

Trump, Congress mount fraudulent charges of antisemitism to launch new attacks on student speech

Dan Conway
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Confirming their collaboration with the Trump administration's fascistic attacks on free speech, several university administrations have announced they will fully cooperate with a right-wing congressional committee formed to attack student protesters.

The Committee on Education and Workforce, led by Republican Representative Tim Walberg of Michigan and Burgess Owens, Republican of Utah, has issued patently false charges of student "antisemitism" and placed demands on five universities, including Pomona College in California, Sarah Lawrence College and Barnard College in New York, Northwestern University in Illinois and Bowdoin College in Maine.

Walberg is a far-right Christian nationalist who is vehemently opposed to same-sex marriage and abortion rights and denies the reality of man-made climate change. He made headlines last year by calling for the complete annihilation of the Gazan population. "We shouldn't be spending a dime on humanitarian aid," he said. "It should be like Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Get it over quick."

In relation to Pomona College, the committee demanded that the university provide "all documents related to disciplinary actions taken against students involved in the [college's October 2024] Carnegie Hall occupation and vandalism." Its letter, addressed to Pomona's acting and former president and to its Board of Trustees, also notes the "defacement" of a flyer posted on campus commemorating the founding of the state of Israel. This was apparently the work of a student armed with a sharpie marker who wrote, "Have you no shame, you bloodthirsty baby killers?"

The letter omits mention of the police crackdown in April of last year in which Pomona students peacefully occupying the college president's office were viciously set upon by police and swat team members clad in riot

gear and wielding truncheons. As at universities across the US, such violent attacks on unarmed college students were unconditionally supported by the Pomona College administration.

All of the allegations in the Pomona letter were provided by the pro-Zionist Anti-Defamation League. The Pomona letter, along with those sent to the other four universities, expressly asserts an equivalence between criticism of Israel and criticism of the Jewish religion and Jewish people, branding both as antisemitism. It states:

The term "antisemitic incidents" should be understood to include any incidents involving the targeting of Jews, Judaism, Israel, Israelis, Zionism and/or Zionists, or incidents otherwise identified as antisemitic.

This narrative, which the *World Socialist Web Site* has called "semantic inversion," is a perverse attempt to equate genuine antisemitism with the politically principled and lawful actions of student youth opposed to the crimes of the Zionist state against Palestinians. It actually slanders the Jewish people as a whole, associating them with, and thus attempting to make them complicit in, the crimes of the Israeli government and its US imperialist backers.

The committee's letter to Sarah Lawrence College expressed concern that students were able to establish an encampment and occupy the college's main administrative building for a short period of time and hang posters with "flagrant" messages such as "Long live the Intifada." The committee also cited the students' demand that the college administration release the names

of Israeli companies receiving investments from the university.

The Barnard College letter differs from the others in its pursuit of student protesters who dared to challenge the college's expulsion of their comrades. It writes that "dozens of masked agitators gathered at Barnard's Milbank Hall to protest the two [previous] student expulsions. The agitators demanded the reversal of the expulsions as well as amnesty for other anti-Israel protesters who had been disciplined." The committee is demanding that Barnard brief it on all aspects of its investigation of that incident.

In flagrant violation of due process rights, the letter to Northwestern focuses on the Community Justice and Civil Rights Clinic of its School of Law, which has provided legal services to the organizers of a protest that blocked access to Chicago's O'Hare Airport.

The committee letter expresses particular outrage that student protesters pressured the administration to boycott Sabra Hummus, whose parent company is known for its support of the Israel Defense Forces. The boycott demand emerged from a student encampment opposing the Gaza genocide that was shut down after a back-door agreement between the organizers and the university administration.

The House committee is demanding oversight of all legal clinics at Northwestern Law, including their funding sources and budgets.

A letter was also sent to Bowdoin College, which includes among its alumni the celebrated 19th century authors Nathaniel Hawthorne, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Henry David Thoreau, the latter two of which were open abolitionists.

In the case of Bowdoin, the committee is demanding records of all disciplinary actions taken against students involved in an encampment at a student center in February of this year. It accuses the administration of "capitulating to the organizers of antisemitic encampments, and lifting disciplinary sanctions under pressure from radical students and faculty."

The reign of terror and political repression on college campuses is a continuation and qualitative expansion of the actions of the Biden administration and the Democratic party, which supported crackdowns against anti-genocide protesters, utilizing the same fraudulent charges of antisemitism.

Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris made clear that she would continue Biden's full support for Israeli genocide in Gaza as well as the assault on pro-Palestinian protesters, stating:

Let me be clear. I will always stand up for Israel's right to defend itself and I will insure Israel has the ability to defend itself.

The so-called "progressive" wing of the Democratic Party is also fully in line with the campaign to arm Israel to the teeth as it murders Palestinian families with bombs and aid blockades. Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders has vehemently declared his support for "the right of Israel to defend itself" against the imprisoned Palestinian population, and the pseudo-left Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), an arm of the Democratic Party, continues to support its congressional representatives who have authorized billions in arms sales to the Israeli military.

The attack on pro-Palestinian student protesters will not be halted through appeals to college administrations, broadly aligned with the Democratic Party, to change course. College administrators do not have any interest in protecting the rights of students. They take in high six-figure and seven-figure salaries and are supported by multi-millionaire and billionaire board members. Their institutions are intimately tied into the military-intelligence establishment of US imperialism.

The letters sent by the House committee are only one part of a broad attack being conducted by the Trump administration against democratic rights and all elements of intellectual and cultural life. Trump's fascist regime is determined to prosecute these attacks to the end. The kidnappings and disappearances of foreign students like Mahmoud Khalil and Rumeysa Ozturk will be extended to native born students as well, creating 21st century versions of Pinochet's Chile and Hitler's Germany.

To confront this reality, students must organize themselves independently on the basis of a socialist and internationalist perspective and reach out to the working class, going to factories and workplaces and preparing mass protests and job actions to defend all those targeted by Trump's dictatorial actions. This is the fight being led by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality.



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