

New York University bans pro-Palestinian faculty and students

**International Youth and Students for Social Equality in New York and New Jersey
13 December 2024**

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in New York and New Jersey condemns the police-state crackdown at New York University (NYU) directed against protesters opposed to the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza. We demand that the university's bans on pro-Palestinian faculty and students be lifted immediately.

On Thursday around 12:30 p.m., police arrested eight pro-Palestinian protesters at the main entrance to Bobst Library at NYU, including at least two NYU faculty members. That same afternoon, NYU emailed dozens of students to inform them they had been declared persona non grata (PNG), a status that deactivates their campus ID cards and bans them from campus buildings, for their participation in a pro-Palestinian sit-in at Bobst on Wednesday.

Three faculty members were also declared PNG for their participation in these protests, including the two who were arrested. The banned faculty include sociology professor Andrew Ross, a member of NYU's Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine (FSJP), and history professor Rebecca Karl, who was initially denied entrance to Bobst to teach her class on Thursday. All three of the banned faculty members are Jewish.

The FSJP stated in a press release, "The faculty were told that the PNG order came from the Office of the Provost, Gigi Dopico, who later verbally confirmed the PNG status but said she had 'no details' on the reasons for it except that it was a 'security issue'... After contacting the Provost, Professor Karl was escorted into the building to teach, although Campus Security Officer Karen Ortman continued to yell 'She's PNG!' as this occurred."

The two protests at Bobst on Wednesday and Thursday were centered on demands that NYU disclose its investments in companies with ties to the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza. In the spring semester, university

administrators promised student organizers that investment disclosures would be made available to students but rescinded the offer when students refused to disband their Gaza Solidarity Encampment outside NYU's Paulson Center.

On Wednesday, 13 protesters sat outside administrators' offices on Bobst's top floor while dozens more occupied Bobst's main lobby from 3 to 8 p.m. At 4:45 p.m., protesters released an audio recording from the spring of NYU administrators promising to disclose NYU's investments. On Thursday around 9 a.m., protesters set up a picket outside Bobst's main entrance, including five students who blocked the entrance by linking their arms with PVC pipes.

According to an update by NYU's campus newspaper, the Washington Square News:

NYU spokesperson John Beckman said the New York City Police Department "came to the scene" after demonstrators blocked Bobst library's last open entrance at around noon, "ignoring the clear direction of Campus Safety officers and repeated attempts by university personnel to de-escalate the situation."

"The university rejects any claims that this is peaceful protest," Beckman wrote in a statement to WSN. "Their harassing behavior disrupted our academic operations at a particularly critical moment in the semester (as finals start), ignored the rights of students who wish to study in the library, and interfered with safe passage into and out of a core academic building."

On the contrary, an independent reporter on Twitter/X posted video of the protesting students allowing people to

leave the library and reported that NYU itself closed alternative entrances to the building just before the NYPD began arresting protesters. And as the WSWs has previously explained:

The banning of protest in the guise of preventing “disruption” of “public order” and “economic life” is the stock in trade of every authoritarian regime in modern history. For that reason, from a democratic legal standpoint, the permissibility of “disruption” has always been understood as essential to freedom of speech and expression.

The authoritarian crackdown at NYU is part of a wave of repression sweeping campuses as the fall semester ends. Campuses in New York and New Jersey that have recently seen similar developments include:

• **Columbia University:** A pro-Palestinian protest was planned for Monday at Barnard College’s Futter Field, but on Sunday, the Barnard administration sent an email to its student body explaining that access to campus would be restricted to those with a valid ID and that students would be required to comply with requests to unmask and search bags. On Monday morning, Barnard installed new surveillance cameras while protesters announced they would relocate to an intersection just off-campus—an announcement that was complicated by the suspension of the Columbia University Apartheid Divest Instagram account that same day.

• **Fashion Institute of Technology:** Eleven students of the State University of New York’s Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York City were executively suspended for participating in the Gaza Solidarity Encampment in the spring. On December 5, the FIT Students for Justice in Palestine announced that four of these students had now been “officially” suspended—three for one semester and one for one year—while two more students had received sanctions for protesting in the fall. One more student was declared persona non grata and banned from campus.

• **Rutgers University:** On Thursday, December 5 in New Brunswick, New Jersey, the Rutgers University Student Assembly (RUSA) was scheduled to hold its last meeting of the semester. Zionists planned to introduce a bill that would call on RUSA members to commit to fighting anti-Zionism on campus based on the fraudulent claim that anti-Zionism is antisemitism. When the university

administration learned that pro-Palestinian activists planned to attend the RUSA meeting, it had police restrict access to the Student Activities Center to voting members of the RUSA only. Ultimately, the administration forcibly canceled the RUSA meeting entirely.

These developments are not limited to New York and New Jersey. At George Mason University in Virginia, university administrators not only banned the Students for Justice in Palestine club, but banned two of its leading members from campus for four years by criminal trespass order after FBI agents and police raided their homes. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Prahlad Iyengar, a second-year PhD student, was effectively expelled for his pro-Palestinian activism on campus.

As the WSWs previously wrote in its statement, “Oppose the pro-genocide purge on US college campuses!”:

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) calls on students to 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.

Students and young people who agree with this perspective and want to fight for it should get involved with the IYSSE.



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