

# University students across Europe protest Gaza genocide

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Student protests have spread across Europe since the Israeli military launched its long-planned assault on Rafah. Inspired by anti-genocide protests on campuses across the United States defying a nationwide crackdown coordinated by the Biden administration that has led to thousands of arrests, students are occupying university halls and facilities across the continent. It also comes as anti-genocide protest camps have spread at universities in Britain, including at Oxford and Cambridge.

Protesters are demanding an end to the US and EU-backed genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, an immediate ceasefire, an end to European arms deliveries to Israel, and humanitarian aid for Gaza. In some countries, they face violent police crackdowns, with at least 200 arrests across Europe in recent days. In others, terrified by the precedent of the May 1968 French general strike, when General Charles De Gaulle's violent crackdown on students triggered an eruption of working class struggle, governments are allowing protests to proceed.

In Germany, police brutally dispersed the student encampment on the Free University of Berlin set up by over 100 protesters on Tuesday, after the university administration called for a crackdown. Wearing keffiyehs and waving Palestinian flags, students shouted "Free, free Palestine!" "Israel is a terrorist state," and "Shame on you Germany." Berlin police reported some arrests for incitement to hatred and trespassing. At Leipzig University, students set up tents in the courtyard and barricaded the entrances. Police are reportedly preparing to raid the campus.

In France, police used tear gas and pepper spray to break up an anti-genocide student protest at the Sorbonne, arresting 86 people. Students chanted "Free Palestine," "Israel, get out! Palestine is not yours," "We are all the children of Rafah" and "Ceasefire in Gaza now." Police broke up a separate demonstration at Sciences Po, another Paris university.

In the Netherlands, several hundred protesters demonstrated around the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam campuses. Inside UvA, protesters built barricades using desks and railings to block off the canal side. Riot police used a bulldozer to knock down barricades and detained 169 people. Footage aired by national broadcaster NOS showed a mechanical digger smashing down barricades and tents. Amsterdam police said on X this was "necessary to restore order."

The day before, Zionist thugs charged students at the UvA encampment as police refused to intervene, recalling similar fascist assaults against student protesters at UCLA in the United States.

Protests spread to Swiss universities in Lausanne, Geneva and Zurich. At the Swiss University of Zurich, students rushed the campus, chanting, "We are all children of Gaza," accusing the EU and Switzerland of financing Israel's genocide. Demonstrators staged a sit-in, chanting "Free free Palestine." Students have also occupied the Geopolis building halls at the University of Lausanne, following a protest by 1,000 people.

In Austria, dozens of demonstrators have camped on the campus at the University of Vienna, erecting tents and stringing up banners.

In northern Europe, protests in the Scandinavian countries have also erupted. In Finland, a Students for Palestine solidarity group set up an encampment at the University of Helsinki. In Denmark, students set up a pro-Palestinian encampment at the University of Copenhagen. In Sweden, terrified at pro-Palestinian demonstrations in the country's third-largest city, Malmö, which is set to host the Eurovision Song Contest where Israel will participate, officials are mobilising hundreds of police and bringing in reinforcement officers from Denmark and Norway.

In Italy, students at the University of Bologna set up a tent encampment this weekend. Groups of students

organised similar peaceful protests in Rome and Naples. Italy has continued to export arms to Israel despite assurances last year that the government of neo-fascist Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was blocking such sales.

In Greece, a thousand anti-genocide protesters carrying Palestinian flags and banners rallied in central Athens. They were assaulted by riot police with batons, tear gas and stun grenades as they tried to move toward the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, beneath the Parliament building, and then to scale the gates of the Egyptian embassy. Western-backed Egyptian dictator General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, known as the Butcher of Cairo, is a leading accomplice in the genocide, closing the Rafah crossing to Palestinians.

Some student protests are for now being tolerated, in the countries whose governments are posturing as somewhat sympathetic to Palestinians, whilst continuing economic and military deals with the Zionist regime.

What started with a small camp in the University of Valencia last week has now engulfed all of Spain. Student occupations are being held in Madrid, Barcelona, Pamplona, Malaga, Alicante and Seville. In many Spanish universities, thousands of lecturers have come out in support of the rallies.

University Minister Diana Morant of the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Sumar government has cynically said she is “proud” of the demonstrations, though her government continues to sell weapons to Israel even after falsely claiming such sales had ceased. Morant asked the right-wing Popular Party, which is calling for a crackdown, to “stop lying, inventing hoaxes, misinforming to harass these students. They should stop saying that university students are defending a terrorist group like Hamas because what they are doing is defending peace.”

Morant’s remarks are in line with the government’s attempts to feign sympathy with Palestinians by calling to recognise a Palestinian state and organising nominally pro-Palestinian rallies with the union bureaucracies. These are meant to placate mass global opposition to the genocide, without in any way deviating from support for the Zionist regime.

Similarly in Belgium, where some 100 students occupied part of Ghent University and protests began at Free University of Brussels, Minister of Development Cooperation Caroline Gennez called on EU states to stop exporting arms to Israel. Deputy prime minister Petra De Sutter called for sanctions in *Nieuwsblad* newspaper, saying: “It is time for sanctions against Israel. The rain of bombs is inhumane.”

Just weeks before, Nicole De Moor, Junior Minister for Asylum and Migration, revoked the refugee status of Mohamed Khatib, the European Coordinator of Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network, labeled a “hate preacher” by Belgian authorities. Belgian police have banned Samidoun protests.

Students across the United States and Europe are taking a courageous stand. The struggle against genocide, war and militarism, however, cannot be limited to demands for universities to sever relations with Israeli universities or divest from banks and corporations backing Israel. To overcome police repression, block weapons deliveries to Israel, and halt the genocide in Gaza, the working class must be mobilized in struggle, as in May 1968 in France. Workers must defend student anti-genocide protesters, whose struggle against militarism and repression is vital for the working class.

Capitalism is descending into a mortal international crisis. US-NATO imperialism is dragging mankind towards a nuclear catastrophe, relentlessly escalating war against Russia in Ukraine. The United States, Britain and France are publicly discussing resorting to missile strikes and ground war against Russia, while Russian officials are warning they may launch nuclear counter-strikes on NATO countries.

Mass protests must be organised in every country to demand the end of the genocide in Gaza, the withdrawal of NATO forces from Ukraine and an immediate end to the conflict. The issues students have raised cannot be resolved in universities, but rather in the factories, warehouses, railroads and docks. The working class, the most powerful social force on earth, which creates all wealth through its labor, must leverage that power to force an end to genocide and war. Capitalist barbarism must be countered with the programme of world socialist revolution.



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