

Ruling class witch hunt against anti-genocide protesters and university presidents intensifies

## Forty-one Brown University students arrested for protesting Gaza genocide

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On Tuesday evening, police officers with the Brown University Department of Public Safety and the Providence Police Department in Rhode Island arrested 41 college students and charged them with criminal trespassing for peacefully protesting the genocide in Gaza on campus.

The multi-ethnic, multicultural, multi-religious group of students arrested on Tuesday were with the Brown Divest Coalition, which called Tuesday's protest in solidarity with Hisham Awartani, a 20-year-old junior at Brown University and one of three Palestinian-Americans who were shot by a right-wing libertarian just off the campus of the University of Vermont in Burlington last month.

While enormous attention has been devoted in the mainstream press and by both political parties to the alleged rise of "antisemitism" on college campuses—by which they mean opposition to Zionism and the genocide in Gaza—the attempted murder of Awartani, and fellow injured students, Kinnan Abdalhamid and Tahseen Ali Ahmad, by an anti-vaccine zealot has virtually disappeared from the headlines.

In a press release accompanying Tuesday's protest at the school, the Brown Divest Coalition noted that five weeks before he was nearly killed, Awartani spoke at a similar protest that called on Brown University President Christina Paxson to divest the university from weapons manufacturers that sell to Israel. Awartani's request, Brown Divest Coalition noted, was met "with silence" from Paxson, "continuing to fuel anti-Palestinian rhetoric and violence."

This is the second mass arrest of students protesting the genocide at the private Ivy League university in just over a month. On November 9, 20 Jewish students with BrownU Jews for Ceasefire Now were similarly arrested for peacefully protesting the mass murder in Gaza. The charges were only dropped following the shooting of Awartani, Abdalhamid and Ali Ahmad.

Following Tuesday's mass arrest, Brown University spokesperson Brian Clark issued a threatening statement to press outlets, including the *Brown Daily Herald*, confirming that the students were "photographed, fingerprinted and provided their arrest

paperwork in lieu of being detained in physical custody."

Promising more police-state measures in response to future protests, Clark added, "The disruption to secure buildings is not acceptable, and the University is prepared to escalate the level of criminal charges for future incidents of students occupying secure buildings."

"Given that this is the second prominent incident in recent weeks of students trespassing in a secure, non-residential building after operating hours," Clark said, "the University fully expects to recommend more significant criminal misdemeanor charges for any future incidents after the Dec. 11 sit-in."

The police crackdown on peaceful college students at Brown is part of a broader authoritarian campaign spearheaded by the Republican Party, and leading billionaires, to attack the democratic rights of students and the entire working class. This includes the right to protest the US-backed Israel genocide in Gaza, in which the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have killed 19,000 people in just over two months, the vast majority women and children.

In order to deflect attention from their embrace and cultivation of actual antisemites such as Nick Fuentes, far-right Republicans, all of whom back the pro-Nazi Donald Trump, have recently taken up the mantle of "defenders of the Jews," as part of their dual strategy of squashing democratic rights domestically while advancing US imperialist interests in the Middle East.

Democrats have joined their "Republican colleagues" in demonizing anti-genocide protesters as "supporters of Hamas" and "antisemites" while at the same time remaining silent on the "staggering" increase of anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian hate recorded by the Council on American-Islamic Relations in the last two months.

Between October 7 and December 2, the organization received "2,171 requests for help and reports of bias," a "172 percent increase over a similar two-month period the previous year."

Notable incidents include the shooting of the three Palestinian students in Vermont, the assault and harassment of dozens of perceived Muslims and Arabs in public, at workplaces and at home, and the murder of 6-year-old Wadea Al-Fayoume in Plainfield, Illinois, last October.

“Far too many people and institutions have spent the past two months weaponizing Islamophobia and anti-Arab bias to both justify the ongoing violence against Palestinians in Gaza and silence supporters of Palestinian human rights here in America,” CAIR Research and Advocacy Director Corey Saylor said in a press release accompanying the latest report.

A prominent example of “people and institutions” supporting the “ongoing violence against Palestinians in Gaza” while also leading the charge to “silence supporters of Palestinian human rights here in America” is House Speaker Mike Johnson (Republican-Louisiana).

On Tuesday morning, Johnson attacked the President and Fellows of Harvard College, also known as the Harvard Corporation, after the board released a statement affirming that it stood behind embattled Harvard President Claudine Gay.

Gay, along with former University of Pennsylvania President Liz Magill and MIT President Sally Kornbluth, has faced a torrent of right-wing attacks following last Tuesday’s congressional hearing, for not sufficiently backing Republican efforts to outlaw anti-war protests and expel foreign students who don’t toe the US and Israeli line on foreign policy.

“President Gay has apologized for how she handled her congressional testimony and has committed to redoubling the University’s fight against antisemitism,” the Corporation wrote in its statement.

Despite Gay’s and the board’s pledge to “redouble” efforts to clamp down on anti-genocide protests, Speaker Johnson condemned the decision not to fire Gay as “outrageous,” adding that there “must be accountability for the failure to protect Jewish students on college campuses.”

Similarly, in a Fox News interview Tuesday, the chair of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, Virginia Foxx (Republican-North Carolina), reaffirmed that the committee had launched a “thorough investigation” into the “moral rot” at “Harvard, UPenn, MIT and other schools.” Foxx first announced the investigation last Tuesday.

The Republicans campaign against the mealy-mouthed university presidents, all of whom denounced the anti-genocide protesters and affirmed their support for the state of Israel and the student protesters themselves at last week’s hearing, is a reflection of the sharp shift to the right of the US ruling class, which is increasingly incapable of tolerating any dissent.

Despite the ouster of Magill earlier this week, on Tuesday, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that billionaire Marc Rowan, a

member of the Wharton School’s board of advisors and the co-founder of Apollo Management Services, is seeking to exert further influence over the entire university, including over the curriculum.

Rowan sent a four-page email to the UPenn board of trustees Tuesday morning with a series of questions attached aimed at intimidating faculty and administrators, such as if the University had any “policies” on faculty or administrations “promoting a particular viewpoint.”

“[H]as the University considered that its current political orientation has exposed UPenn to significant risk in the event of political realignment in Congress?” Rowan wrote, implying that the supposedly “far left” politics of the university had exposed it to attacks from right-wing elements like himself.

Rowan, 61, founded Apollo Global Management in 1990 with Joshua Harris and Leon Black, the latter of whom served as CEO until 2021. Rowan, who has a current net worth of \$5.9 billion, took over as CEO of Apollo in 2021 after it was revealed that Black had authorized \$158 million in payments to convicted child sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein between 2013-2017.

The *Inquirer* reported the “pressure to remove Magill” began in October “after the Palestine Writes literature festival was held on campus,” with Rowan urging donors to “close their checkbooks” after the festival took place.

The entire mainstream press and both political parties have slandered the Palestine Writes festival as a gathering of antisemites because rock star Roger Waters, an outspoken defender of Palestinian and all human rights, as well as recently assassinated English professor and poet Dr. Refaat al-Ar’eer, were among the scheduled speakers.

Far from supporting the festival, during last Tuesday’s hearing, Magill concurred that speakers at the festival, including Waters, espoused “antisemitism” and that she found the event “very very objectionable.” Despite her attempts to save her job by throwing Waters and the anti-genocide protesters under the bus, Magill was ousted in less than a week.



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