

# Google employees arrested for sit-in protest against cloud services contract with Israel

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Nine Google employees were arrested on Tuesday night in New York and California for occupying the company's corporate offices to protest an advanced technology services contract with the Israeli government and military.

The protesting workers entered the Google offices in New York City and Sunnyvale, California at approximately 2:00 p.m. Eastern to demand the company end its work on Project Nimbus, a \$1.2 billion cloud computing platform that provides the Zionist regime with services including artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning.

The workers hung a banner in the New York City office that said, "Google Worker Sit-In Against Project Nimbus. No Tech for Genocide." Other workers rallied outside both occupied buildings.

According to a report by The Verge, after nearly eight hours of the sit-in by four workers who remained in the common area of the 10th floor of Google's offices in Chelsea, New York City police arrived with someone who appeared to be a company representative. After telling the workers that they had been placed on administrative leave and their access to the building had been revoked, the man said, "We're asking you to leave again for the last time."

The arrests, which were live-streamed on Twitch by protesters, took place after a police officer said, "Listen, we'll let you walk out the door right now—it's a non-issue if you're willing to go. If not, you're going to be arrested for trespassing." The officers then asked the protesters to turn around and put their hands behind their backs to be handcuffed.

At the Sunnyvale campus, the protesters occupied the office of Google Cloud CEO Thomas Kurian. The arrests in California, captured on video, were carried out in a similar manner when someone who appears to

be a security guard asked the protesters to leave voluntarily. When they refused, police officers came in and arrested the five workers.

Speaking to The Verge, Billy Van Der Laar, a Sunnyvale-based software engineer, said, "We did not come to Google to work on technology that kills. By engaging in this contract leadership has betrayed our trust, our AI Principles, and our humanity."

The Project Nimbus contract between Google and Amazon and the state of Israel was announced in 2021. The Israeli Finance Ministry said at the time that the software contract provides, "the government, the defense establishment, and others with an all-encompassing cloud solution." Google and Amazon beat out Microsoft, Oracle and IBM to win the services agreement which will establish local cloud sites that "will keep information within Israel's borders under strict security guidelines," according to a report by Reuters on April 21, 2021.

Terms of the contract also state that Google and Amazon are forbidden from boycotting the agreement. The *Times of Israel* reported that the terms of the agreement bar the companies from denying services to "particular government entities."

This did not stop Google Cloud external communications manager Anna Kowalczyk from issuing a statement saying Project Nimbus is not related to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). "We have been very clear that the Nimbus contract is for workloads running on our commercial cloud by Israeli government ministries, who agree to comply with our Terms of Service and Acceptable Use Policy. This work is not directed at highly sensitive, classified, or military workloads relevant to weapons or intelligence services," Kowalczyk said.

However, an exclusive report in *Time* on Friday,

based on a company document, detailed Google's cloud computing services partnership with the Zionist military. The report states, "The Israeli Ministry of Defense, according to the document, has its own 'landing zone' into Google Cloud—a secure entry point to Google-provided computing infrastructure, which would allow the ministry to store and process data, and access AI services."

The *Time* report goes on, "The ministry sought consulting assistance from Google to expand its Google Cloud access, seeking to allow 'multiple units' to access automation technologies, according to a draft contract dated March 27, 2024. The contract shows Google billing the Israeli Ministry of Defense over \$1 million for the consulting service."

The movement of tech workers against providing advanced software services to Israel has intensified during the US-backed genocide against Palestinians over the past six months. In March, Google fired software engineer Eddie Hatfield for publicly protesting Project Nimbus during Mind the Tech, an annual Israeli tech conference in New York, and interrupting a speech by Google Israel's managing director.

At the conference, Hatfield said, "I'm a Google Cloud software engineer, and I refuse to build technology that powers genocide, apartheid, or surveillance. Project Nimbus puts Palestinian community members in danger."

According to *Time*, Vidana Abdel Khalek, a UK-based trust-and-safety-policy employee, resigned in protest after Hatfield was fired.

On March 4, more than 600 other Google employees signed a petition opposing the company's sponsorship of the conference. The petition is addressed to Google parent company Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai and has the headline, "Stop profiting off of Israeli apartheid and violence against Palestinians."

The petition states, "By providing cloud technology to ... Israel, Google is enabling the oppression of the Palestinian people. For example, Project Nimbus will likely expand the data capacity of the Israeli Land Authority (ILA), a government agency that uses discriminatory policies to expand segregated Jewish settlements while trapping Palestinians in densely populated areas and limiting the growth of their communities."

Reports are emerging that Israel has been using AI

tools for mass targeting of civilians since the beginning of its ethnic cleansing campaign in Gaza. In an investigative report by *+972 Magazine* and *Local Call*, which is based on interviews with six Israeli intelligence officers who were involved in the use of AI in Gaza, civilian homes have been targeted with little human review by a system called Lavender.

The report says, "during the first weeks of the war, the army almost completely relied on Lavender, which clocked as many as 37,000 Palestinians as suspected militants—and their homes—for possible airstrikes." One source said that "human personnel often served only as a 'rubber stamp' for the machine's decisions," and that the individuals were targeted at night while their whole families were present in their homes.

In another automated system called "Where's Daddy?," targeted individuals were tracked and bombing strikes were carried out after they had entered the family residence. One of the intelligence officers said the IDF was not interested in killing their targets "only when they were in a military building or engaged in a military activity. On the contrary, the IDF bombed them in homes without hesitation, as a first option. It's much easier to bomb a family's home. The system is built to look for them in these situations."

Another AI system called "The Gospel," is used by the IDF to determine which targets the Israeli Air Force would bomb. The system automatically provides a targeting recommendation to a human analyst, who then decides whether to pass it along to soldiers in the field, according to a report by National Public Radio.

Tal Mimran, a lecturer at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who has worked for the Israeli government on targeting during previous military operations, told NPR that "The Gospel" is much more efficient than humans. Mimran said a group of 20 officers might produce 50-100 targets in a year. By comparison, he thinks "The Gospel" can suggest around 200 targets "within 10-12 days" or 50 times faster than military personnel.



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