

Oppose the detention of pro-Palestinian activist Mahmoud Khalil! Mobilize the working class to prevent his deportation!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality in New York and New Jersey
9 March 2025

Attend the IYSSE's public meeting this Friday, March 14, "Fascism and the Oligarchy: Trump's Return to Power and the Way Forward," at 6:30 p.m. at The Center (208 W 13th St., Room 310, New York City).

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in New York and New Jersey condemns the detention of pro-Palestinian activist Mahmoud Khalil by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on Saturday night.

A US permanent resident born in Syria, Khalil graduated from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) in December and was a lead negotiator for the Gaza Solidarity Encampment protest in April.

Khalil's detention is a dramatic escalation by the Trump administration, which aims to silence political opposition at the universities in preparation for dictatorship. Above all, the working class must take up the fight for Khalil's freedom and the defense of democratic rights. We reiterate our call: "All students suspended or disciplined by Columbia University and other institutions for participating in anti-genocide actions must be fully reinstated, have their academic standing restored and have all disciplinary records expunged."

Advocates for Khalil have reported to Zeteo and the *Columbia Daily Spectator* that the detention occurred around 8:30 p.m. when Khalil and his eight-months-pregnant wife were entering their home in an apartment building owned by Columbia University. Two agents of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), wearing badges but no identifying uniforms, pushed inside behind them.

The DHS agents initially refused to identify themselves and threatened to arrest Khalil's wife if she did not leave. The agents claimed that the State Department had revoked Khalil's student visa; when his wife retrieved his green card—which is proof that he is a legal resident—they claimed it had been revoked as well. Khalil's attorney, Amy Greer,

demanded over the phone to see a warrant, but the agents hung up on her. According to ICE's website, Khalil is being held at an ICE facility in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Preparations to detain and deport pro-Palestinian international students have been in the making since Trump took office. On January 29, Trump signed an executive order, "Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism," requiring universities to "monitor for and report activities by alien students and staff" relevant to the fight against "campus anti-Semitism."

The order was accompanied by a White House statement from Trump that read: "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. I will also quickly cancel the student visas of all Hamas sympathizers on college campuses, which have been infested with radicalism like never before."

On February 28, Trump's Orwellian "Federal Task Force to Combat Antisemitism" announced that it would be investigating 10 universities, including Columbia and New York University (NYU). As we have previously pointed out:

Columbia University and [NYU] in New York City are central targets of Trump's executive orders. New York is the second most popular state for international students after California, and Columbia and NYU have been prominent centers of pro-Palestinian opposition on US campuses. Columbia University in particular started the movement for "Gaza Solidarity Encampments" on campuses in the US and around the world in 2024.

On February 26, the head of the task force, Leo Terell, told the media, "A lot is going to happen in the next four to five weeks," adding, "When you see universities start losing

millions of dollars in federal funding, you're going to see a change in their behavior. When you see court orders protecting Jewish students, visas of antisemitic students being revoked—you will see a major change.”

In response to a request for comment on Khalil's detention by Drop Site, the DHS stated, “You need to reach out to the White House,” indicating that the order to detain Khalil was given at the highest levels of the state. Republican US Secretary of State Marco Rubio stated on Twitter/X in response to the story, “We will be revoking the visas and/or green cards of Hamas supporters in America so they can be deported.”

Khalil may have been targeted because of a tweet by the far-right Zionist Columbia professor, Shai Davidai, directed to Rubio on Thursday. Davidai, who has been a central leader of Zionist efforts to dox and intimidate pro-Palestinian students at Columbia, wrote to Rubio: “Illegally taking over a college in which you are not even enrolled and distributing terrorist propaganda should be a deportable offense, no? Because that's what Mahmoud Khalil from @ColumbiaSJP did yesterday @BarnardCollege.”

Davidai attached a video showing Khalil participating in the student occupation of Milstein Library on Wednesday, which was called to protest the expulsion of three pro-Palestinian students from Columbia's Barnard College. The NYPD called in a fake bomb threat as a pretext to evacuate the building and arrest nine anti-genocide students. Columbia has since suspended four of the students who were arrested.

Khalil's detention, and the imminent threat of his deportation despite his holding a green card, underscore that students must not waste their energy on pressuring the university administrations to change course. To be blunt, the university presidents aren't calling the shots—the fascist president of the United States is.

The Democratic Party, likewise, cannot be pressured to the left, because it speaks for the same financial oligarchy that Trump does. The genocide in Gaza and the campaign against so-called “antisemitism” began under the Biden administration, and today the Democrats refuse to speak out against Trump except to call for greater imperialist aggression against Russia in Ukraine.

To oppose the genocide in Gaza and prevent Mahmoud Khalil's deportation, students must fight to mobilize the working class against a Trump dictatorship. As we wrote in our previous statement, the Trump administration's “desperate measures do not reflect the strength of the capitalist system but rather its deep crisis and instability. The ruling class fears that today's student movement will ignite broader working-class opposition to fascism, war and the capitalist system itself.”

We concluded:

The IYSSE, the student and youth movement of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), fights for the development of rank-and-file committees in every workplace, as part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, which will connect the defense of the interests of workers with the fight against genocide, war and dictatorship.

There are no easy solutions or shortcuts, but the massive struggles ahead will provide immense opportunities.

The IYSSE calls on all students at Columbia and campuses nationwide to oppose the attack on pro-Palestinian students. We demand the immediate reinstatement of the expelled Barnard students and the dropping of all disciplinary actions against students facing repression for their participation in anti-genocide protests. We call for an end to the criminalization of free speech and the broader crackdown on democratic rights.

The defense of democratic rights and opposition to war can only succeed through the mobilization of the social force capable of challenging the capitalist ruling class—the international working class. This requires a political break from both the Democratic and Republican parties, which, despite their factional differences, are united in their support for genocide, war and dictatorship.

Those who agree with this perspective or want to learn more should attend the IYSSE's public meeting on Friday, “Fascism and the Oligarchy: Trump's Return to Power and the Way Forward,” at 6:30 p.m. at The Center (208 W 13th St., Room 310, New York City).



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