law firm after expressing solidarity with Palestinians.**

Students at Columbia<sup>46</sup> and Yale<sup>47</sup> were also reportedly doxxed by the AIM trucks that circled their university campuses in the fall of 2023, which similarly accused students of promoting hatred and violence for criticizing the Israeli government’s actions. The respective universities have reportedly released statements condemning the doxing of students. Reports of the doxing trucks targeting students and faculty have also emerged at numerous universities across the country.

Although receiving far less media coverage, Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students have also reported experiencing doxing from other members of their institution, which has failed on numerous occasions to intervene to protect them from such attacks.

School of Law have been subjected to anti-Palestinian harassment and discrimination from fellow students and even faculty for several months. Students report that they have been followed and recorded by other students, who have threatened to dox them, as well as post pictures and videos of them online. Students also report that professors have “openly celebrated the doxing of Palestinian students at Harvard, as well as NYU law student Ryna Workman’s high-profile job revocation” from a corporate law firm after expressing solidarity with Palestinians.<sup>48</sup>

1. In April 2024, Palestine Legal filed a complaint with the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights alleging that students at Northwestern Pritzker

2. As a part of a 49-page complaint alleging a hostile



environment for Palestinian students at UMass Amherst, some students also reported receiving “vicious messages and threats online” from seemingly student and student-run accounts. Some of the posts reportedly called students “classic Islamic barbarism supporters [who] love raping and killing” and made comments like “where is the best beach in Gaza to build a house next to?! I’ve heard Pali bones make great foundation!” According to the university, a student had reportedly been running these accounts. The report claims that the university failed to address the harassment for months and that, even when it finally did, it refused to “issue any statement explicitly condemning anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab behavior.”<sup>49</sup>

3. In a letter from CAIR-Georgia and a number of community and civil rights organizations, students at Emory University have also reported being doxxed by university donors and alumni. In a LinkedIn post from October 2023, an alumnus reportedly listed and tagged the full names of a faculty member and at least four students affiliated with Emory Students for Justice in Palestine (ESJP) and also called ESJP a “terror-related” organization, asking the university to expel students affiliated with it. The post was reportedly liked by several students, alumni, and faculty, who have not “faced any consequences for supporting clearly anti-Palestinian and Islamophobic expression.” Moreover, when students approached a dean of the business school for support with social media posts targeting them, the dean reportedly said that “when students say ‘Free Palestine,’ they are associating themselves with terrorism,” thereby “directly and dangerously implying that advocating for Palestinian freedom and equality is a ‘terrorist’ act.”<sup>50</sup>

**In one October incident, two students were reportedly doxxed by a fellow student and member of the law school student government, who sent an email to a large group falsely accusing the two students of supporting a designated terrorist organization and encouraging others to widely share these students’ names and faces.**

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4. In April 2024, CAIR-New Jersey and the American-Arab Discrimination Committee (ADC) filed a Title VI complaint against Rutgers University for “ongoing, patterned anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab, and anti-Muslim bigotry,” including doxxing, at the Newark law school and New Brunswick undergraduate campuses.<sup>51</sup> In one October incident, two students were reportedly doxxed by a fellow student and member of the law school student government, who sent an email to a large group falsely accusing the two students of supporting a designated terrorist organization and encouraging others to widely share these students’ names and faces. Students reportedly

met with law school deans shortly after the incident to express their concerns regarding the doxxing and hostility toward Palestinian students and ask for officials to take corrective actions. As of the filing of their report in April, CAIR-NJ and the ADC argue that the Palestinian and Muslim students who met with the deans in October 2023 “have still not received a resolution of their complaints or even an explanation about why the complaints have remained pending for over six months.” The complaint details a number of additional incidents of anti-Palestinian and anti-Muslim discrimination, including by faculty members who have reportedly verbally harassed and recorded students.<sup>52</sup>



Students protest at Kent State University. Photo courtesy of Sehar Shaikh.

## UNIVERSITIES TARGET STUDENTS, GROUPS SUPPORTING PALESTINIAN HUMAN RIGHTS

Rather than support students subjected to anti-Palestinian, anti-Muslim, and anti-Arab hate by external organizations, corporate leaders, and other members of their institutions, universities and colleges have themselves sought to silence students who support Palestinian rights or who otherwise appear to be affiliated with Palestinian rights’ advocacy.

Across the country, students have sought peaceful and democratic means to call on the university to acknowledge and reconsider its investments in companies profiting from the continued genocide against Palestinian civilians in Gaza. Instead of engaging in open discussion, universities have seemingly sought to prioritize their investment portfolios and acquiesce to external demands to suppress speech critical of the Israeli government. They have responded by censoring events that feature voices in support of Palestinian human rights, altering and introducing arbitrary school policies to facilitate disciplinary action against student groups, and authorizing law enforcement to forcibly remove students who continue to engage in demonstrations for human rights.

While it is not inherently anti-Palestinian to enforce school policies, it is discriminatory when universities enforce punishments that have not been administered in other similar instances and even bypass their own standard procedures to introduce new policies that facilitate disciplinary action particularly against Palestinian students and student groups, as well as their allies.

### **'No Precedent': Universities Suspend Student Groups Advocating for Palestine**

Among the most shocking displays of explicit restrictions on the right to free speech has been the decision by multiple university administrators to suspend student groups dedicated to activism in support of Palestinian human rights.

The recent move to suspend pro-Palestinian student groups arguably began in November 2023, when an open letter issued by the Anti-Defamation League and The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law “called on university leaders to investigate pro-Palestinian student groups,” claiming that “their speech constitutes ‘material support for terrorism,’ punishable under federal and state law,” without reportedly citing

**Instead of engaging in open discussion, universities have seemingly sought to prioritize their investment portfolios and acquiesce to external demands to suppress speech critical of the Israeli government.**

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any evidence. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) quickly blasted the move, arguing that calls to investigate student groups without evidence were “dangerous and unwarranted” and urging universities to “reject calls to investigate, disband, or penalize student groups on the basis of their exercise of free speech rights.”<sup>53</sup>

Politicians have also attempted to encourage restrictions on student groups advocating for Palestinian human rights. In October 2023, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis sought to disband two chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), an organization advocating for Palestinian rights. Lawsuits on behalf of the student groups, including one filed by CAIR Legal Defense Fund and CAIR-FL on behalf of students at the University of South Florida, challenged the decision on the grounds of violating students’ constitutionally protected right to free speech.<sup>54</sup> In March 2024, Texas Governor Greg Abbott explicitly mandated that two Palestinian student groups – SJP and Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) – face disciplinary action for reportedly violating free speech policies. Falsely equating criticism of a foreign state with hateful speech, Governor Abbott’s order encroached upon the rights of students to express legitimate political discourse.<sup>55</sup> Most recently, in a letter to the Biden administration, Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) demanded that international students who have participated in pro-Palestine protests be deported, depriving them of their “rights to free speech, assembly, and due process – rights that are afforded not only to U.S. citizens, but to anyone who is present in the U.S.”<sup>56</sup>

Rather than assert their commitments to free speech in light of such external attacks, universities have themselves moved to outright ban or suspend groups in support of Palestinian human rights and critical of the Israeli government.

1. In November 2023, Brandeis University reportedly became the first private university in the country to ban its chapter of National Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), reportedly removing their funding and permits to hold activities on campus. The decision was reportedly made without informing the student group and without consulting the student union.<sup>57</sup>

2. In a lawsuit filed against Columbia University, the New York Civil Liberties Union and Palestine Legal accused the university of “violating its own policies” in order to suspend Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) in November 2023. The university had reportedly altered policies and language regarding student group events following several protests held on campus by the two groups and then referenced that newly introduced language in their decision to suspend them.<sup>58</sup>

David Lurie, the president of the Columbia chapter of the American Association of University Professors, said that university administrators’ reported decision to make updates to student group policies on their own superseded “well-established, extensive procedures” for the sanctioning of student speech and believes that the new policies were created “in order to use it exactly as [the university] did.”<sup>59</sup> Another professor at the university claimed that there is “no precedent for simply banning a student group – certainly not like this, unilaterally, without transparency.”<sup>60</sup>

