

Oppose the police-state attacks on anti-war and anti-genocide protests on college campuses!

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16 September 2024

University administrations, working hand in hand with the Biden-Harris administration, Republican and Democratic state governments, and local, state and national police, are conducting an unprecedented crackdown on the democratic rights of students and of all those seeking to oppose the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza and the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

At college campuses throughout the United States, students face an array of new conduct rules limiting protests, outright prohibition of the encampments that were the focus of the mass student protests earlier this year against the genocide in Gaza, as well as suspensions and banishments of students to punish them for past actions and intimidate them going forward.

On numerous campuses, particularly in California, students have been doubly and triply victimized. Resident assistants, who live in campus housing, have been barred from the campus and thus deprived of both a place to live and a job that pays the rent or a stipend. Others could not gain possession of their own computers or get access to the college network or classrooms, thus making it impossible to complete assignments or meet other course requirements.

Last week, the ACLU Foundation of Northern California, the Center for Protest Law & Litigation, and civil rights attorney Thomas Seabaugh filed a lawsuit against the University of California Santa Cruz, arguing that its decision to ban more than 100 students and faculty from campus after they were arrested for protesting the genocide in Gaza last semester is unconstitutional.

“Our clients did not engage in conduct that posed a

threat of significant injury to anyone or anything,” Seabaugh said. “Banning them on the spot was not just heavy-handed, it was unconstitutional and a violation of basic democratic rights and academic freedoms. We’re suing to ensure that in the coming school year, UCSC officials comply with the law and respect the constitutional limits on their power to ban students and faculty from campus.”

State governments run by the Democratic Party, like those in California, Michigan and New York, have been particularly vicious in targeting student opponents of the Gaza genocide. In Michigan, Attorney General Dana Nessel is bringing criminal charges against 11 University of Michigan students for their actions last spring. Seven are being charged with trespassing and obstructing a police officer, a felony with a maximum two-year sentence. Two are charged with trespassing only, and another two face misdemeanor charges like disturbing the peace.

One of the most flagrantly anti-democratic actions was taken last Monday, September 9, when local Ann Arbor, Michigan police stopped supporters of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) from informing students and campus workers about an on-campus meeting the following day to be addressed by SEP presidential candidate Joseph Kishore.

The police, following the provocative actions of a Zionist professor, barred the SEP supporters from distributing leaflets and campaign literature.

Even more outrageous was the written order handed out by the police barring the four SEP supporters from setting foot on the campus for the next year, under the threat of being arrested and prosecuted for trespassing.

On Monday, the SEP supporters issued a formal objection to the citations, which states:

The presidential election is seven weeks away, and we wish to continue campaigning for our candidate on campus. Each day these bans remain in effect, the weight of the violation of our constitutional rights becomes greater. This is not a tin pot dictatorship where police are allowed to harass supporters of candidates that oppose the status quo, and we plan to assert our rights to the fullest.

Opposition to the escalating attack on democratic rights requires the mobilization of the broadest sections of the working class. Workers must recognize that what is being done today to students opposed to the Gaza genocide is the preparation by the capitalist state for far wider attacks on the democratic rights of the working class as a whole.

It is well known that the mass student antiwar movement of the 1960s became the target of such repressive operations as the FBI's COINTELPRO, which spied on and sought to victimize students active in campaigning against the war in Vietnam. But it must be said that what has already taken place, under the auspices of the Biden-Harris administration and fascist Republicans in Congress, goes far beyond the anti-democratic methods employed then.

The last school year has been characterized by political and media witch-hunting of an unprecedented character, with protests against genocide smeared as “antisemitic,” while students have been teargassed, pepper-sprayed, fired on with rubber bullets, beaten with truncheons, and subjected to various forms of criminal, academic and employment retaliation.

Several university presidents have been forced to resign on the grounds that they supposedly did not crack down hard enough on “antisemitic” protests. And huge pressure has been brought to bear, both from wealthy donors and the government, to make sure that there is no further upsurge of protests this fall.

The preemptive character of this repression is particularly noteworthy. The concern in the corporate elite and its military-intelligence apparatus is not

simply that there will be a repetition of last year's anti-genocide protests, although the Israeli regime is still carrying out massive war crimes against the Palestinian people.

The ruling elite fears that the anti-war sentiments sparked by the events in Gaza have set the stage for a much wider movement of opposition, directed against the US-NATO imperialist war against Russia in Ukraine, the escalating military provocations against Hezbollah, the Houthis and Iran in the Middle East, and the build-up toward full-scale war with China in the Indo-Pacific region, which some top US military figures have predicted could erupt as soon as next year.

In this mounting crisis, the greatest fear of the financial oligarchy is the coming together of the political opposition to imperialist war and the mass struggles of the working class to defend jobs, living standards and social rights like healthcare, education and decent housing. In particular, they fear the growing influence of the Trotskyist movement, the Socialist Equality Party and the IYSSE, which fight consciously to unite the working class and youth in a common struggle for socialism and against imperialist war.



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