

Two Dartmouth College students arrested for peacefully protesting genocide in Gaza

Clara Weiss

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The *World Socialist Web Site* received a statement from the Sunrise Movement at Dartmouth, documenting the university administration's crackdown on a peaceful pro-Palestinian protest. The WSWS and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) condemn this attack on democratic rights and call for the widest possible participation in the protest called by the Sunrise Movement and other student organizations on October 30 at Dartmouth.

The statement by the Sunrise Movement read:

At 1:00 a.m. on October 28th, Dartmouth College called Hanover Police to arrest two students for trespassing on the Parkhurst Administration Building lawn. The students initiated an encampment six hours earlier, urging Dartmouth to divest from Apartheid as part of the Dartmouth New Deal framework.

After college administrators refused to publicly acknowledge the Dartmouth New Deal and establish a mourning site for lost Palestinian and Israeli lives, two students chose to remain in a tent against school official's requests. The College subsequently summoned over a dozen officers from Dartmouth College Department of Safety and Security and Hanover Police Department to handcuff and arrest both students.

Kevin Engel, one of two Dartmouth students arrested, says: "After spending over 80 hours outside Parkhurst over the last ten days, it is explicitly obvious to me that the current administration cares very little about the effects of the war in Gaza on students. Tonight, over a dozen Hanover PD and SNS officers arrested and charged me and a peer for occupying a tent. A single tent — even more evidence that Dartmouth prioritizes their public image over the wellbeing of students."

The arrests took place hours after the campus Sunrise Movement Chapter launched the Dartmouth New Deal, their multi-demand framework for investment in marginalized students and climate-justice. The continued encampment on the administrative lawn escalated a weeklong protest for Palestinian liberation which began after mourners placed small black flags in

the administrative lawn following an October 19th vigil for Palestinian and Israeli civilians.

Campus Safety and Security informed event organizers that they would remove the flags immediately afterwards. When the vigil was not dismantled, students decided to keep watch over the memorial 24 hours a day and did so until the arrests.

Roan Wade, a student and Sunrise Dartmouth organizer arrested Saturday morning, says: "Dartmouth claims to support free speech but arrested me for demonstrating against Dartmouth's complicity in the ongoing genocide in Gaza. We were told that President Beilock was inside Parkhurst at the time of our arrest. Rather than talking to us, she suppressed our right to voice our concerns. Dartmouth's commitment to free speech and open discourse fell apart when met with student activism. Police told us we were banned indefinitely from stepping foot in Parkhurst, the building that houses Title IX, the president's office, and other Dartmouth administrators — further restricting our right to voice our dissent."

During this time, students at the vigil faced constant surveillance from Safety & Security officers, including frequent visits from the Director of Safety & Security, Keiselim "Keysi" Montás. Repeated attempts to remove students included confiscating a canopy to protect from rain and warning students not to sit down on the steps or store food.

The Associate Dean for Student Life delivered a highlighted copy of Dartmouth's policy on Freedom of Expression and Dissent, claiming students were deliberately obstructing "the orderly processes of the college." When asked for a specific example, Montás told students that flags prevented workers from mowing the Parkhurst lawn.

"President Beilock, in her September 22, 2023 inaugural address to Dartmouth College, calls for a 'brave space'—approach to freedom of expression on campus," says Hayden El Rafei '24. "As a student and undergraduate researcher, I see the administration's actions tonight as a cruel and repulsive attack on

students' academic, artistic, and creative expression — their acts of bravery in the wake of grief.

The Palestine Solidarity Coalition of Dartmouth Students, The Sunrise Movement at Dartmouth, and other student groups authored a statement in response to the college's actions. Dartmouth students plan to hold a rally at 12:30 on Monday, October 30th calling for the protection of students' free speech and right to protest at Dartmouth.

President Beilock tried to justify the arrest of the students in an email, claiming that they had threatened to “‘escalate and take further action,’ including ‘physical action,’ if their demands were not met.” In response, the Sunrise Movement issued a statement refuting the essentially anti-democratic argument of Beilock:

The interpretation made by the administration, which claims that “physical action” inherently equates to violent physical action, is misguided at best and a willful act of suppression at worst. Physical action encompasses a wide array of nonviolent direct action strategies, including acts of civil disobedience such as that taken by the student protesters. Taken in context, It refers to the mass mobilization of people in order to further a collective goal. Physically being in a tent is physical action. Hosting vigils for community mourning is physical action.... What her statement truly demonstrates is that to her, the student protesters were not dangerous, but rather, the free expression of their ideas were. Furthermore, in supposedly protecting the Dartmouth community, the administration willfully put the physical safety of the peaceful protesters at risk by involving over a dozen Safety and Security officers and Hanover Police officers.

As on campuses across the country, student organizations at Dartmouth, including the Jewish Voice for Peace and the Sunrise Movement, had issued a principled statement in defense of the Palestinian people on October 10, insisting that “The tragic violence we see today is the bitter fruit of apartheid for Israelis and Palestinians.”

On Wednesday, October 25, students and supporters also held a rally to stand in solidarity with mourners at Parkhurst and deliver messages about the college's role in Palestinian liberation to President Beilock. The protests at Dartmouth are part of a growing movement by workers and young people in the US and across the world in opposition to the unfolding genocide in Gaza.

The steps taken by the college administration are an attack on

the democratic rights of the entire student body and the working class. It is part of a campaign in the US and internationally by the ruling class that seeks to intimidate and criminalize opposition to war, fascism and genocide among youth and workers.

It is not coincidence that the administration of Dartmouth is complicit in this. In an earlier interview, Kevin Engel, one of the arrested students, pointed to the investments of Dartmouth and the portfolios of several members of the college's Board of Trustees. “Dartmouth is making a profit off of the war occurring right now,” Engel stated. “And because of that, they're inherently making a profit off of the committing of war crimes, the killing of children and the bombing of hospitals.”

Like all elite academic institutions in the US, the administration of Dartmouth is tied closely to Wall Street and the military and is implicated in the crimes committed by US imperialism and its proxy in Israel. The Board of Trustees is chaired by Elizabeth Cahill Lempres, a senior partner emeritus with the managing consulting company McKinsey, which has worked for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), and Jeff Blackburn, a former investment banker and executive with Amazon, which works closely with the US military and intelligence agencies. It also includes Jeffrey M. Crowe from Northwest Venture Capital, which has invested in over 100 Israeli-based entrepreneurs and 30 companies. In light of the unfolding genocide, its Israeli branch issued a statement pledging that it stood “in solidarity with our portfolio company leaders, some of whom have been forced to step aside from their lives to fight for their country.”

Under President Beilock, who has been celebrated as the “first female” president of the college, Dartmouth is also being integrated into the effort by the Biden administration to enlist US academia in military production in the war preparations against China. Beilock, along with a number of female US university presidents, issued a statement last year supporting the “CHIPS Act” by the Biden administration and emphasizing that the growth of the workforce for the semiconductor industry—a key battleground for the war against China—must be “diverse.”

These are the forces the students at Dartmouth are up against. They have taken a courageous stand in opposition to the militarist policies of US imperialism and the college administration. We also urge students at Dartmouth and other colleges and universities to contact the WSWS and IYSSE to inform us about what is happening on your campuses and to organize rallies and meetings to oppose the genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza and the war in the Middle East.



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