

More time behind bars than Trump

2 Pennsylvania students remain imprisoned 4 days after anti-ICE protest as “Quakertown 5” face felony charges

Jacob Crosse
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Five teenagers arrested last Friday after police attacked an anti-ICE student rally in Quakertown, Pennsylvania are now facing felony aggravated assault charges, according to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Notably, no charges have been filed against Quakertown Police Chief Scott McElree, who was captured on video in plain clothes grabbing students by their shirt collars and placing a teenage girl in a chokehold.

The *Inquirer* reported that the five teens “face charges of aggravated assault and related crimes,” citing two people with knowledge of the case who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the ongoing investigation.

More than four days after the police assault, the cops have refused to release the teens’ names, ages, or specific charges. Despite tracking the students after they left the campus on Friday, police have refused to provide a detailed timeline of events leading up to the attack. They have withheld body camera footage and offered only a brief statement claiming police intervened after students were “throwing snowballs” and “blocking traffic.”

The paper confirmed that only children were arrested during the incident, contradicting earlier reports that an adult had been taken into custody.

A 17-year-old girl who attended the protest but was not arrested told the *Inquirer* that students were speaking with a uniformed officer when Chief McElree “barged onto the sidewalk” and grabbed a teenage boy by the back of the neck.

The students did not know the man in plain clothes

was the police chief. “All the kids thought he was a counter protester. So everyone started to protect their friends.”

She said she saw McElree throw one student to the ground and choke another. At least three students suffered significant injuries. One student’s nose was broken while a separate student suffered a chin injury that required stitches.

The teen recorded part of the encounter. “It was really scary, because it was a group of kids versus this really angry man.”

The students were held for over 72 hours before appearing before a judge Tuesday morning in a more than three-hour hearing that was closed to the public. Prosecutors declined to answer reporters’ questions after leaving the courtroom.

Attorney Ettore Angelo, representing one of the teenagers, told the *Inquirer* that his 15-year-old client was released to her parents and placed on house arrest. She faces aggravated assault, a felony punishable by up to five years in prison.

NBC10 Philadelphia reported that three teens were released Tuesday, while two remain in custody.

Public anger was evident Monday night at the Quakertown Borough Council work session. North Penn Now reported that nearly 70 residents packed the typically sparse meeting.

Once public comment began, the microphone “became a relay baton,” the paper reported with repeated demands for the immediate suspension or removal of Chief Scott McElree and the release of the five students.

Frank Bauer, an Air Force veteran and father of three daughters, said: “The reason the eyes of the public are now on Quakertown is because of the response to those students. Public video and credible reporting have raised serious questions about deescalation and treatment of minors.”

A student named Colin told the council: “I do not feel very safe going back to school tomorrow... I feel that everybody who was arrested at the scene should be released to their parents immediately. In addition to the chief, I believe that every police officer that was present on the scene that day should be investigated.”

Another student connected the incident to prior protest experiences following the murder of George Floyd: “We had to move out onto the road against the wishes of the borough to make sure our voices were heard... Everything about this is disgusting.”

The prosecution of the Quakertown 5 expresses the fascistic and class character of the US government and its so-called justice system. Students peacefully protesting Trump’s “mass deportation program,” which serves as the spearhead of dictatorship, after being attacked by police, have already spent more days behind bars than Trump has for any of his numerous crimes. They have spent more time in detention than Trump did for the failed January 6 coup.

These teenagers now face the possibility of spending years in prison, a significant portion of their young lives, while the billionaire president and his criminal administration continue to cover up the murders of American citizens in Minnesota, prepare for illegal war against Iran, carry out deadly murders in the Caribbean and Pacific, and suppress evidence of their own criminal conduct exposed in the Epstein files.

Trump is able to carry out these attacks, from mass deportations to his return to the presidency after a failed coup, because of the Democratic Party. Following January 6, Biden and the Democratic leadership refused to pursue serious accountability in the name of “unity” with their Republican colleagues, prioritizing record military budgets and the expansion of US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, as well as unwavering support for the genocide in Gaza.

Days after the police assault in Quakertown, no leading Democrats have spoken in defense of the students or backed calls for McElree to resign or face prosecution. The Democrats defend the police no less

than the Republicans. Since Trump’s return to the White House, they have repeatedly backed funding measures that enable the escalation of the immigration police and the construction of a network of concentration camps, while supporting US imperialism abroad. The Democrats defend the same capitalist system that produced Trump and that is driving society toward fascism and war.

The defense of democratic rights, including the right of children to protest without the threat of police violence and years-long prison sentences, requires a break with the parties of capital and the building of an independent movement in the working class, grounded in socialist consciousness, that defends the rights of students and workers, regardless of where they live or their immigration status.



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