

Michigan Attorney General announces FBI raids targeted pro-Palestinian protesters over “vandalism and property damage”

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Following FBI raids that took place on Wednesday across Michigan targeting pro-Palestinian protesters, Democratic Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel, who directed the raids, announced they were part of a probe into “coordinated criminal acts of vandalism and property damage occurring in multiple counties in southeastern Michigan” totaling \$100,000 in damages.

Nessel’s press release statement, published on Thursday, explained that “officers from multiple agencies executed search warrants at five locations.” To justify the elevation of the probe to a state-level investigation, Nessel stated, “Due to the many, evidently coordinated and related, criminal acts occurring across the jurisdictions of several local law enforcement and prosecutorial authorities, the Department of Attorney General is conducting this unified investigation with the aid of local authorities.”

In her statement, Nessel cites 12 acts of vandalism spread across southeast Michigan in Bloomfield Hills, West Bloomfield, Romulus, Chelsea, Southfield, Novi, Ann Arbor and Plymouth. These include alleged defacement of the properties of University of Michigan (U-M) President Santa Ono and several members of the U-M Board of Regents.

Describing the acts of vandalism, Nessel stated, “The crimes were committed in the middle of the night and in one case upon a residence wherein children were sleeping and awoken.” She continued, “In multiple instances, windows were smashed, and twice noxious chemical substances were propelled into homes.”

Nessel continued, claiming, “At every site, political slogans or messages were left behind.” These slogans included “Divest Now” and “intifada,” common phrases used by pro-Palestinian and anti-genocide

protests.

The raids were executed across Ann Arbor, Canton and Ypsilanti. No one was arrested or charged during the raids, but police and FBI agents seized electronic devices and personal belongings and briefly detained 11 individuals for interrogation. Police broke down the door of at least one of the three raided residences and initially refused to show warrants for the assault. One individual targeted in Canton was required to give a DNA sample.

Nessel’s press release makes clear that the investigation remains open, allowing the possibility of future arrests, charges and raids.

In a statement provided to CNN, John Philo, the legal director at the Maurice & Jane Sugar Law Center for Economic & Social Justice, which is representing two of the individuals targeted in the raids, stated, “The students that were targeted appear to be those that U-M officials believe are most active in on-campus protests—protests that have been loud at times...but which in no way can be characterized as violent or causing significant vandalism.”

Continuing, Philo said, “Other than a shared viewpoint concerning Palestine, a real question exists as to why student campus protesters are being targeted, or is that the point—because they are expressing that viewpoint on U-M’s campus.”

As the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) stated in its initial report on the raids, they are part of a broader campaign by both the Democrats and Republicans to criminalize opposition to US imperialist policy in the Middle East and to suppress the growing movement against the genocide in Gaza.

Throughout the end of March and the first weeks of

April, the Trump administration revoked hundreds of student visas across the country. Students have been picked up by masked federal agents in their homes or off the street, including Columbia graduate student Mahmoud Khalil and Tufts student Rümeysa Öztürk, both of whom remain in detention in Louisiana.

Explaining the political intent of the fascist administration's attack on international students and workers, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, speaking to the media in early April, said, "They're visitors to the country... If they're taking activities that are counter to our foreign—to our national interest, to our foreign policy—we'll revoke the visa."

Rubio included among such thought crimes pro-Palestinian views and opposition to the US/Israeli genocide in Gaza.

The political witch-hunt has impacted students at several major universities across Michigan, including U-M, where the federal government revoked the visas of 22 current and former international students or otherwise terminated their right to remain in the country legally.

On the same day Nessel released her press statement, the 14A-1 District Court in Ann Arbor held a hearing for seven protesters her office charged with felonies for their involvement in the U-M pro-Palestinian solidarity encampment. The encampment was erected and later torn down by police last summer.

The court hearing centered on the defense's motion to disqualify Nessel from prosecuting the case due to her open political alignment with the Zionist Israeli regime and for the numerous personal and financial ties she has to the U-M Board of Regents. From the limited reports on the hearing, it does not appear the presiding judge has disqualified Nessel.

The only apparent outcome of the hearing was the sending of one student defendant to the Washtenaw County Jail for four nights for violating his bond conditions, which barred him from setting foot on U-M property outside of class periods. The student supposedly violated this condition by passing through U-M's Mason Hall between class periods. The student is set to be released Sunday morning.

According to a statement published by the pro-Palestinian Tahrir Coalition, "The date at which the judge will decide whether to move the cases on toward trial," which was initially set for April 7, then delayed

to May 5, "has again been suspended to a potential later date TBD."

The WSWs and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at U-M, the youth section of the Socialist Equality Party, denounce the latest bipartisan measures to intimidate and repress the growing opposition among workers and youth to genocide, war and fascism—which are the byproducts of a political and social crisis in the world capitalist system.

The IYSSE demands the immediate dropping of all charges issued against those protesting the Gaza genocide and unequivocally condemns the FBI-police raids on the homes of pro-Palestinian activists in Michigan. Workers and youth must mobilize in defense of those targeted by Nessel by taking up a fight to defend the unconditional right to protest and organize against imperialist war and oppression.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact