

# Oppose the University of Michigan disciplinary charges against pro-Palestinian protesters!

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Over the past two months the University of Michigan (U-M) administration has renewed and escalated its attacks on current and former students for their involvement in on-campus protests against Israel's US-backed genocide of Palestinians in Gaza.

According to an article in the *Michigan Advance* on September 29, U-M has handed down seven charges against pro-Palestinian protesters, again targeting students and alumni. These charges come roughly two months after administrators brought disciplinary charges against 11 protesters, while the campus was largely empty during the summer semester.

The IYSSE at U-M calls on all youth and workers on campus, across the country and internationally to oppose the frame-up of anti-genocide protesters at the University of Michigan and universities throughout the US and around the world. The IYSSE demands that the GEO and AFT defend their members and all students facing disciplinary charges, and take strike action to halt the university's repressive measures.

As was the case in the first round of charges at U-M, the new charges reportedly carry a range of penalties, including academic suspension, re-enrollment ban, formal reprimand and a lifetime ban from the campus. It's currently unclear whether the students and alumni targeted in the first round are among those receiving these new charges. The 11 individuals charged in the first round still face the threat of further disciplinary action.

Those facing charges now include several leaders from the pro-Palestinian Tahrir Coalition—including members from the Students Allied for Freedom and Equality (SAFE, the U-M chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine), the Muslim Student Association, the Arab Students Association and Jewish Voice for Peace—and four former members of the Graduate Employees

Organization (GEO), Local 3550 of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

Four of these 11 were among the pro-Palestinian protesters charged by Democratic Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel for their involvement in anti-genocide protests on the U-Mich Ann Arbor campus. In May, Nessel dropped all charges, including felonies, against roughly a dozen protesters her office charged between September 2024 and January 2025 for their involvement in anti-genocide demonstrations and the U-M solidarity encampment in May 2024.

The real intent behind Nessel's sudden reversal—after months of public prosecution had become a lightning rod for public opposition—is that there was a determination by the Democratic Party that the U-M administration would be better suited to suppress political dissent at U-M, through anti-democratic on-campus mechanisms.

The U-M administrators had already spent much of the previous two years working with the Biden administration and Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer in erecting an anti-democratic apparatus on campus. Since the election of the fascist Donald Trump as president in November 2024, the U-M administration has worked swiftly to accommodate the authoritarian attack on campuses across the country.

This includes the recent formation in the fall semester of the Office of Student Accountability (OSA), and several new amendments to U-M's Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities (SSSR). Previously, all disciplinary actions were overseen by the Office of Student Conflict Resolution (OSCR). The OSCR typically processes disciplinary actions within 180 days of receiving a formal complaint. The OSA, as well as new amendments to the SSSR, appear to allow the administration to now bypass these limits and “align” previous violations to “reflect

changes to federal, state, or university laws” under the Trump regime.

In issuing the charges against protesters, U-M claims the pro-Palestinian protests were disruptive, compromising regular university operations and infringing on the rights of other U-M students. In his communication to *Michigan Advance*, Jarvis stated, “The university has been clear that we will enforce our policies related to protests and expressive activity, and that we will hold individuals accountable for their actions in order to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all.”

In effect, creating an “inclusive environment” for defenders and apologists for the genocide inflicted by Israel in Gaza means punishing and excluding those who publicly oppose the genocide and call it what it is.

Over the last two months, U-M has also wielded this argument to suppress the Tahrir Coalition’s “Freedom School,” which was intended as a week-long art exhibit featuring teach-ins and social events. Just days into the events, the university’s Division of Public Safety and Security mobilized and removed it from campus grounds.

Over the past two years, the university administration has made sweeping changes to its conduct policy and internal operations, with the sole intent of restricting the democratic rights of students and workers on campus in response to growing opposition to the Gaza genocide. Revisions to the conduct code made by the Board of Regents enable the administration to define virtually any protest action it wishes to suppress as “disruptive” to the university’s functioning.

On this basis, it allows the administration to subject students, staff and faculty to a wide range of disciplinary measures, including the charges brought against students and alumni. The OSCR itself has received several modifications to serve this end, most significantly the Regents’ July 2024 revision to the student conduct code, which created the Student Conduct Investigator position under the OSCR.

The investigator works directly with the U-M police and surveillance networks to collect information and file complaints against students, faculty and staff on behalf of the university. U-M augmented this operation with the hiring of private investigators employed by Detroit-based City Shield to the tune of \$800,000 between June 2023 and September 2024.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality at the University of Michigan (IYSSE at U-M) demands an end to disciplinary hearings and the dropping of all charges. This is a witch-hunt against students and

workers whose only “crime” is to have opposed the genocide in Gaza. Pro-Palestinian students and workers face slanderous accusations of antisemitism for peacefully protesting against the war crimes of US imperialism and the Zionist Israeli regime.

Despite it having been two months since the initial round of disciplinary charges were issued against their alumni members and students, the GEO and AFT bureaucracy have not taken any measures to defend workers and youth except for a paltry statement issued on the GEO’s website and distributed through its Twitter/X account.

While acknowledging the “grave threat” the charges pose, and the parallel between U-M’s attack on democratic rights and the authoritarian nature of the fascist Trump administration, the union bureaucracy makes no calls for mobilizing workers and youth to take action to defend their democratic rights.

The charges are part of a national campaign to suppress opposition to US imperialism’s crimes abroad, directed in Michigan by Democratic Governor Whitmer and coordinated at U-M with the Democrat-dominated Board of Regents. Between 2023 and 2024, the Democratic Biden administration served as the nerve center for this national repression campaign.

The IYSSE at U-M supports the Socialist Equality Party’s (SEP) call for workers and youth to take the initiative by forming rank-and-file committees in every workplace, school and neighborhood to defend their coworkers, their families and their communities. The SEP is spearheading the building of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), to unify workers across all industries and countries into a political movement against dictatorship, war and capitalist oligarchy.

Internationally, opposition to the Gaza genocide is emerging in record mass protests once more, drawing tens of millions of workers and youth around the world into struggle with the interests of world imperialism. Students, workers and youth at U-M and other universities looking to oppose Trump’s dictatorship, the Gaza genocide and war must take up the fight for socialism and join the IYSSE and SEP today.



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