

MIT suspends pro-Palestinian group following “emergency action for Rafah” protest

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The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has suspended the pro-Palestinian MIT Coalition Against Apartheid (CAA) after a protest by the group, which MIT President Sally Kornbluth said violated campus rules about demonstrations. This came after the CAA conducted an “emergency action for Rafah” on February 12 outside the Stratton Student Center at the prestigious scientific institution in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

In a video released to the MIT community on February 13, Kornbluth stated that the CAA would be barred from using MIT facilities, receiving funding allotted for student groups, and organizing further protests on the campus. CAA executive officers have been contacted by Vice Chancellor and Dean of Student Life Suzy Nelson regarding the suspension, according to *The Tech* student newspaper.

“Last night, members of the CAA, the Coalition Against Apartheid, once again conducted a demonstration on campus without going through the normal permission processes that apply to every student group at MIT,” Kornbluth said in the video, adding, “When students don’t respect the rules, we have to take steps to ensure the safety and smooth functioning of the campus community.”

Kornbluth was hauled before a December 5 hearing on antisemitism held by the House Committee on Education and the Workforce along with Harvard University President Claudine Gay and University of Pennsylvania President Liz Magill. The three were grilled by Republican members of the committee who asked them whether “calling for the genocide of Jews” amounted to bullying and harassment on campus.

Committee member Elise Stefanik of New York and

Committee Chair Virginia Foxx of North Carolina—who railed against the three university presidents for their alleged capitulation to antisemitism on campus—are both proponents of the Great Replacement Theory, an anti-immigrant and antisemitic conspiracy theory that claims Jewish people and left-wing groups are seeking to “replace white people” in Europe and the US with “inferior stock” from South America, Africa and Asia.

After coming under intense pressure from pro-Israeli forces in government and the political elite in both big-business parties for their refusal to admit to the slander that antisemitism is sweeping their campuses unimpeded, Harvard’s Gay and Penn’s Magill resigned their positions, leaving only Kornbluth retaining her presidency.

Since then, the MIT president has come under increased pressure to demonstrate her commitment to Zionist forces as Israel escalates its genocide in Gaza, including Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu’s plans to launch a ground war against the 1.4 million Palestinians who have been herded into Rafah by the Israel Defense Forces. The suspension of the MIT CAA comes within this context.

The CAA says that MIT has also issued sanction letters to 13 student organizers, threatening them with permanent suspension from MIT. Students have spoken out about cases allegedly made against them individually in connection with the CAA protest. “MIT decided that due to my involvement in student activism, I was prohibited from holding leadership positions in any student organization and that doing so could result in my permanent suspension,” a student shared through public channels, according to *The Tech*’s report.

Following Kornbluth’s video announcing CAA’s

suspension, student groups at MIT and elsewhere have spoken out against the group's suspension. The CAA issued a statement February 13 calling on the MIT administration to reinstate its recognition as a student group.

The statement reads in part:

For over four months, the MIT administration has continued to silence our voices by applying unjust punitive measures to our actions. We have held peaceful protest after peaceful protest in response to the genocide perpetrated by the Israeli occupation in Palestine.

However, the exercise of our right to free speech has been met with sanctions and suppression by the administration. The latest crackdown was on our emergency action for Rafah, a supposed "safe zone" where millions of Palestinians have been forcibly displaced by Israel's genocide, which was carpet bombed the night before. ...

Their response today reveals that *MIT fears the mass mobilization of our community, who have remained steadfast with Palestine*. Thousands of our community members, from students and alumni to faculty and staff, have participated in our actions as part of the struggle for the liberation of Palestine. ...

We call on all people of conscience to stand alongside us and support our right to protest. *We demand that MIT reinstate the Coalition Against Apartheid and retract the threats against student organizers.*

The CAA letter is also a signable petition. As of February 26, 186 organizations had added their names.

The House Committee on Education and the Workforce has not let up on its pressure on MIT and other universities in the two months since the contentious hearing on Capitol Hill. On January 9, Chairwoman Foxx sent a letter to Harvard Interim President Alan Garber and Penny Pritzker, leader of the university's top governing board, requesting documents and information about the university's response to antisemitism on campus and "its failure to

protect Jewish students, faculty, and staff."

Foxx announced earlier this month she would be issuing subpoenas to Garber and others at Harvard, claiming they had failed to turn over a range of documents related to the supposed resurgence of antisemitism on campus, including any internal reports about antisemitic incidents, minutes of board meetings and disciplinary records.

In particular, the committee is demanding internal communications at the university pertaining to its response to a statement authored by the Palestine Solidarity Committee and co-signed by over 30 Harvard student groups after the October 7 Hamas incursion that correctly blamed the Israeli regime for the Gaza conflict. It stated in part:

Today's events did not occur in a vacuum. For the last two decades, millions of Palestinians in Gaza have been forced to live in an open-air prison. Israeli officials promise to "open the gates of hell," and the massacres in Gaza have already commenced. Palestinians in Gaza have no shelters for refuge and nowhere to escape. In the coming days, Palestinians will be forced to bear the full brunt of Israel's violence.

In the more than four months since, these warnings have been tragically borne out.



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