

University administrations collaborate in Trump's reign of terror on campuses

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The administrations of the major universities in the United States are playing an absolutely foul role in facilitating the fascistic reign of terror against free speech and democratic rights being implemented by the Trump administration.

As a component of Trump's efforts to establish a political dictatorship, the White House is overseeing a sweeping assault on student protesters, focused initially on international students. According to Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the administration has revoked hundreds of student visas based on political speech.

Over the past week, students across the country have received emails from the US State Department informing them that their F-1 student visas have been revoked and that they must leave the country at risk of being seized by immigration officials and thrown in detention centers, along with a threat that they may never be allowed back.

These emails are part of the administration's "Catch and Revoke" policy, which includes an artificial intelligence program that monitors social media accounts to identify anyone involved in protests against the genocide in Gaza and opposing the policies of the Israeli state.

Dozens of students have already been seized and thrown into detention centers for deportation, including Mahmoud Khalil, a lawful permanent resident and Columbia graduate student; Rumeysa Ozturk, a Fulbright scholar and Tufts Ph.D. candidate, kidnapped on the streets of Boston by masked ICE agents; and Yunseo Chung, a permanent resident from South Korea who has been in the US since she was seven years old.

Momodou Taal, a UK and Gambian citizen and Ph.D. student at Cornell University, is facing imminent detention and deportation for attending protests against the genocide and in retaliation for a lawsuit he has filed against the Trump administration's illegal and unconstitutional executive orders.

Trump is implementing an American version of *Gleichschaltung*—the Nazis' "synchronization" of all elements of intellectual and cultural life, including the revision of university programs and the purging of scholars,

to correspond with state ideology. Without even the threat of SS troops, university administrations are facilitating Trump's demands and functioning as junior partners.

Harvard University, long regarded as the pinnacle of American academia, is leading the charge. On Wednesday, it was revealed that the director and associate director of Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies—Cemal Kafadar and Rosie Bsheer, respectively—were summarily removed from their posts.

The dismissals were carried out by Interim Dean of Social Science David Cutler, who offered no public justification. As the *Harvard Crimson* reported, this "dramatic shakeup" follows previous moves by the university to sever ties with Palestinian institutions and cancel events.

Last week, Columbia University agreed to a list of demands that included placing its Middle East, South Asian and African Studies Department, and its Center for Palestine Studies under administrative review.

Cornell University, for its part, has remained silent as one of its own—Momodou Taal—is targeted for arrest and deportation. Indeed, it created the conditions for the Trump administration's efforts to deport Taal by attempting to suspend him last year for his involvement in demonstrations against the genocide.

Over the weekend, Dr. Joanne Liu, a pediatric physician and former international president of Doctors Without Borders, reported that a lecture she was scheduled to give at New York University was cancelled due to stated concerns from the administration that references to the mass slaughter in Gaza "could be perceived as antisemitic" and to cuts in international aid programs as "anti-governmental."

The administrations of these universities are generally dominated by the Democratic Party and closely integrated with the corporate and financial elite, overseeing massive endowments and headed by presidents who in many cases have salaries over \$1 million a year. Harvard, for example, has an endowment of \$53.2 billion, the largest in the world, while Columbia's endowment stands at \$14.8 billion.

These institutions are money-making machines, charging

tuition rates that saddle students with lifelong debt while amassing billions in endowments tied up in hedge funds and private equity.

The presidents and top administrators are executives in all but name. Harvard's president, Alan Garber, receives a salary of nearly \$1 million, and he has received millions for sitting on the boards of various pharmaceutical giants. Prior to Trump's re-election, Garber's administration led the attack on student protesters, most infamously by blocking 13 undergraduates from collecting their diplomas during last year's commencement for participating in demonstrations against the genocide. The move was initially overturned by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, only to be reinstated by the Harvard Corporation, which is packed with corporate CEOs and former members of Democratic Party administrations, such as billionaire Penny Pritzker.

The actions of the university administrations underscore the fact that the turn toward dictatorship and the suppression of the most basic democratic rights does not arise merely from the head of Donald Trump. He is realizing, in the form of a presidential dictatorship, a process that is rooted in the oligarchic character of American society. This character infects all of its institutions.

Whatever tactical divisions exist between the Democrats and Republicans, they are united on the essentials. Both parties support the eruption of American imperialism around the globe, from the genocide in Gaza to the preparations for war with China. Both support the war on the working class at home.

Throughout the genocide in Gaza, the Biden administration funneled weapons to the Israeli military while slandering student protesters as antisemites. Now, as Trump escalates to mass deportations, academic purges and the dismantling of entire departments, the Democrats respond with collaboration and complicity.

The trade union apparatus, for its part, is doing nothing to mobilize opposition to the persecution of graduate students—many of whom are members of the United Auto Workers (UAW), the United Electrical Workers (UE) and other unions—just as it is doing nothing to stop, and indeed facilitating, the Trump administration's assault on the working class.

More than two decades ago, the Supreme Court intervened to halt the counting of ballots in Florida and install George W. Bush as president of the United States. At the time, the *World Socialist Web Site* warned that the decision would reveal “how far the American ruling class is prepared to go in breaking with traditional bourgeois-democratic and constitutional norms.” The result of the Supreme Court case, and the absence of any opposition from the Democratic Party, the WSWS wrote, demonstrated that there did not

exist a significant constituency for the defense of democratic rights in the ruling class.

As Trump now erects the framework of a dictatorship, that warning has been vindicated in full.

The social force that can defend democratic rights and halt the descent into dictatorship is the working class.

The crackdown on campuses is inseparable from the broader assault on the working class. The Trump administration is tearing up the union contracts of federal workers, carrying out purges at government agencies that in any way limit corporate profit, dismantling public education and preparing a massive assault on Social Security, Medicaid and other social programs. The repression of students is a warning for what is being prepared against all opposition to the corporate and financial oligarchy.

The Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality call for protests and demonstrations on campuses and in workplaces to oppose the escalating crackdown on free speech and democratic rights. We demand the reinstatement of all those who have been suspended, fired, or silenced for speaking out against the genocide in Gaza, and for the immediate release of those who have been seized for deportation.

The defense of democratic rights and opposition to war cannot be waged on the campuses alone. It requires the independent mobilization of the working class. Students should send delegations to the factories and workplaces, and workers should prepare work actions, independent of the pro-corporate trade union apparatus, to defend all those targeted by Trump's dictatorial actions.

The SEP and IYSSE are fighting to build a socialist movement to put an end to capitalism—the source of war, dictatorship, and inequality—through the expropriation of the financial oligarchy and the establishment of workers' power. This is the only basis on which democratic rights can be secured. We urge all those who agree with this perspective to join our movement and take up this fight.



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