

UCLA police storm pro-Palestinian film screening, arrest 3

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On the evening of April 30, the UCLA administration once again bared its repressive teeth against pro-Palestine students and community members, arresting three protesters during a rally and film screening marking the first anniversary of the infamous Zionist attack on last year's Gaza solidarity encampment.

The demonstration, organized by Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), a group that the university has suspended in a blatant attack on free speech, was met with overwhelming police presence, riot gear and a grotesque display of state-sanctioned intimidation.

About 200 protesters gathered in the evening at Wilson Plaza to screen *The Encampments*, a documentary chronicling the wave of student-led protests against Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza. This film features firsthand footage and testimonies from students who endured state and vigilante violence during the encampments.

However, UCLA's administration shut down the screening with spurious justifications under the so-called "Time, Place and Manner" policy, which is nothing more than a fig leaf for state repression.

When protesters adapted by moving locations—from Wilson Plaza to Bruin Plaza, and later to De Neve Plaza—UCLA Police Department (UCPD) officers, backed by private security and equipped with riot gear, descended en masse. By 9 p.m., in a scene of brazen authoritarianism, police stormed the crowd, seized the film equipment, and arrested protesters under flimsy pretexts.

The arrests and violent suppression come precisely one year after the notorious attack on the pro-Palestinian encampment on April 30, 2024. That night, Zionist thugs hurled fireworks, scooters, and other projectiles at peaceful protesters. For over three hours, police stood by and refused to intervene, allowing the violent mob to terrorize students. The university's refusal to protect

students and their free speech rights underscored its complicity in silencing any challenge to US imperialism and its backing of Israel's genocide in Gaza.

While the Biden administration mouthed platitudes about human rights, it laid the groundwork for today's authoritarian measures under Trump—demonizing anti-Zionist activism, conflating it with antisemitism, and offering unconditional military and financial support to Israel's genocidal campaign in Gaza.

Far from being a bulwark for democratic rights, the Democrats have led the charge in constructing the machinery of repression.

The events at UCLA must be understood within this broader political context. The ruling class has no constituency for the defense of democratic rights. Both Republicans and Democrats serve the interests of US imperialism and the capitalist state. Far from being an aberration, Trump's escalations, now unfolding with chilling speed, are a logical extension of the repressive apparatus meticulously erected by the Democrats.

This escalation has been on full display as the Trump administration targets 900 University of California faculty over their opposition to the Gaza genocide, combining its attacks on pro-Palestine activism with broader assaults on immigrants on campuses, particularly in cases like Mahmoud Khalil, Momodou Taal and Rümeysa Öztürk.

The so-called left wing of the Democratic Party, represented by figures like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, has proven to be nothing but an instrument of imperialist containment. Their tepid statements and hollow gestures are designed to pacify dissent while maintaining their loyalty to the capitalist state and its imperialist interests.

Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez have repeatedly affirmed their support for Israel's "right to defend itself"—code for endorsing mass slaughter—and have done nothing to challenge the Democratic Party's pro-war agenda in any

substantive way.

Meanwhile, the campus unions, especially the United Auto Workers (UAW), have shown their true colors by colluding with university administrations and law enforcement to suppress student activism.

UAW Local 4811 delayed action after the Zionist thugs attacked the UCLA encampment, failing to protect students. When it did respond, it limited strikes to the fraudulent and failed “stand-up” model, weakening the movement. Union officials, fully supportive of “Genocide Joe” Biden at the time, allegedly facilitated police access to dismantle the encampment. Overall, the UAW leadership prioritized collaboration with university, state and political authorities over support for the protesters and their democratic rights.

Adding to this context are recent lawsuits that expose the university’s complicity and overreach: victims of last year’s Zionist assault on the student encampment have filed a lawsuit against UCLA’s administration, seeking accountability for the violent suppression and negligence that endangered student lives.

Additionally, in a significant legal setback for the university’s expanding surveillance ambitions, a judge recently ruled against the University of California’s attempt to assert blanket police access to a student protester’s phone at UC Santa Cruz.

While legal challenges may provide temporary relief or small victories, the struggle for democratic rights and true liberation will not be won in a court of law, but through the organized class struggle of the working class worldwide.

The suppression of the anniversary rally and the arrests of protesters expose, yet again, the utter bankruptcy of relying on any faction of the ruling class or its appendages for the defense of democratic rights. The only viable path forward lies in the independent political mobilization of the working class, uniting students, workers, and oppressed people globally in a common struggle for socialism against the capitalist system.



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