**Another professor at the university claimed that there is “no precedent for simply banning a student group - certainly not like this, unilaterally, without transparency.”**

3. In December 2023, Rutgers University became the first public university to suspend a chapter of National Students for Justice in Palestine. The student group reportedly learned of their suspension not through university administrators but rather through a reporter who received a leaked document of the suspension.<sup>61</sup> University administrators reportedly alleged that SJP had violated school policies and reserved the right to suspend student groups who “pose a substantial and immediate threat to the safety and well-being of others.” Students claim that the university had failed to substantiate their allegations, argued that they engaged in peaceful protests, and accused the university of applying a “racist double-standard.”<sup>62</sup>

Other universities have also introduced arbitrary policies in an attempt to suppress pro-Palestinian groups. In April 2024, American University

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reportedly placed its chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine on probation following a peaceful and silent “indoor walk” during a demonstration in February 2024. The university had reportedly banned indoor protests in January 2024 following student activism on campus.<sup>63</sup> The university’s chapter of the American Association of University Professors claimed that the ban was a break from the “university’s longstanding commitment to free expression and civic engagement” and was “adopted without a transparent process, faculty input, or meaningful community discussion of alternatives.”<sup>64</sup>

In late April 2024, amid the overnight establishment of student-led protest encampments at dozens of universities, Indiana University administrators reportedly changed a decades-old policy to ban “unapproved tents, posters, and other structures” and posted it on the morning of the students’ planned protest.<sup>65</sup> The policy was then reportedly used as grounds to ban dozens of students from campus. University leaders also reportedly called Indiana state troopers to dismantle the encampment, leading to the arrest of over 30 protesters.<sup>66</sup>

## **‘Safety Concerns,’ ‘Unnamed Threats,’ and ‘Procedural Reasons’: Universities Cancel Events, Censor Palestinian Voices**

Beyond suspending student groups associated with Palestinian rights advocacy, universities have also sought to cancel events inviting Palestinian speakers and even to censor faculty and staff that show sympathy for Palestinians in Gaza. Universities have frequently cited safety concerns to justify cancellations. However, upon further request, universities have either denied the existence of or refused to discuss any threats that had allegedly been made, suggesting that the cancellations were intended to restrict free speech critical of the Israeli government.

1. In October 2023, the University of Vermont (UVM) canceled a lecture featuring Palestinian poet and journalist Mohammed El-Kurd that had been organized months earlier, reportedly claiming it would be unable to “adequately provide safety and security for this event.” A professor at UVM and a board member of the lecture series sponsoring El-Kurd claimed that, the week prior, sponsors had been “assured that the university values academic freedom and would not

cancel the event.” A spokesperson for the university reportedly did not respond when asked whether the university had received threats related to the event.<sup>67</sup> An article released later in December found that emails obtained by Seven Days “through the open records law, as well as subsequent reporting, reveal there were no threats related to the event.”<sup>68</sup>

2. In November 2023, two teaching assistants at the University of Texas at Austin were reportedly dismissed after sharing a statement to students that “acknowledge[d] the mental health implications of the current escalation of violence in Gaza,” following a request from a student that the “mental health needs of Palestinian, Arab and Muslim students” be acknowledged. The instructors reportedly received approval from the course’s faculty member to distribute the statement. However, the dean of the Steve Hicks School of Social Work reportedly sent dismissal letters to the teaching assistants, claiming that they lacked “professional judgment,” that the statement was “unprompted,” and that they had not received “approval of the supervising faculty member.”<sup>69</sup>



*Students protest at the encampment at the University of Southern California. Photo courtesy of Hussam Ayloush.*

3. In November 2023, thirty minutes before it was set to begin, Columbia Law School reportedly canceled an event with Omar Shakir, the Israel and Palestine Director at Human Rights Watch, citing security concerns.<sup>70</sup>

4. An event with Representative Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) at Arizona State University was reportedly canceled in November 2023 due to “procedural reasons.” In a statement posted to their Instagram, Students for Justice in Palestine argued that “ASU cannot impose requirements on the event not imposed on other ASU groups or faculty when they sponsor a lecture.”<sup>71</sup>

