Oppose the attacks on the democratic rights of students at George Mason University! Mobilize the working class in defense of democratic rights!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality at George Mason University
4 December 2024

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality at George Mason University denounces the anti-democratic measures taken against the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) at GMU in Northern Virginia. We demand that the university lift its ban on the two leading members of the student club and that the SJP be allowed their official club status again, with full rights granted as such.

On November 7, Fairfax County and university police, with the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) conducted a Gestapo-like raid of the off-campus home of the two students, one of whom is co-president of the SJP at George Mason and the other is a former president of the same chapter.

The extreme reaction by the university and police stemmed from an event on August 28 where several people spray-painted pro-Palestine messages on the campus sidewalk. No charges or formal accusations have been brought upon the two students who were raided nor is there any indication that the SJP or anyone associated with the SJP did the vandalism.

According to The Intercept, “more than 12 police officers showed up outside at an address in Springfield, Virginia, knocked, broke down the door, and raided the family home of two Palestinian American students at George Mason University.”

The FBI and police “forced the family to gather in the living room while they searched the house. … Some family members were eventually released to attend work, but the rest remained while police conducted their six-hour search.” It adds, “Police seized electronics from the residence, including phones and laptops, but made no arrests.”

Despite this fact, GMU has issued a criminal trespass notice and barred the students from campus for four years, effectively expelling them, according to a petition opposing the ban that has been signed by over 3,400 people.

To add insult to injury, the club ban was never issued to anyone outside of the two students, now without phones and laptops, essentially keeping the student group in the dark about its own status until later that month.

A statement signed by George Mason faculty asks, scathingly:

> Do universities such as GMU routinely send phalanxes of police officers in military fatigues and armored vehicles, and carrying assault rifles, to break down the front door and raid the homes of students during the pre-dawn hours over an allegation of spray painting? Do administrators routinely rush to judgment and issue criminal trespass orders, the kind used to exclude serial sexual predators and stalkers from campus-against students who have been accused of graffiti?

Since the genocide in Gaza began last year and mass protests broke out opposing the criminal actions of the Israeli government, carried out with full support from the United States, universities around the world have been transformed into garrison states.

Student clubs associated with the defense of the Palestinian people have been suspended, banned and criminalized. Brandeis University and Columbia

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University both banned their chapters of the SJP. Authorities have allowed peaceful solidarity encampments to be physically attacked by fascist organizations and police. A chapter of the SJP at the University of Michigan has had its activities suspended based on a complaint by an outside consultant hired by the university.

At Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania, tenured professor of anthropology Maura Finkelstein, who is Jewish, was fired earlier this year for her openness regarding her support for Palestine.

Internationally, administrators at Condell Park High School in Australia banned a 17-year-old student from attending school after he wore a keffiyeh to a graduation event in September. In Germany, the IYSSE was listed as an "anti-constitutional organization" by the Verfassungsschutz (Office for the Protection of the Constitution) for its anti-war stance and strong opposition to German militarism.

In the US, the Democratic Biden administration has been at the forefront of efforts to silence dissent, collaborating with far right and fascist forces in singling out campuses to enforce crackdowns, firings and the abuse of democratic rights.

It must be made clear: The coming weeks and months will see an even larger attack on democratic rights as the fascist Donald Trump returns to the White House. The attack on the SJP at GMU came in the immediate aftermath of the 2024 election.

Following the Democratic Party's loss and the election of Trump, the Biden administration has continued to escalate war abroad in Ukraine and Gaza. Since the election, American-made missiles have been authorized to fire into Russia and the recent ceasefire agreement between Hezbollah and Israel in Lebanon is being used to bide time for a massive escalation against Iran even as the genocide in Gaza rages and Trump promises "all hell to pay."

Trump has met with Biden at the White House in order to pledge his support to the US wars abroad. He is staffing his incoming administration with fascist thugs, avowed enemies of social spending and billionaires committed to cutting social spending and funneling it to fund wars abroad.

Students and youth need a perspective to guide a struggle against the attacks on democratic rights. In doing this, they must draw the political lessons of 14 months of protests against the US-backed genocide in Gaza.

As the IYSSE stated at the beginning of the 2024 fall school semester that while not lacking in commitment and courage: "The protests of the past 10 months have failed to bring about either an end to the genocide or the attack on democratic rights…

"This is because, so far, they have been dominated by middle class forces like the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), which functions as a 'left' faction of the Democratic Party, and the Party of Socialism and Liberation (PSL)."

These forces, "while appealing to the anti-imperialist sentiments of youth with radical rhetoric … have advanced a perspective that threatens to derail and demoralize the protests" by limiting them to attempts to pressure the Democratic Party and various school administrations, who are "tied by a thousand threads to Wall Street and the war machine."

Likewise, they have "attempted to separate the genocide in Gaza from the war in Ukraine and the history of decades of wars by US imperialism." This has led to a failure to understand that "the root cause of the Gaza genocide lies not in the choice of individual governments or politicians, but in the objective crisis of world capitalism and the emergence of an imperialist redivision of the world."

Most critically, these forces "have sought to preempt students and youth from directing their protests … toward the principal revolutionary force in society that can stop the genocide: the international working class."

A turn to the working class, as the only social force capable of liberating society from the stranglehold of the capitalist financial oligarchy, genocide and war, is the only way possible to ensure the defense of democratic rights as well.

Students wanting to fight for this should make the decision to join the IYSSE!

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