

UCLA, Los Angeles schools chief targeted by Trump administration

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On the day of President Trump's fascistic State of the Union address, the Department of Justice officially filed an 81-page federal lawsuit against the University of California system, focusing on the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

The suit alleges that UCLA violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by engaging in a "pattern or practice of discrimination" by failing to prevent and correct an "antisemitic hostile work environment" for Jewish and Israeli faculty and staff in light of the campus protests over Israel's genocidal war in Gaza following the October 7, 2023 Hamas attacks.

The complaint claims that the spring 2024 encampment protesting the slaughter in Gaza functioned as a "Jew Exclusion Zone." It alleges that UCLA ignored complaints of antisemitism from Jewish and Israeli faculty and staff, permitted harassment and ostracism and failed to prevent assaults, vandalism including swastikas, and the blocking of campus access. According to the DOJ, some employees took leave or resigned as a result. The lawsuit seeks court-ordered policy changes and monetary damages.

Also on Wednesday, the Federal Bureau of Investigation raided the headquarters of Los Angeles Unified School District and Superintendent Alberto Carvalho, an outspoken critic of Trump and ICE raids. Together, they constitute an extraordinary and coordinated intervention by Trump, aimed at intimidating opposition and reasserting state authority amid a rapidly intensifying class struggle.

Last year, Los Angeles became an early training ground for Trump's military operations, followed by operations in Washington D.C., Minneapolis and other major cities.

Los Angeles and the state of California are becoming a flashpoint of the class struggle. A four week strike by 31,000 Kaiser Permanente workers was ended this week without a contract, only through unilateral action by the union bureaucracy. Around 40,000 graduate students in the University of California system have voted for strike action; in 2024, the same workers struck against police assaults against student Gaza protests. In LAUSD, some 65,000

workers, including teachers and support staff, have authorized potential strike action.

The UCLA lawsuit represents the latest stage in a protracted offensive. By the summer of 2025, federal authorities had escalated from investigation to open financial punishment. Roughly \$584 million in UCLA research grants, nearly 800 awards from the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy, were frozen.

This financial strangulation also affected other campuses, most prominently Columbia University, as part of a nationwide campaign to discipline universities deemed insufficiently aggressive in policing pro-Palestinian speech.

Last August, Trump demanded \$1.172 billion from the University of California, including a \$1 billion fine and a \$172 million compensation fund. The move was pure coercion. Federal Judge Rita Lin later issued injunctions restricting the government's use of grant freezes as leverage, underscoring the legally dubious character of the administration's tactics.

Separately, UCLA reached a \$6 million settlement with several Jewish students and a professor who alleged discrimination during the protests. The new DOJ lawsuit insists that this was inadequate and that broader judicial enforcement is required.

The narrative advanced by the federal government inverts reality.

The defining event at UCLA in spring 2024 was a violent attack on the April encampment by a far-right mob, not the alleged creation of a "Jew Exclusion Zone." On the night of April 30–May 1, pro-Israel vigilantes, some armed and masked, assaulted participants with wooden planks, metal bars, chemical irritants and incendiary devices, causing fractures, burns, lacerations and alleged sexual violence.

The attack unfolded in full view of campus security and law enforcement, which failed to intervene. When the mob withdrew, police targeted the encampment, using flashbangs, less-lethal projectiles and mass arrests, while no attackers were detained. Injured students and faculty later filed legal

action, citing UCLA's failure to protect them.

The lawsuit is a brazen attack on political dissent. It rests on the premise that sharp criticism of Israel, Zionism or US foreign policy can be treated as unlawful discrimination.

The protests at UCLA were part of a broader wave of opposition to the US-backed Israeli assault on Gaza. Students demanded divestment from organizations tied to the war and there is mounting opposition to the bipartisan military budget exceeding \$1 trillion, passed while social programs face cuts and inequality reaches historic highs.

The Trump administration, representing a financial oligarchy enriched by decades of war and austerity, is seeking to criminalize this opposition. The message is that no criticism of US imperialism and its alliances will be tolerated in academic spaces.

A \$1 billion fine would devastate an already strained university system. Public higher education in California has been subjected to years of underfunding, tuition hikes, privatization and the erosion of working conditions. Under Democratic administrations, the University of California has imposed austerity on staff and students.

In fact, California Democrats have played a central role in preparing the ideological and administrative groundwork for this attack.

For years, leading Democratic politicians and university administrators have conflated anti-Zionism and criticism of Israeli state policy with antisemitism. Under the banner of combating "bias," they have expanded bureaucratic oversight, created task forces and adopted vague definitions that blur the line between genuine antisemitism and political speech.

The unanimous passage and signing of California's AB 715 exemplifies this trend. Framed as antisemitism prevention, the law establishes new state offices and broad standards empowering investigations and sanctions for supposed bias. In reality, such measures erect an apparatus for monitoring and policing political expression.

Within the UC system, administrators adopted "zero tolerance" protest policies, restricted encampments and tightened conduct rules. These measures were often justified as necessary to curb antisemitism, normalizing the idea that political protest constitutes a civil rights violation.

Democrats also legitimized the use of "civil rights" complaints and disciplinary investigations to target critics of Israeli policy. Universities developed bureaucratic internal investigations, event restrictions, expanded policing and more, that the federal government now exploits on a far larger scale.

The trade union apparatuses have functioned as accomplices in this process.

The UAW bureaucracy, representing many academic

workers, repeatedly stalled and limited action. Strike authorization votes were announced only after intense rank-and-file pressure.

At UCLA, union officials who claimed to support the encampment were present as police prepared to clear it. Video and eyewitness accounts indicated that union representatives permitted police access through barricades, facilitating the sweep.

Other unions representing campus and public sector workers, including affiliates of the AFT, NTEU, AFSCME and SEIU, discouraged coordinated strike action and sought to channel opposition into safe, procedural avenues.

By isolating struggles and subordinating them to the Democratic Party, these organizations have helped create the conditions in which the federal government can intervene with sweeping repressive measures.

The defense of democratic rights and public education cannot be entrusted to the courts, university administrators or the Democratic Party. Nor can it be left in the hands of union bureaucracies that have demonstrated their willingness to contain and dissipate mass opposition.

As inequality deepens and social conflict intensifies, the ruling class is moving to curtail democratic forms of rule. Academic freedom, free speech and the right to strike are increasingly incompatible with a social order dominated by oligarchic wealth and permanent war.

The defense of these rights requires the independent mobilization of the working class, uniting university workers, students, healthcare workers and educators in a common struggle. Only through such a movement, directed against the subordination of society to profit and militarism, can public education and democratic freedoms be secured.



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