

4 additional students arrested at Case Western Reserve University for protesting genocide in Gaza

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On January 9 arrest warrants were issued for four students who were accused of vandalism on the property of Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) in Cleveland, Ohio while protesting the genocide in Gaza. This was preceded by the arrests of four other student protesters who were charged with third-degree felonious vandalism only two months earlier.

Six of the eight individuals that were arrested in both November and January were held in the Cuyahoga County Detention Center for several days before being released. All eight individuals have been banned from campus, thus interrupting their studies and housing.

The arrests were made in relation to a demonstration that took place on November 8, 2024, when students engaged in an act of protest on campus by painting messages and posting flyers about CWRU's financial ties to the Israeli regime, which has been actively committing genocide with the backing of US imperialism since October of 2023.

In response to various protests since the start of the genocide, CWRU's administration has continuously attacked the democratic rights of students by enforcing restrictions on speech and protest activity.

These actions have intensified, especially after the encampments that were organized on campus in the spring of last year. The encampments were part of an international student protest movement demanding an end to the Gaza genocide, which were subject to a vicious police crackdowns across the US and in Europe on the bogus grounds of combating antisemitism.

In an official notice after the incident on November 8, CWRU stated, "Overnight, a group of individuals vandalized multiple buildings, structures and artwork on our campus with paint and glued posters, some of which included what the university considers antisemitic language and symbols."

This claim was used to justify the arrests and charges of third-degree felonies. Students were transferred to the

Cuyahoga County Detention Facility located in Cleveland, which is notorious for its overcrowded and inhumane living conditions. Millions of dollars have been spent by the county to settle lawsuits relating to extreme misconduct in the prison, including physical assault by employees.

The student arrests at CWRU coincided with a federal investigation opened up by the US Department of Education in the waning days of the Biden administration for alleged discrimination against Palestinian, Arab and Muslim students.

Although such investigations by the Department of Education seem promising they are designed to create the illusion of an equitable system. In reality, campuses are given free rein to attack student protesters. Regardless of the results of the investigation, the alleged claims of discrimination speak to the repressive environment that students endure.

A statement previously made public by the Case Western Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) after the second round of arrests were issued declared that the disciplinary actions "escalated the university's repression of pro-Palestinian advocacy," and that the university's decision to "over-charge its own students with third-degree felonies based largely upon their political affiliation and purported damages of nearly half a million dollars lays bare the administrations and President Eric Kaler's politically motivated attempt to silence Palestine advocacy."

A student organizer with the Case Western (SJP), who asked to remain anonymous, spoke to the WSWS about the severity of the situation.

"They are using the police as a suppression tactic. Vandalism is not a crime that hurts other people," the student noted. "These are very serious charges and will have long-term implications for these students. If convicted, this will have a long-term effect on their employment, housing, Social Security and everything. These students are real people; these are serious things."

While the actions on November 8 that led to the arrests were not organized by the SJP, the organization strongly opposes the prosecution of the arrested students at the hands of CWRU.

“The university is seeking to suppress opposition to the genocide in Gaza,” the SJP representative said. “They have tried to paint us and the protesters as antisemitic. This is not a protest against Jewish people, but against the genocide being carried out by the State of Israel. We are not antisemitic, we are not prejudiced to call out what a government is doing.”

The SJP representative also sees the arrests at CWRU as part of the national suppression of student protests over the genocide in Gaza.

“They want to suppress protests everywhere. This is happening in Chicago and in New York at Columbia. The university has hired a major law firm to construct these cases against their students.”

Many of the students at the university question the claim that half a million in property damages were carried out during the demonstration on November 8. A video of the incident, posted as a compilation of different community submissions, shows leaflets and red handprints plastered on a few glass walls and doors.

“Many people did not even see it. This was all cleaned up and taken down by the next day. They are increasing the cost to present the protesters as violent,” the SJP representative noted.

International students who have been involved in demonstrations against the genocide have often faced extreme repercussions, such as in the case of Momodou Taal, a student who was threatened with deportation from Cornell University for his involvement with pro-Palestinian groups.

President Donald Trump signed an executive order Wednesday directing the cancellation of the visas of pro-Palestinian noncitizen college students, opening them up to immediate deportation, as part of his broader evisceration of democratic rights.

“To all the resident aliens who joined in the pro-jihadist protests, we put you on notice: come 2025, we will find you, and we will deport you,” Trump said in the factsheet released by the White House. “I will also quickly cancel the student visas of all Hamas sympathizers on college campuses, which have been infested with radicalism like never before.”

In regard to the consequences that international students face, the SJP member stated, “About 20 percent of Case Western students are international students. Many who are Palestinian, some who don’t have a passport because Palestine is not recognized as a state. What would happen if

they were arrested as felons? The university is seeking to intimidate them from speaking out.”

In 2024, students and young people across the world participated in protests demanding an end to the genocide in Gaza. These protests were met with enormous retaliation from the Biden administration, whose response was to allow universities to brand protesters as antisemitic and proceed with mass arrests.

Administrators at CWRU, as well as universities across the United States, have made it abundantly clear that the rights and livelihoods of their students are of little importance compared to their lack of allegiance to the ruling class.

The life-altering attacks taken against students and young people for their opposition to the genocide are a violation of democratic rights, and must be unequivocally denounced. However, lessons must be taken from the response of the ruling class to popular opposition to the genocide over the past two years.

The genocidal onslaught on Palestinians in Gaza will not be stopped by making moral appeals to university administrations, state and local governments, or any section of the Democratic Party. Additionally, individual acts of protest fail to address the underlying causes of any social, political or economic issue.

The working class is the only revolutionary force capable of putting an end to war and genocide. Students and young people must turn to workers, join the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and wage a political struggle that seeks to overturn capitalism and establish a socialist society based on social need.

If you are a student that would like to speak on conditions at your university or join the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), please fill out the form below.



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