

As Trump Administration cuts \$400 million in funding to university

## **9 anti-genocide students arrested at Columbia University protest against expulsions**

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Barnard College administration at New York City's Columbia University called in the New York Police Department (NYPD) Wednesday after pro-Palestinian students occupied the campus' Milstein Library, the second occupation of a university building in a week. Nine students were arrested.

About 50 students had occupied the building around 1 p.m. and posted stickers and banners on the wall calling for the end to expulsions by Columbia University of students who exercise their rights to speak out against the destruction of Gaza and Zionist historical falsification.

They renamed Milstein to "Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya Liberated Zone," after the Palestinian pediatrician and director of Kamal Adwan Hospital in the Gaza Strip, who was detained by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on December 27 and remains incommunicado.

The students were demanding that Barnard rescind the expulsion of three students, two for interrupting a class on the history of Israel in January and one for participating in the April occupation of Hamilton Hall (renamed Hind's Hall after 5-year-old Hind Rajab who was killed with six members of her family and two paramedics by Israeli fire in January 2024).

As with the February 26 occupation of Barnard's Milbank Hall, the students are demanding a meeting with Barnard President Laura Rosenbury to discuss the expulsions.

At about 4:30 p.m., in a transparent lie, the NYPD claimed that a bomb threat had been made at the building. The NYPD sent no officers from its bomb squad or its Emergency Service Unit, which deploys bomb-sniffing dogs, but instead flooded the campus with dozens of members of its Strategic Reaction

Group (SRG), the famous "anti-terrorist" unit which time and time again over the last 16 months has arrested and brutalized unarmed student protesters throughout New York City. The SRG forced students it had corralled back into the same building which it declared had to be cleared.

On Wednesday, the Barnard Student Government Association (SGA) issued an open letter of protest over the action:

Barnard College has broken a long-standing promise. SGA has been explicitly told by President Rosenbury, in the presence of other senior staff, that the College would never invite the NYPD onto campus. To go against this commitment blatantly violates a precedent that was meant to protect students. Barnard has chosen the repressive path. Any remaining trust between the student body and the administration has been broken after this dangerous decision to use such disproportionate force against students engaging in nonviolent protest ... Calling the police is an act of cowardice. Rather than engage in an honest dialogue with our "community of care." You have chosen to betray your community.

The letter called for an amnesty for all students connected to the occupation, good faith negotiations and a restructuring of Barnard's disciplinary process.

The protests and arrests are only the latest examples of a struggle by students against the policies of

universities—which are now lining up with the fascist program of the Trump administration—against freedom of speech and their institutional support for Israel's ethnic cleaning of Palestine.

On March 4, about 30 law students at New York University (NYU) staged an eight-hour sit-in outside of administrative offices on campus to demand a meeting with NYU President Linda Mills to discuss divestment and amnesty for students that had been suspended for participating in pro-Palestine protests on campus. Dozens of campus security were dispatched to bully and photograph the students.

Administrators refused to meet with the group, Law Students for Justice in Palestine, which later issued a statement that drew a connection between the university's harassment of students, its refusal to divest from investments in companies that support Israel, and the policies of the Trump administration:

We demand that the university, to protect its students and pledge non compliance with the racist xenophobic trump administration and ice ... we demand [NYU president] Linda Mills reopen the university's common spaces, withdraw the police and security personnel who surveil and harass members of our community and grant amnesty for all students and faculty punished for pro Palestine speech.

Later in the day hundreds of students protested the presence of former Israeli prime minister Naftali Bennett at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs. Students at the City University of New York also protested the presence of police on campus who have been deployed to intimidate anti-genocide protesters.

A major push by the Trump administration and university administrations has begun to further restrict democratic rights on US campuses. In a pointed message to all educational institutions that receive federal funds, on Friday, four federal agencies, the Departments of Justice, Health and Human Services, and Education, along with the General Services Administration, announced that \$400 million in contracts and grants were being cut to Columbia,

though which ones were not specified.

This follows a warning on Monday from Secretary of Education Linda McMahon that, "Universities must comply with all federal antidiscrimination laws if they are going to receive federal funding. For too long, Columbia has abandoned that obligation to Jewish students studying on its campus. Today, we demonstrate to Columbia and other universities that we will not tolerate their appalling inaction any longer."

In other words, Columbia must see to it that students who speak out against the mass murder and ethnic cleansing in Gaza and the West Bank are arrested, beaten, put under surveillance and expelled. The university has obliged at every turn, but clearly this is not enough for the fascist Trump administration.

In a further warning, particularly to any international students who voice their opposition to American imperialism and the Zionist state, media reports on Thursday announced that Trump is now preparing a reactionary travel ban that mirrors his travel bans of 2017, although the one being prepared appears to be done with more deliberation.

According to information from sources within the administration that has been leaked to the media, individuals from Cuba, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela and Yemen as well as Afghanistan and Pakistan may be barred completely from entering the United States. The 2017 travel bans prompted mass protests at airports around the country.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations warned all workers, students and others in the United States legally from Muslim countries on the list with visas not to leave the country for at least 30 days.



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