

Washington D.C. prosecutors forced to drop charges against 11 people arrested during Israeli prime minister's visit

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Prosecutors in Washington D.C. announced on July 25 that they would drop charges against 11 people out of the 25 total who were arrested for protesting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to the United States Capitol last week.

The decision to drop the charges only a day later demonstrates the overt lawlessness of the police forces, who often detain and abuse protesters without a second thought. "It is not uncommon for prosecutors to initially decline to press charges against individuals arrested during protests, especially those that turn violent," noted the *Washington Post*.

The newspaper cites the former US assistant attorney for Washington D.C., Rizwan Qureshi, who added, "when prosecutors bring cases, they have an obligation to look at the evidence individually and determine if they can present these facts and prove beyond a reasonable doubt the offense here."

Despite the obvious weakness of the cases, it is possible for the attorney general's office to reinstate the charges and have those individuals rearrested.

Netanyahu's appearance before Congress after being extended a bipartisan invitation to speak prompted massive outrage against the Israeli war criminal and his handlers in the American state. To date, the official number of dead in Gaza are more than 39,000. A far-higher calculation is provided by the prestigious *Lancet* peer-reviewed medical journal, which published an estimate, on conservative assumptions, of nearly 190,000 dead.

Of those that were arrested in Washington, many were given misdemeanor charges for small acts of vandalism. Further revealing the fraudulent character of the official justification for the genocidal campaign,

several of those arrested last week were family members of Israeli hostages seeking to denounce Netanyahu's nine-month war on Gaza which has done nothing to free their loved ones.

Of the 14 remaining charges, one of them is for a 15 year old from Ohio who allegedly assaulted a police officer. Ten people were arrested near Union Station, and eight of them are being charged.

During the incident at Union Station, police deployed chemical irritants on the crowd and clashed with protesters. A few people were arrested after climbing a statue of Christopher Columbus and spray-painting it. Three others, Sonia Krishan, 21, Nathaniel Lawrence, 19, and Roger Miller, 43, were arrested for lowering an American flag at a flagpole and replacing it with a Palestinian flag. The American flag was then burned by demonstrators.

In comments cited by the *Post*, Lawrence stated "it didn't seem right" that the US flag was sitting higher than the Palestinian flag, given that the US government "just stands there and lets [the genocide] happen." Prosecutors later increased the charges against those who removed the flag, charging all of them with one count each of attempted theft, a felony that carries a heavier sentence than the other charges.

Essa Ejelat, 33, was arrested and charged with threatening to do bodily harm to a police officer after he pointed his finger at a cop and allegedly threatened them. Frederick Coates, 25, Momamome Crow, 23, and Antonio Somerville, 23, were arrested for carrying weapons which supposedly included bats, batons and a dart gun.

The prosecutors' decision to drop nearly half of the cases provoked immediate outrage from the D.C. police

union. Gus Papathanasiou of the Metropolitan Police Department's Fraternal Order of Police declared that the prosecutors were "giving free passes to criminals." The union officials also stated that they were unhappy with the number of arrests made, saying that they would have liked to have arrested many more people if it weren't for their "staffing levels."

The US political establishment has also swung behind the police, denouncing the protesters for exercising their First Amendment rights. Rep. Michael McCaul (R-Texas) took to X/Twitter to denounce protesters and demand that "[o]ur nation's leaders on both sides of this aisle must fully denounce this ... and make clear that antisemitism has no place in America."

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump gave a reply Wednesday that was equal parts thuggish and ignorant when asked by Rachel Scott of ABC News about the mob of supporters who broke into the Capitol building on January 6, 2021, and assaulted numerous police officers as they attempted to overturn his electoral loss. He claimed that the protesters against Netanyahu "fought with police much more openly than I could show on January 6," although Scott had noted that 140 police were injured in the 2021 mob assault.

Democratic Vice President and presumed presidential nominee Kamala Harris issued an official statement the day after the anti-Netanyahu, anti-genocide demonstrations in which she said that "despicable acts" were the product of "unpatriotic protesters and dangerous hate-fueled rhetoric." Harris also accused protesters of being antisemitic: "I support the right to peacefully protest, but let's be clear: Antisemitism, hate and violence of any kind have no place in our nation."

Harris' statement is a damning exposure of the lie, presented by the Democratic Party and its various supporters, that she would somehow be more sympathetic to the plight of the Palestinian people, to say nothing about the right to protest.

With more than three years at the side of "Genocide Joe" Biden at the helm of American imperialism, Harris has the same fundamental policy outlook. In her private meeting with Benjamin Netanyahu, Harris reaffirmed her absolute support for Israel's attacks on Palestine.

Neither the Democrats nor the Republicans offer any progressive solution to the crisis of the capitalist

system. Their answers are provided through the wars abroad that they wage and the attacks on living standards and democratic rights at home. As the Socialist Equality Party's speakers presented at their rally on Wednesday outside the US Capitol, the solution cannot be through appeals to capitalist parties, but through mobilization of the working class as an international force against genocide, war and reaction.



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