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## The U.S.: Student Unrest and Government Policies



The recent events unfolding in American universities have shocked people around the world who have watched peaceful student protesters being violently arrested, beaten and demonized by armed police, pro-Israel groups and authorities. Many members of American society, most notably professors, have strongly condemned the administration and law enforcement agencies for treating students as dangerous criminals, expressing shock and dismay at the unprecedented level of violence now taking place on the campuses of various universities in the so-called democratic United States.

### Requirements of students and aggressive actions of administration

Students generally make three requirements. They want a ceasefire in Gaza and a halt to the massacre of Palestinian civilians, they advocate that the U.S. stop massive political, military and financial support for Israel aimed at expelling Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, and

finally, they demand that their universities withdraw their cooperation with military companies and control of pro-Israeli organizations. Many universities have collaborated and invested in companies that produce the rockets and bombs that rain down daily on Palestinians in Gaza. One of the students' appeals to university leaders is the universal fact that it is necessary to put human rights before profits. At the same time, to claim that these protests are anti-Semitic is an absolute lie. In fact, there are many representative Jewish Americans who participate in these protests because they do not want Israel to kill Palestinians on their behalf.

The American media notes that the aggressive actions that the official authorities are committing against students are shocking and horrifying to most people working in universities. The administration decided to introduce armed special forces into their campuses to 'deal with their students'. What was more shocking was that the university administration, which was completely on Israel's side, very quickly turned to law enforcement, who quickly used violence against the students, which was completely unjustified. It is important to recognize that if students sue these administrators in the future, they are likely to win. The use of violence by university administrators against their own students is a clear violation of their own principles and conventions. Here is American democracy in action!

It is also worth noting that law enforcement agencies in the United States are often Islamophobic and anti-Palestinian. This can be explained by the fact, the media notes, that many police officers are veterans who have served in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, there is evidence that U.S. [police forces](#) have been trained in Israel, leading to a similar hostile and racist approach to Palestinians that is seen in the Israeli military.

Pro-Palestinian student protests in the United States continue to grow amid a police crackdown and a House bill that seeks to punish criticism of Zionism and Israeli actions in the wake of the regime's genocidal war in Gaza. Just recently, police have arrested more than 2,000 pro-Palestinian demonstrators on more than 40 college campuses in at least 25 states.

### **Illegal actions of the police**

According to U.S. media, [American police](#) have an 'iron fist' policy against university students who have held peaceful protests on college campuses in solidarity with the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. Police with riot shields stormed the Columbia University building in Los Angeles and broke up a pro-Palestinian demonstration. Protesters also barricaded Hamilton Hall at the University of California, Los Angeles in New York. They occupied the building after the administration said it had started suspending students who took part in the demonstrations.

A video circulating on social media shows individuals affiliated with pro-Israel groups attacking pro-Palestinian supporters camped out on the college campus. The attacks came hours after police stormed Hamilton Hall. Many of the attackers, well-trained youths and unaffiliated with the university, infiltrated the campus and clashed with pro-Palestinian protesters near a tent city they had set up. Police did not intervene to prevent the attackers from beating students who demanded that their universities stop doing business with Israel or companies that support the regime's brutal offensive on Gaza.

Pro-Palestinian protesters at the University of California, Los Angeles, blamed pro-Israel groups for the attack. "The life-threatening assault we face tonight is nothing less than a horrifying, despicable act of terror," said the UC Divest in UCLA group in a statement published by the university's Daily Bruin newspaper. They criticized college administrators for not protecting them.

The police crackdown on pro-Palestinian sentiment at the university came on the 56th anniversary of a similar move to stop the occupation of Hamilton Hall by students protesting racism and the Vietnam War. Police also resorted to violence at other American universities to disperse peaceful pro-Palestinian protesters. The university authorities had earlier threatened that the students would face criminal charges if they did not disperse.

U.S. and especially Israeli officials have sought to accuse the university protests of antisemitism, but critics say the accusations are designed to silence opposition. Organizers of the protests, which include Jewish Americans, say they are a peaceful movement to defend Palestinian rights and oppose Israel's war on Gaza.

