

UC Davis Chancellor Katehi's past: Police repression in Greece, FBI spying in the US

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The pepper spraying of peaceful student protesters at the University of California, Davis has become a focal point for national outrage over the police repression of demonstrations against social inequality.

The police action was ordered by UC Davis Chancellor Linda Katehi, who was acting on behalf of the UC Regents and the Democratic Party-controlled political establishment in California, which is determined to enforce a new round of drastic tuition increases on students. Katehi has spent the past week and a half defending herself against demands for her resignation, while making half-hearted attempts to distance herself from the police violence.

However, Katehi's claims of innocence in the matter are belied by her past. She has played a major role in developing repressive measures against students protesting austerity measures and is a prime example of the growing nexus between corporate CEOs, academic administrators and the police-intelligence apparatus.

Katehi's has been involved with police crackdowns in her home country of Greece, is one of 20 administrators involved in a national FBI network aimed at monitoring "anti-U.S." activities on college campuses, and has overseen an administration-run campus infiltration program.

At a rally of students last Monday, Katehi made a backhanded reference to the suppression of Greek students during an uprising against the military junta in 1973. "There is a plaque out there that speaks about 17 of November in 1973, and I was there. And I don't want to forget that, so I hope I will have a better opportunity to work with you, to meet you, to get to know you," Katehi announced.

Aside from its hypocrisy, this reference contains an implicit threat. Katehi, as part of a team of bankers, speculators, and administrators, has worked to bring police back onto Greek university campuses after a nearly

30-year ban on such activity.

Campuses in Greece became an important focus of opposition to the Greek junta in 1973. Throughout the year, students gathered at Athens Polytechnic under the banner of "Bread, Education, Freedom" to protest the forced conscription of any students deemed to be "subversive." In February of that year, students began a campus occupation. In November, they launched a general strike, which was met with military force on the 17th of the month.

The ultra right-wing dictatorship, with the help of fascist armed thugs, massacred 24 students as they successfully ended the occupation. Several of those killed were run over by tanks.

The brutality contributed to mass opposition that eventually led to the dictatorship's downfall the following year. In 1982, the Greek parliament passed the Academic Asylum Law, which required police to request permission from a prosecutor before entering a campus.

Recently, however, Chancellor Katehi served on a team of representatives from the European Bank, European Commission, and International Monetary Fund, along with educators and administrators from across the world, to call for an end to these restrictions.

The team, called the "International Committee On Higher Education in Greece," issued a report earlier this year, which Katehi co-signed, that called for an increase in police presence on campus under the guise of ensuring a "safe" environment.

"University campuses are unsafe," the report claims. "While the [Greek] Constitution permits the university leadership to protect campuses from elements inciting political instability, Rectors have shown themselves unwilling to exercise these rights and fulfill their responsibilities, and to take the decisions needed in order to guarantee the safety of the faculty, staff, and students. As a result, the university administration and teaching

staff have not proven themselves good stewards of the facilities with which society has entrusted them.

“The politicizing of universities – and in particular, of students – represents participation in the political process that exceeds the bounds of logic. This contributes to the rapid deterioration of tertiary education [emphasis added].”

According to the panel, then, peaceful student protesters like the ones who were pepper-sprayed at UC Davis “exceed the bounds of logic” and are helping to bring about the “rapid deterioration” of higher education.

The language used by the committee is strikingly similar to that used by the UC Davis administration to justify the deployment of police against students. On the morning of the police violence, the administration sent a letter to students warning that police action was necessary so that students “could learn and work in a safe, secure environment without disruption.”

In August, Greece’s PASOK government, headed by George Papandreou, approved the repeal of the Academic Asylum Law. Until his resignation on November 11, Papandreou oversaw the imposition of austerity measures dictated by the International Monetary Fund and the European banks, including further attacks on public education.

On November 17, 2011, the 38th anniversary of the massacre at Athens Polytechnic, the new Greek government authorized police entry at a university in Thessaloniki. This was the first time since 1982 that police have been allowed on a university campus.

FBI involvement

In the United States, Chancellor Katehi has participated in a national network of college presidents that works with the Federal Bureau of Investigation to “promote discussion and outreach between research universities and the FBI.”

The network is called the “National Security Higher Education Advisory Board,” and it is responsible for disseminating information regarding any activity by students and faculty that may be considered subversive.

The FBI has confirmed Katehi’s active involvement in the program. “Because of the nature of the material they discuss,” explains UC Davis administrator Andy Fell in a story from the campus faculty newspaper, *Dateline*,

“board members must hold ‘secret’ security clearances.”

In light of this evidence of collusion with the FBI, the true meaning of Katehi’s claim that she wants to “get to know” students becomes clear.

Katehi herself boasted upon her appointment, telling the *California Aggie*, the UC Davis newspaper, in October 2010: “My participation allows me to visit with like-minded chancellors and presidents of major research institutions, to explore and share best practices that ensure our researchers and our research remain safe and unimpeded.”

That the real target of such activities is the politicization of students is made clear by Katehi’s involvement with the “Student Activism Response Team”—a group of 33 administrators from a variety of student service centers whose responsibility it is to infiltrate peaceful student demonstrations and disseminate information to the UC Davis Police Department. The team, active since at least 2009, is still in existence today.

The results of a Freedom of Information Act filing released last year documents the actions of the infiltration team. One email from an administrator released through the FOIA request, titled “Student Activism Response Protocol” and dated August 18, 2010, explains that administrators were given the responsibility to “receive information from all Student Affairs staff regarding any anticipated student actions, not just those of registered student organizations,” “inform police and request standby support if appropriate” and “notify and maintain communication with news service.”

Katehi’s sordid past and present actions exemplify a political establishment, comprised of both the Democrats and Republicans, that is thoroughly hostile to the interests of students, and ruthlessly determined to enforce the dictates of the corporate and financial elite in the face of growing mass opposition.



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