

As it cracks down on student anti-war encampments, NYPD claims to represent New York

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In the wake of last week's violent suppression of anti-genocide protests on college campuses, top officials in the New York Police Department are calling into question civilian authority over the police force and effectively criminalizing dissent.

In coordination with Democratic Mayor Eric Adams and President Joe Biden, the NYPD last week launched raids and arrested hundreds of protesters at five campuses: Columbia University, City College of New York, New York University (NYU), The New School and Fordham University.

The extraordinary police mobilization attacking peaceful protests has been accompanied by a series of NYPD propaganda videos, press appearances, and public denunciations of politicians that are characteristic of authoritarian and fascist regimes. And they bear the stamp of approval of the Democratic Party.

NYPD Chief of Patrol John Chell launched a diatribe against Tiffany Cabán, a City Council member from Astoria, Queens and member of the Democratic Socialists of America, after she criticized the police sieges at Columbia and City College, calling them an affront to democracy.

The police chief responded by attacking Cabán on X as “a person who hates our city and certainly does not represent the great people of NYC.” Chell's comment, which was posted on an official NYPD social media account, implied that it is not elected officials who represent the people of New York, but his gang of deputized thugs.

The denunciation of political opposition to police state operations has been accompanied by a series of videos on social media, set to stirring music, mythologizing the raids at each campus. A video portraying the NYPD raid of City College, for instance, depicts officers tearing down a Palestinian flag and raising the Stars and Stripes, comparing themselves to a heroic army planting the flag after emerging victorious on a battlefield.

The videos present the encampments as having been organized and funded by “outside agitators” intent on radicalizing young people. NYPD Chief of Operations Kaz Daughtry, in a video of the NYU raid, refers to the supplies in

the encampment and says:

Look at the water. This is very, very organized. We got water. We got cups, coolers. Somebody is definitely behind this.... There is definitely a mastermind behind this.

Along similarly farcical lines, the NYPD and Mayor Adams have pointed to other “evidence” to justify their claims: an academic textbook (at a college campus!) on understanding terrorism; a poster with a safety tip to “mask up - COVID is on the rise” and a warning to “not engage with cops, Zionists or the media;” and a piece of paper with the words “Death to America” printed on it.

Chief Chell proclaimed on social media:

There is an unknown entity who is radicalizing our vulnerable students. Taking advantage of their young minds. As parents and Americans we must demand some answers! I can't speak for the rest of America, but in NYC we won't rest until we find out! We will broadcast what we see and find. We will use the might of our Intelligence Bureau and our federal partners to quite simply connect the dots. Follow the money!!!!!!”

Appearing Sunday on ABC's *This Week*, Mayor Adams defended the police raid of campuses and doubled down on the supposed threat from outsiders.

Adams, referring to the student protesters, stressed the need to “terminate what is perceived to be a threat.” Picking up on the charge of nefarious outsiders influencing youth, he added:

When you train people to do disruptive things, you are

an agitator. So, I'm not trying to be politically correct. I'm trying to be correct for the city of New York as we make sure this continues to be safe.

The attempt to portray the student protests as the work of outside agitators while ignoring the impact of the policies of "Genocide Joe" and the war criminals in both political parties cannot be written off as merely a matter of stupidity.

Democrats as well as Republicans around the country have sought to undermine support for campus protesters using a variety of smears, including the lie that opposition to Zionism and the crimes of Israel is antisemitism.

Moreover, the claims of a conspiracy to radicalize young Americans and the presence of shadowy financial backers behind the campus protests are themselves antisemitic dog whistles to the far-right.

Behind the irrational character of the propaganda lies a grave danger. The explicit threat to go after political forces that are supposedly radicalizing youth is a call to further dismantle the First Amendment protections on assembly and speech, and to use the full force of the state against opponents of American imperialism. To the extent that forces within the state argue for a softer hand, the NYPD leadership is making it clear they will not be tolerated.

The NYPD, with approximately 36,000 officers, is a vast apparatus that has done more than dip its toes into illegal and unconstitutional activity. Last year, the city settled a lawsuit for a record \$13.7 million over the brutal NYPD rampages in 2020, when police arrested thousands illegally and unleashed terror on protesters following the Minneapolis police murder of George Floyd.

The NYPD's vast spying capabilities include its counterterrorism unit, set up to hound and brutalize Muslims and Arab-Americans during the "War on Terror." It is now directed at anti-genocide protesters.

While the courts shut down some of its most egregious practices after a lawsuit, the NYPD has continued to expand its operations in coordination with the Israeli military. The department also deploys sophisticated tracking technologies, including drones, facial recognition software, and cell phone trackers, while skirting its legal responsibility to disclose their use.

The Adams administration has elevated figures like Chief Chell, a killer cop who fatally shot a man in the back in 2008, to the highest levels of the department. Chell was never criminally charged for his crime, but a civil jury rejected his claim of accidental fire and required the city to pay the victim's family \$1.5 million.

The violent character of the NYPD and the scale of its repressive resources has been further exposed with more details of the police crackdowns emerging since last Tuesday. At Columbia, the police rampage resulted in the hospitalization of

multiple students.

One protester was thrown down the steps. Another was observed by student journalists lying unconscious on the ground with officers hovering above. Others were kicked and hit by cops, leading to swollen faces and similar injuries.

During the raid on Hamilton Hall, police in armor entered with guns drawn, using stun grenades. One officer fired his weapon, supposedly accidentally.

Press, legal observers and students were removed from the area and ordered to "shelter in place" under threat of arrest, in order to bar them from documenting the actions of the police.

The violence was replicated at City College, where police violently attacked the student encampment, beating protesters and arresting more than 170. Some of the students have been charged with felony burglary, a major crime. Such charges are transparently aimed at intimidating protestors, especially at working class campuses like City College.

The fact that the assault on democratic rights and the rejection of civilian authority over the police is advancing under Democratic administrations at the city, state and federal levels is highly significant. The posture of the Democrats as the moderating force in American politics, restraining the violence of the police and acting as a bulwark against the threat of Donald Trump, is being exposed as a complete fraud. The Democrats are enabling fascism.

The crackdown on campus protests has also undermined the increasingly threadbare claims of the Democratic Socialists of America that the Democratic Party can be transformed into an instrument of progress. No amount of hypocritical statements by DSA politicians can conceal the fact that the organization is a faction of the Democratic Party, whose most prominent figure, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, is actively campaigning for the reelection of the person most responsible for Israel's genocide in Gaza and the accompanying attack on dissent in the US, Joe Biden.

For decades, the Democrats have joined with the Republicans in systematically building up police forces and arming them with military weaponry repurposed from America's wars in the Middle East. Now, under conditions of rapidly expanding global conflict and escalating class conflict at home, they are demonstrating why: Imperialist war abroad requires the suppression of opposition at home.



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