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5. A vice provost at the University of Pennsylvania reportedly called and threatened a student with disciplinary action due to the decision by Penn Chavurah, a Jewish student group, to host a screening of “Israelism,” a film critical of Israel. The student insisted that students were “well within [their] rights as students to exercise [their] free speech” and that they were “abiding by open expression guidelines.”<sup>72</sup> Hunter College had also reportedly canceled a screening of “Israelism” in November, citing safety concerns. Students, faculty, and staff called the move “an egregious and illegitimate violation” of academic freedom. The screening at Hunter was reportedly rescheduled for December.<sup>73</sup>

6. In April 2024, the University of Southern California canceled the graduation speech of undergraduate valedictorian Asna Tabassum. In a letter, USC Provost Andrew T. Guzman reportedly cited “unnamed threats” after Tabassum, who had been criticized online for supporting Palestinian human rights, had been publicized as the valedictorian, claiming that the decision was made to “maintain campus security and safety.” According to university officials, this is the first time the university has denied a valedictorian the chance to speak at the commencement ceremony.<sup>74</sup> Amid backlash and protests following the university’s decision, USC then announced that it would cancel its main commencement ceremony.<sup>75</sup>

## **‘Unilaterally Canceled’: Universities Block, Condemn Democratic Calls for Divestment**

University administrators have also blocked or vocally opposed students’ attempts to democratically raise the issue of divestment from companies aiding in the war against Palestinians among the student body, directly threatening the ability of all students to engage in free speech and discussion even through existing, university-approved means.

1. In February 2024, in an email to the student body, Pomona College President Gabrielle Starr reportedly expressed public opposition to a referendum in which students called for the college to disclose its “investments in all companies aiding the ongoing apartheid system within the State of Israel” and to divest from those



companies, among other demands. Starr reportedly claimed that while there are “many ways to help heal a broken world,” the referendum was “not one of them” and moreover claimed that the referendum, which was critical solely of the Israeli state’s policies, “raises the specter of antisemitism.”<sup>76</sup> Each of the demands in the referendum passed with at least 75 percent approval.<sup>77</sup>

2. In March 2024, administrators at Vanderbilt University unilaterally canceled a referendum organized by students which called for the Vanderbilt Student Government to cease from “purchasing goods or services from companies identified as ‘complicit’ in Israel’s violence in Gaza and Palestine.” The university reportedly cited “federal and state laws” that “punish boycotts of ‘countries friendly to the United States.’”<sup>78</sup> A cease-and-desist letter to the university from Palestine Legal challenged the basis of the university’s argument and accused administrators of “violating students’ rights to free speech and association.”<sup>79</sup>

3. A ballot initiative urging Ohio State University to divest from companies profiting from human rights violations was blocked by university administrators in March 2024. The university had reportedly requested the opinion of the Ohio attorney general on “whether or not the university could divest from Israeli assets,” to which the attorney general reportedly claimed that “doing so would violate Ohio Revised Code Section 9.76.”<sup>80</sup> According to a university spokesperson, the code “prohibits the university from divesting any interests in Israel and prohibits adopting or adhering to a policy that requires divestment from Israel or with persons or entities associated with it.”<sup>81</sup> Palestine Legal sent a letter challenging the decision, arguing that the ballot initiative, which called on divestment “solely from companies

**At Columbia, students were reportedly kicked and pushed to the ground, and one was reportedly thrown down a flight of stairs and did not receive medical attention for over an hour. One police officer had “accidentally” fired a gun, according to the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office.**

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complicit in the documented ethnic cleansing of Palestinians,” is “not a binding directive on OSU to divest, nor does it call for wholesale divestment of OSU’s interests in Israeli assets.” The letter accused the university of engaging in a “deliberate misinterpretation of Ohio state law.”<sup>82</sup>

**University administrators have overwhelmingly refused to engage in discussion with their own students and have instead responded to these largely peaceful sit-ins by requesting that law enforcement forcibly shut them down, frequently resulting in violence against students, staff, faculty, and other university affiliates.**

## **‘Body Armor, Helmets and Face Shields’: Universities Deploy Law Enforcement Against Student Protesters**

Beyond introducing arbitrary institutional policies and suppressing democratic calls for divestment, universities have even deployed law enforcement against their own students. As early as October 2023, universities, such as the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the University of Chicago, have called in police to forcibly disperse students who organized peaceful protests and sit-ins to call attention to the ongoing genocide in Gaza and protest their university’s ties to weapons manufacturers. Students were met with not only arrests and possible criminal charges but also additional disciplinary sanctions that had reportedly rarely been used against other students in the past.

