

Oppose the attack on GWU student Cecilia Culver and other students for opposing the genocide in Gaza!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality at George Mason University
27 May 2025

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at George Mason University (GMU) unequivocally condemns the targeted repression of students across the United States who have spoken out against the ongoing genocide in Gaza, including George Washington University (GWU) student Cecilia Culver.

In recent weeks, multiple universities have either withheld or threatened to revoke graduating students' diplomas for using their commencement platforms to denounce the US-backed genocide in Gaza. This is a deeply anti-democratic attack on the First Amendment and freedom of speech.

Among the most outrageous examples are the cases of Logan Rozos at New York University (NYU) and Cecilia Culver at GWU. At NYU, the administration has withheld Rozos' diploma following his powerful commencement address, in which he courageously condemned the Israeli state's actions in Gaza and the role of the United States in supporting them.

Meanwhile, at GWU, Cecilia Culver delivered remarks that urged the university to sever its financial ties and divest from companies enabling the genocide in Gaza. She has since been banned from campus and the issuance of her diploma remains pending. Both speeches enjoyed overwhelming support from the audience, with loud ovations.

Rather than being celebrated for speaking truthfully about the imperialist slaughter of the Palestinians and the complicity of American universities in backing Israel, students have been vilified and punished. These unjust disciplinary actions are part of a broader campaign of political repression targeting anyone for expressing opposition to the genocide in Gaza.

Many other students around the country have made courageous statements against the genocide and are faced with retaliation from their universities, in a clear attempt to suppress growing opposition to imperialism and war.

Other students, such as Mahmoud Khalil, have been arrested by ICE and threatened with deportation or, like Momodou Taal, forced to flee the country to avoid ending up in detention for the "crime" of speaking out against genocide. Numerous artists, including Kneecap, have also been targeted.

In the most far-reaching attack to date, the Trump administration has revoked Harvard University's Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) license, placing over 6,800 international students and visiting scholars at its institutions in danger of being deported, along with their families.

This repression comes in the context of an escalating campaign by the Trump administration, in collaboration with university administrations, to silence opposition to US foreign policy. With the threat of deportation, international students are among the most vulnerable as they face having their visas abruptly revoked solely for engaging in peaceful protest and political expression. Under the fraudulent guise of combating "antisemitism," criticisms of Israel and its war crimes are being equated with hate speech.

The Trump-run Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights has targeted over 60 universities, including GMU, for supposed violations of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

GMU itself has been complicit in welcoming the Trump administration's crackdown on students. In August 2024, the university adopted the International

Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, which effectively equates anti-Zionism and criticism of Israel with anti-Jewish hatred in order to criminalize political dissent.

Furthermore, in November 2024, the administration banned the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) from campus. University police, along with Fairfax County police and the FBI, conducted an egregious early morning raid on the homes of student activists Jenna and Noor Chanaa without any charges or formal accusations. With no due process, the two students were banned from campus for four years. Such actions are meant to intimidate and criminalize opposition against the Gaza genocide.

The IYSSE reiterates our full solidarity with all students facing repression. The targeting of commencement speakers for stating facts about a historic and ongoing atrocity is an attack on the most fundamental of democratic rights. To slander these students and claim they've "misused" their platforms is a transparent excuse to censor anti-war sentiment.

As the US ruling class oversees mass death abroad and deepening inequality at home, it cannot tolerate dissent. The crackdown on student's free speech is one expression of the wholesale assault on democratic rights, in which universities are being rapidly converted into instruments of state repression.

The IYSSE demands the full awarding of degrees and public exoneration of Logan Rozos, Cecilia Culver and all other students facing unjust academic discipline for speaking out against genocide. We call for the immediate termination of all Title VI investigations being used to suppress criticism of Israel under the false pretext of combating antisemitism.

We further demand the full reinstatement of GMU's Students for Justice in Palestine and an end to all disciplinary and legal actions against Jenna and Noor Chanaa. We also renew our demand for the immediate release of all individuals held in ICE detention and the full restoration of visa privileges for international students targeted for their political speech.

We call on students at GMU and across the country to mobilize in opposition to both the Democratic and Republican parties. The repression of student protesters began under the Biden administration, which repeatedly denounced them as "antisemitic" and actively supported the dismantling of campus encampments in

2024. It is now being enormously escalated under the fascist Trump.

Both parties defend capitalism, imperialism and war. The only social force capable of ending war, inequality and repression is the international working class. Students who seek to oppose genocide, defend democratic rights and fight for a future free of war and exploitation must turn to the working class and help build a mass socialist movement.

The repression of students is not just a campus issue, but the spearhead of the attack on the democratic rights of the working class. Measures being used against students today will be used against striking workers tomorrow. We urge all students to join the IYSSE and take up the fight for building socialist consciousness in the working class.



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