

Oppose the pro-genocide purge on US college campuses!

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In response to student and faculty outrage over the ongoing genocide in Gaza, a veritable purge is taking place on college campuses in the United States. Administrations are suspending, evicting, firing and otherwise trampling on the democratic rights of faculty and students protesting the ongoing slaughter.

This repression is taking place at some of the most prestigious universities in the country, with deep ties to the Democratic Party. This past Friday, some 25 faculty members from Harvard University were suspended from entering the Widener Library for two weeks after conducting a silent “study-in” protest in solidarity with students who were suspended for conducting a similar protest the month prior.

The banning of faculty from the library, for simply displaying pieces of paper that had innocuous phrases, such as “Embrace diverse perspectives,” is an unprecedented act of disciplinary action. Harvard cited “library policy” to justify barring faculty members from the institution’s main library, which would severely impact their ability to conduct their own work.

In addition to over two dozen faculty members, according to *The Harvard Crimson*, more than 60 students who previously conducted a silent “study-in” at Widener Library against the genocide have also been banned from the main library on campus for two weeks.

Similar anti-democratic measures are underway at many other campuses:

•At the **University of Pittsburgh**, at least 17 students and community members face prosecution for their participation in Gaza Solidarity encampments. After police assaulted the encampments, arrested protesters face inflated charges, including felonies. They have also been issued “persona non grata” notices, essentially banning them from the University of

Pittsburgh campus.

•At the **University of Chicago** last week, university officials sent the police to evict and suspend an Arab student who participated in an anti-genocide protest earlier this month. Megan Porter, the student’s attorney, told a local news outlet that even though her client has not been convicted of a crime, he was nevertheless removed from campus. Porter added that he does not have family in the state and has nowhere else to live.

•At **Muhlenberg College** in Allentown, Pennsylvania, Dr. Maura Finkelstein, who herself is Jewish, was fired for posting comments on social media in opposition to Zionism and the ongoing genocide. Interviewed earlier this month by the *World Socialist Web Site*, Finkelstein observed, “Our campuses are being militarized.”

• At **Cornell University**, administrators suspended four students for three years for their involvement in a pro-Palestinian protest on September 18, directed at military contractors arming the genocide. Cornell University Ph.D. student Momodou Taal, a graduate instructor, was nearly deported earlier this month for participating in the September 18 demonstration.

•At the **University of California, Santa Cruz**, over 100 students and faculty members have been banned from campus since they were arrested for protesting the Gaza genocide last semester. The ACLU Foundation of Northern California and the Center for Protest Law and Litigation have filed a lawsuit against the university, arguing that the mass suspension is unconstitutional.

• The **University of Michigan** is pursuing criminal charges against 11 students for participating in anti-war demonstrations against the war in Gaza last spring. The charges include trespassing and obstructing a police officer, a felony offense with potential sentences of up to two years in prison.

Many of these universities have close ties to the Democratic Party and American imperialism. The Harvard Corporation, the top governing board of Harvard University, includes former Obama administration officials, billionaires and heads of private investment firms.

Among the notable Democrats that are currently members of the Harvard Corporation are: Penny Sue Pritzker, billionaire heiress and US Secretary of Commerce in the Obama administration; Kenneth Chenault, one of several corporate executives who spoke at this year's Democratic National Convention; and Mariano-Florentino Cuéllara, former justice on the Supreme Court of California who served in the Clinton and Obama administrations.

Earlier this year, Harvard University appointed as its vice president and general counsel Jennifer O'Connor, a former executive at Northrop Grumman, the sixth largest weapons manufacturer in the world, which supplies the Israeli Air Force with missile and laser systems for attack helicopters and fighter jets.

The repression on campuses is not limited to the United States. Earlier this month riot police violently arrested students at Western Sydney University for participating in a peaceful sit-in protest against the genocide. After the thuggish arrests, hundreds of academics and faculty signed an open letter condemning the police brutality. The signatories noted the violent actions of the police “are part of a broader pattern of police repression across Australian universities against those who protest against Israel's atrocities.”

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) calls on students to be mobilize against this escalating attack on democratic rights. Students must demand that all charges against those protesting the genocide—one of the greatest war crimes of the 21st century—be dropped. All sanctions and restrictions on students and faculty must be overturned.

Students should seek the support of workers in the factories and workplaces where colleges and universities are located, to mobilize broader support, connecting the defense of basic democratic rights with opposition to war abroad and the war on the working class at home.

The escalating assault on protests on campuses takes place only one week before the US election, which is

characterized by a plumbing of the depths of political reaction. Trump and the Republicans are seeking to build up a fascist movement and have pledged to mobilize police and the military against opponents of the genocide and all opposition to the politics of the corporate and financial oligarch.

The central involvement of the Democratic Party in the persecution of opposition to genocide demonstrates that their claim to be protecting “democracy” is a cynical fraud. No matter who prevails in the election, if there is indeed a clear outcome, the drive toward dictatorship will continue, in lockstep with the escalation of war and the extreme growth of social inequality.

The McCarthyite witch-hunt against Gaza solidarity demonstrators, the harassment of anti-war activists, and the punitive measures against protesting students and faculty are preparations for even more extensive attacks on the democratic rights of the population as a whole.

The anti-democratic methods deployed by the US ruling class during the McCarthyite anti-communist witch-hunts of the 1950s are being rekindled on a global scale by all the imperialist powers. The defense of fundamental democratic rights, including the right to protest genocide and ethnic cleansing, is inseparable from the development of an independent socialist movement in the working class and among young people against all imperialist war and its source, the capitalist system.



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