In April and May 2024, police violence against student protesters peaked, as peaceful, student-led protest encampments spread across universities following the April 17 launch of a student encampment at Columbia University and the decision by university administrators to call in the NYPD to clear the encampment the following day. Students across the country responded to the mass arrests by establishing their own encampments at their respective universities overnight, organizing clear and legitimate demands, foremost among them that universities divest from companies profiting from genocide in Gaza, as well as the Israeli government’s occupation of Palestinian land. CAIR estimates that more than 120 universities and colleges have been the site of a protest encampment.

University administrators have overwhelmingly refused to engage in discussion with their own students and have instead responded to these largely peaceful sit-ins by requesting that law enforcement forcibly shut them down, frequently resulting in violence against students, staff, faculty, and other university affiliates. As universities take further disciplinary action against arrested students, they also threaten students' ability to access basic necessities, such as shelter and food, with seemingly little regard for the well-being of their students. At Barnard, for instance, students were reportedly given just 15 minutes to pack and vacate university housing.<sup>83</sup>

In multiple instances, university and political leaders have attempted to justify the arrests by claiming that the protest encampments were led or infiltrated by 'outside agitators' who are unaffiliated with the university; however, students continue to insist that the protests are student-led and that students, as well as other university affiliates, are among those subjected to brutal police violence. As of May 11, nearly 3,000 people have been arrested in this recent wave of student protests.<sup>84</sup>

While this is by no means a comprehensive account, we highlight several instances here in which law enforcement has been weaponized against students by their own universities, both during this current wave of student-led sit-ins and in the months preceding it.

1. On April 18, more than 100 Columbia University and Barnard College students were arrested after President Minouche Shafik reportedly authorized the New York Police Department to sweep the encampment established by students in protest of the continued attacks on Palestinians in Gaza.<sup>85</sup> The Barnard and Columbia chapter of the American Association of University Professors issued a statement condemning the suspensions and arrests "in the strongest possible terms" and claimed that the "acts violate the letter and the spirit of the University Statutes, shared governance, students' rights, and the University's absolute obligation to defend students' freedom of speech and to ensure their safety."<sup>86</sup> The protest encampment was immediately reestablished following the initial arrests.

On April 30, hundreds of NYPD officers in riot gear entered Columbia, as well as nearby City College of New York (CCNY), where

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**Counterprotesters attempting to dismantle the encampment could reportedly be seen on video spraying chemicals at the encampment and, at times, “descending on a single person” where they could be seen “punching, kicking, and attacking people with makeshift weapons.”**

another student encampment was underway, to sweep protesters from the campuses. At Columbia, students were reportedly kicked and pushed to the ground, and one was reportedly thrown down a flight of stairs and did not receive medical attention for over an hour. One police officer had “accidentally” fired a gun, according to the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office. At CCNY, students were

reportedly sprayed with mace and pepper spray, beaten with batons, and tackled to the ground. Students were also reportedly denied medical attention and suffered from “burns, broken bones, concussions and broken teeth.”<sup>87</sup>

2. On April 24, university administrators at the University of Texas at Austin called in state troopers clad in riot gear and on horseback to disperse a student protest, who reportedly pinned students to the ground and arrested over 50 demonstrators. Faculty report that they had witnessed “police punching a female student, knocking over a legal observer, dragging a student over a chain link fence, and violently arresting students simply for standing at the front of the crowd.”<sup>88</sup> Charges against the demonstrators were reportedly dropped due to “lack of sufficient probable cause.”<sup>89</sup> Another 79 people were reportedly arrested at another campus demonstration on April 29.<sup>90</sup>