### **The Biden administration's clumsy policies**

The growing pro-Palestinian protests have caused deep concern in President Joe Biden's administration. Polls show that a majority of young Americans are dissatisfied with Biden and his policy of condoning the Israelis' destruction of Palestinians in Gaza. Many pro-Palestinian protesters, accuse Biden in particular of being complicit in Israel's genocide against the civilian population of Gaza. The expansion of protests on college campuses has only exacerbated the domestic situation in the U.S. on the eve of the election. Meanwhile, young voters could play a key role in Biden's re-election in November's presidential election. U.S. officials condone violence by police who accuse protesters of anti-Semitism. But critics say such accusations are primarily aimed at suppressing pro-Palestinian protests. For example, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill amid attempts to suppress demonstrations at universities. The bill, which passed by a vote count of 320-91, requires the Department of Education to enforce federal anti-discrimination laws using the International

Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism. Republicans voted 187-21 in favor of the bill, Democrats supported it 133-70, and eighteen lawmakers did not vote. The bipartisan bill went to the Senate for consideration. House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson defended the bill as a generally accepted attempt to quell antisemitism on college campuses.

But lawmakers who voted against the measure hold opposing views. For example, Jerry Nadler, the highest-ranking Jewish American member of the House of Representatives, correctly noted, "This legislation threatens freedom of speech, one of our most cherished values, while doing nothing to combat antisemitism." The Democratic lawmaker struck a blow at Republican Party leaders, rejecting the 'political theatrics' of Johnson and leading Republicans in the House of Representatives, who had secured the bill's support from many Democrats.

Some of the other 70 Democrats, including Jewish representatives, also raised the alarm over the measure. Sara Jacobs, the youngest Jewish American member of the House of Representatives, said: "I do not believe that anti-Zionism is inherently antisemitism." Republican lawmaker Mike Lawler, however, railed against Democrats, accusing them of 'overstepping their bounds because of electoral politics' in states with large Muslim populations that traditionally vote for Democrats.

Arab and Muslim American voters, who once helped Joe Biden defeat Donald Trump in the 2020 election, could play a crucial role in November's presidential election. Now they are criticizing the Biden administration for supporting Israel's war in Gaza. For example, in one Democratic Party primary, a significant number of people, including Arab and Muslim voters, marked their ballots as 'unconfirmed.'

Independent Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, meanwhile, warned Congress against accepting an argument put forward by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "that equates criticism of his government's illegal and immoral war against the Palestinian people with antisemitism." Pointing out that in nearly seven months Netanyahu's extremist government has killed 34,000 Palestinians and injured more than 77,000, seventy per cent of whom are women and children, the senator specifically pointed out, is not a policy of carrying out antisemitism.

The American Civil Liberties Union also opposed the bill. "Federal law already prohibits anti-Semitic discrimination and harassment by federally funded entities. [The bill] is therefore not needed to protect against anti-Semitic discrimination; instead, it would likely chill free speech of students on college campuses by incorrectly equating criticism of the

Israeli government with antisemitism.” Human rights organizations have repeatedly condemned attempts by the U.S. and some of its Western allies to conflate criticism of Israel’s atrocities against Palestinians with a policy of pursuing anti-Semitism. The students, who are currently holding peaceful protests on university campuses, are only criticizing Israel’s ‘genocidal war on Gaza’.

[According to NBC News](#), senior White House officials are increasingly concerned about the widening protests on college campuses and see a potential ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas as the only possible development that could partially mitigate the negative political backlash over Biden’s actions in the conflict. The U.S. news outlet also reports that Biden is concerned about the spread of pro-Palestinian protests to events hosted by him and other top administration officials in the months ahead. But it is also clear that tough measures will not help Washington put an end to pro-Palestinian protests.

The brutal police crackdown and the approval of the bill in the House of Representatives clearly show that the U.S. establishment still supports Israel, regardless of the regime’s crimes against defenseless Palestinians. Hence the rapid and massive supply of huge amounts of weapons to the IDF, which it uses to kill Palestinian civilians. Hence also the ‘political umbrella’ carefully unveiled by Joe Biden on the world stage in defense of Israel and its aggressive policies. But still, the question of establishing an Arab state on Palestinian territory will have to be resolved sooner or later. And the sooner the better for Palestinians, Israelis and other peoples of the Middle East.

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