

In victory for democratic rights, police rescind citations banning SEP/IYSSE members from University of Michigan campus

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (US)

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In a significant victory, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) have successfully defended their members against the University of Michigan's (U-Mich) attempts to restrict their democratic rights.

On October 15, following hearings, Ann Arbor police rescinded trespass citations that they had issued to block three SEP/IYSSE members from going on campus. The prohibition from stepping on campus has also been withdrawn. A decision on the fourth member is still awaiting a formal hearing with the police.

In a brief note, the Ann Arbor police wrote, "Following consideration of the incident documentation and our discussion, the trespass warning is hereby **rescinded**."

The decision is a result of a determined fight by the SEP to oppose the reactionary attack on free speech.

The case stems from a public meeting on September 10 at the University of Michigan, featuring SEP presidential candidate Joseph Kishore. Members of the IYSSE/SEP were campaigning on the U-Mich Diag (the central quad) when university police approached them, claiming they needed a permit to table.

In an attempt to comply with police demands, the campaign team moved to the public sidewalk to continue leafleting, where they were approached and accosted by Dr. Victor Lieberman, a pro-Zionist professor of history at U-Mich. Following Lieberman's departure, police again approached the IYSSE/SEP members to issue citations to the members for campaigning on a public sidewalk without a permit.

The citations were an obvious and unlawful attempt

to prevent workers and youth at the university from hearing a socialist perspective in opposition to war, genocide, and social crisis.

The U-Mich administration's actions are part of a broader crackdown on political dissent, aimed at silencing voices that oppose the bipartisan war drive and Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza.

The targeting of SEP/IYSSE members is not an isolated incident. It follows a series of repressive measures taken against pro-Palestinian protesters on the U-Mich campus, including the arrest of four protesters on August 28 and the recent announcement of felony charges against 11 students involved in last semester's solidarity encampment for Gaza.

Most recently, on October 7, police attacked a peaceful U-Mich protest against the Gaza genocide on its first anniversary, arresting one protester while brutally assaulting others with pepper spray.

The IYSSE denounces this attack and those that preceded it. These attacks are part of a national bipartisan campaign led by both parties of the US ruling class, the Republicans and Democrats, which aims to strangle the democratic rights of workers and youth opposing genocide in Gaza and US imperialism's expanding plans for World War III.

Major US college and university campuses have transformed into staging grounds for a nationwide assault on democratic rights. In Michigan and at U-Mich, this campaign is led primarily by the Democratic Party.

As revealed in a leaked audio recording of U-Mich President Santa Ono, the US Congress is pressuring

universities to suppress protests against Israel's war crimes, threatening to withhold billions in federal funding. Ono admitted that U-Mich stands to lose up to \$2 billion if it fails to carry out these repressive measures, which are falsely framed as combatting "antisemitism."

U-Mich's new policies now effectively allow any individual to file conduct complaints as a "member of the university," allowing outside consulting firms to gather information and file complaints and sanctions against students on behalf of the university. Additionally, the new conduct policies no longer guarantee an accused student the right to request an appeals panel of students, faculty and staff, effectively erasing due process.

This attack on democratic rights is unfolding as the US government provides full backing to Israel's genocidal war against Gaza. As Israel intensifies its military operations, it has openly declared its goal of annexing northern Gaza and displacing the Palestinian population. With the full support of the Biden administration, Israeli forces are targeting civilians, hospitals, and refugee camps in what amounts to war crimes.

Following a year of protest by millions internationally, the genocide in Gaza is now expanding war in Lebanon and the imminent Israeli attacks on Iran. The war in the Middle East is connected to the US-NATO-led proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and war provocations against China by US imperialism and its allies.

Workers and youth must draw a balance sheet. Appeals to the representatives, institutions and governments of the ruling class have only resulted in a further escalation of war and the attacks on democratic rights.

The struggle to defend democratic rights is inseparable from the fight against imperialist war. The SEP and IYSSE are fighting to turn the anti-war sentiment among workers and youth into a powerful movement against the entire capitalist system.

The attack on SEP/IYSSE members at U-Mich is not just an attack on free speech—it is an attack on the democratic rights of all workers and youth who are opposing war and oppression. The defense of democratic rights must be linked to the struggle to end the capitalist system that drives war and repression.

Join the fight for socialism and defend the right to free speech and political expression!



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