3. On April 25, at Ohio State University, nearly 40 demonstrators were arrested following an attempt to set up a protest encampment. Students report that officers with riot gear attacked Muslim students engaged in prayer and those encircling the worshippers in an attempt to protect them, “shoving people into those in prayer, causing people to fall on top of tents, and knowingly creating a stampede where students were trampled while attempting to seek refuge.” A university spokesman also confirmed that officers stationed on the roof of the Ohio Union had “long-range firearms” as law enforcement began to arrest students and protesters.<sup>91</sup>

Protesters arrested during the protest claimed that police “forced women to remove religious head coverings and refused to provide space for arrestees to pray.”<sup>92</sup>

4. On April 25, at Emerson College, more than 100 protesters were reportedly arrested during a violent overnight sweep of an encampment. Officers reportedly surrounded the block, trapping protesters before “storming both sides of the alley in full riot gear” during which students “were dragged” and “thrown to the ground.” Students report that others were injured and denied medical attention until they arrived at the precinct. Reports have also emerged that city crews were sent to “clear blood and graffiti” from the alleyway in which the attack occurred.<sup>93</sup>

5. On April 25, at Emory University, police officers attacked students, faculty, and other protesters following the establishment of an encampment. In videos from the attack, officers are seen holding down a person while another officer “appears to hold a stun gun against their leg.” In another video, a student who reportedly identified themselves as an Emory student claimed that they were tear-gassed.<sup>94</sup> Reports have also included the “use of teargas on the crowds, in addition to stun guns and rubber bullets being deployed against the protesters.”<sup>95</sup> While the university initially released a statement indicating that protesters were “not members of [Emory’s] community,” students have contested the claim.<sup>96</sup> Videos also appear to show two professors among those arrested, including one who was reportedly held to the ground, arrested, and charged with battery of a police officer after she attempted to ask officers why they were holding a student to the ground.<sup>97</sup> In a later statement, Emory University President Gregory L. Fenves reportedly admitted that the university’s earlier claim that protesters were not affiliated with the school was “not fully accurate.”<sup>98</sup>

6. On May 2, police officers in riot gear reportedly arrested more than 200 people at the University of California in Los Angeles. Officers in “body armor, helmets and face shields” reportedly launched flares over the encampment, and at least one officer is seen on video “shooting rubber bullets into the crowd.”<sup>99</sup> The

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**Students claim that a private investigator had visited a Palestinian student's home and rattled "the doorknob as if trying to break in."**

actions by law enforcement came under criticism, particularly as, the previous evening, police officers stalled to intervene as pro-Israel extremists from outside groups had reportedly come to campus and violently attacked students at the encampment.<sup>100</sup> Counterprotesters attempting to dismantle the encampment could reportedly be seen on video spraying chemicals at the encampment and, at times,

"descending on a single person" where they could be seen "punching, kicking, and attacking people with makeshift weapons."

Even after officers began to arrive more than two hours later, counterprotesters continued to attack the encampment, as officers reportedly stood several hundred feet away without stepping in.<sup>101</sup> The students were reportedly left to fend for themselves for three hours before law enforcement took action.<sup>102</sup> Nearly two weeks following the incident, university officials "still have not explained why security officers stood by for hours while the attack was underway."<sup>103</sup>

While this current wave of student protests has evidently drawn excessively violent responses from universities, it is important to note that university administrators resorted to law enforcement to punish student protesters and suppress free speech even prior to the launch of protest encampments following the arrest of Columbia students on April 18. Indeed, since October 2023, university administrators have both responded to peaceful protests with law enforcement and wielded disciplinary policies against students protesting for Palestinian rights in ways they reportedly had not in the past.

1. In October 2023, over 50 demonstrators at the University of Massachusetts Amherst were arrested following their participation in a sit-in calling on "school administrators to cut ties with weapons manufacturers involved in Israel's occupation of Palestine." The students were reportedly arraigned in court and placed on probation, during which some students were banned from studying abroad in the spring semester. A faculty member and attorney for the students claimed that the sanction was "out of step with the university's past practices of disciplining students in such circumstances."<sup>104</sup>

A civil rights complaint later filed with the U.S. Department of Education reportedly claimed that the university police department published the home addresses of the students following their arrests, which “they refused to take down even after the doxing and the shooting of three Palestinian students in nearby Burlington, Vermont.”<sup>105</sup> The complaint also claimed that the decision to ban some students from studying abroad came from vice provost Kalpen Trivedi, who had reportedly suggested in a Facebook post that doctors at Gaza’s Al-Shifa Hospital were “complicit with Hamas,” a claim that had been made by the Israeli military “without credible evidence.”<sup>106</sup>

2. In November 2023, at the University of Chicago, students were arrested following their participation in a sit-in calling for the university to disclose and divest from weapons manufacturers involved in the ongoing genocide in Gaza.<sup>107</sup> Students also faced disciplinary hearings for violating policies regarding “amplified sound, chanting and not leaving when directed to, and gathering on the quad after allotted hours,” which they report have not “typically been enforced against other student groups.”<sup>108</sup>

3. In November 2023, 20 members of “Jews for Ceasefire Now,” a student group at Brown University, were arrested after launching a peaceful sit-in in a university building to call on the university to divest from “companies that enable war crimes in Gaza.” The students were reportedly held in cells for multiple hours by Providence police and charged with trespassing.<sup>109</sup> In a letter, more than 200 faculty members and 60 staff members condemned the decision to have students arrested and argued that “freedom of speech... includes the right to protest and perform civil disobedience.”<sup>110</sup> The charges were reportedly dropped following the shooting of three Palestinian students in Burlington, Vermont; however, in December, 41 students were reportedly arrested and charged with trespassing at Brown following another on-campus protest. Their charges were reportedly not dropped.<sup>111</sup>

4. In March 2024, following a student sit-in protesting Vanderbilt University’s decision to unilaterally cancel a referendum

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on divestment, over a dozen students were reportedly suspended, with three students “arrested for assault and bodily injury” after reportedly making physical contact with an officer and a staff member. The students have contested the accusations, claiming that the blurred video does not show the full interaction, during which the officer reportedly dragged one of the students, and that the university has reportedly refused to release video of the alleged interaction with the staff member.<sup>112</sup> In an open letter, 150 faculty members criticized the university’s response to student activism and called on the administration to repeal the suspensions and criminal charges against students.<sup>113</sup> In April 2024, three students were reportedly expelled for their involvement in the sit-in following the university’s preliminary hearings.<sup>114</sup>

5. In April 2024, Pomona College deployed “25 vehicles’ worth of riot police to a Palestine solidarity demonstration,” where 20 students from the Claremont Colleges consortium were reportedly arrested. The protesters reportedly occupied a campus building, as well as President Starr’s office, after the college reportedly removed the ‘apartheid wall’ that students had constructed in protest of the apartheid system in Israel.<sup>115</sup> Student reporters were reportedly pushed out by police. An attorney for the students claimed that he was not permitted to see his clients and that his clients and a police officer told him that they were not read their Miranda rights.<sup>116</sup>

6. In April 2024, Columbia University was reportedly “aided by ‘an outside firm led by experienced former law enforcement investigators’” to investigate students for an unauthorized event. Students claim that a private investigator had visited a Palestinian student’s home and rattled “the doorknob as if trying to break in.” Students also report that investigators “demanded to see the private text messages of students in order to ‘comply’ with the investigation.”<sup>117</sup> At least four students were reportedly suspended indefinitely and evicted from university housing.<sup>118</sup>



## RECOMMENDATIONS

When people go unheard, they protest. Many universities, however, have chosen to meet peaceful protests, such as those organized by Palestinian, Arab, Muslim, Jewish, and other students, with threats, intimidation, and violence. Universities must:

- **Immediately move to engage in good faith negotiations with student protesters, who have organized clear, legitimate, and popular demands for divestment from companies profiting from genocide.** Good faith negotiations with students regarding their reasonable demands is the only tactic universities can take that will not risk harm to their students and irreversible damage to their university's reputation as an upholder of academic freedom. At Sacramento State, for example, students peacefully ended their encampment after negotiations with administrators resulted in the establishment of a "socially responsible investment" policy that would ensure students' education is not funded by "companies that profit from ethnic cleansing, genocide, and human rights violations."<sup>19</sup> Universities that reach resolutions with student protesters should also establish accountability measures to ensure that the terms of the resolution are respected by all parties.
- **Stop responding to nonviolent protesters with increased policing, which jeopardizes the safety of students, staff, faculty, and other university affiliates. Universities who have engaged in this behavior must call for law enforcement to drop all pending charges against nonviolent protesters.** In a number of instances, militarized police officers have, at the request of university administrators, engaged in violence against students to disperse peaceful protesters on campus. University claims of valuing academic freedom and diversity ring false as protesters are tear-gassed and arrested for peacefully expressing their opposition to genocide in Gaza.
- **Protect student protesters from pro-Israel individuals seeking to cause harm to students and publicly condemn misinformation attempting to falsely portray nonviolent student protesters as 'outside agitators.'** At UCLA, students were left to fend

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for themselves for hours as pro-Israel individuals harassed and physically attacked them. If universities are concerned about unrest on college campuses, they must stop villainizing peaceful students protesting against genocide and instead ensure the safety of their entire campus by taking action against individuals seeking to cause harm to protesters. Universities must also condemn attempts by political leaders and other external actors to frame the overwhelmingly student-led and peaceful protests as orchestrated by ‘outside agitators.’

- **Stop introducing arbitrary school policies designed to suppress free speech and acts of protest in support of Palestinian human rights on campus.** As demonstrated in this report, multiple universities, such as Columbia and Indiana University, established policies which were then shortly after used to discipline students engaging in free speech in support of Palestinian human rights. Such actions appear to be blatant reinforcements of the “Palestine exception,” in which there is a lower tolerance for pro-Palestine speech than for any other speech. Disciplinary action based on these arbitrary policies not only suppresses free speech but can also unfairly threaten students’ ability to have access to housing, food, and other basic needs.
- **Reject attempts to frame overwhelmingly peaceful sit-ins organized by diverse groups of college students and often led by Jewish and Palestinian students as hateful or violent.** Antisemitism, like Islamophobia, anti-Arab bias, anti-Palestinian hate and all forms of discrimination and bigotry, must always be condemned and opposed. However, condemning the Israeli government’s policies, which is legitimate political speech, should not be conflated with hate speech in order to silence political views one does not agree with.
- **Respect the efforts of democratically elected student representatives using the university’s own established means of assembly to protest for Palestinian rights.** Even when students have sought to use university forums, such as their student council, to raise the question of divestment, they have been met with condemnation from university leaders and even shut down entirely. At Pomona, the

university president publicly condemned a resolution brought forward by students. At Vanderbilt, university administrators unilaterally canceled a student-led referendum.

Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students have for months pleaded for university administrators to protect them amid increasing incidents of discrimination, harassment, and assault on campus, many of which have come directly from fellow students, staff, and even their own instructors. Universities must urgently work to regain the trust of their Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students. University administrators must:

- **Ensure that complaints of discrimination against Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students are taken seriously and properly investigated, as they would be for any other minority.** Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students have indicated that university mechanisms for bias-reporting have failed to support them as they experience verbal harassment, doxxing, and physical assault from fellow students and even instructors on their own campus. In failing to properly investigate these incidents, many universities have tacitly endorsed anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobia.
- **Establish mandatory trainings for staff and faculty on anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobia.** That staff and faculty members across the country harbor anti-Palestinian and Islamophobic sentiments, as seen in numerous incidents in which Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students are attacked, should raise alarms at every institution of higher education and mandates action to ensure that these forms of discrimination are considered as unacceptable as any other form of discrimination.
- **Establish anti-doxxing task forces to address continued harassment of Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students.** Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students, as well as their supporters, have been brutally doxxed online and in-person by external actors, as well as members at their own institutions. These attacks are not only discriminatory but also disrupt students' ability to engage in educational and career opportunities equally.

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