

The Gaza War and the Global pro-Palestine Protest Phenomenon: A Comprehensive Report

On May 19, 2024, fierce fighting continued in northern Gaza, with Israeli jet, helicopter, and artillery attacks reported on the Jabalia refugee camp as Doctors Without Borders warned that al-Awda Hospital in the area had completely run out of drinking water.¹

Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi calls for an international probe into "war crimes" committed during Israel's war on Gaza. The tough words come after Israel killed 31 people in the Nuseirat refugee camp and intensified air and ground attacks across Gaza.²

On May 19, 2024, there was an escalated campaign of Israeli airstrikes and fighting in northern Gaza, an area that has been predominantly cordoned off by Israeli forces for several months. The United Nations humanitarian chief has warned of "apocalyptic" consequences due to aid shortages in Gaza, where Israel's military offensive in the southern city of Rafah has "blocked desperately needed food."³ Martin Griffiths, the UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, said on May 19, 2024, that:⁴

If fuel runs out, aid doesn't get to the people where they need it. That famine, which we have talked about for so long, and which is looming, will not be looming anymore. It will be a present. And I think our worry, as citizens of the international community, is that the consequence is going to be hard. Hard, difficult, and apocalyptic.

Israeli tanks and warplanes continued to bombard parts of Rafah over the weekend. An Israeli airstrike on May 19, 2024, killed 20 people in central Gaza, mostly women and children. A separate airstrike in Nuseirat resulted in a further five deaths.⁵

Very recently, Israel's intensifying air and ground attacks killed 70 Palestinians in Gaza. The Israeli army has attacked Rafah, where the UN says 800,000 civilians have been newly displaced by the assault. It has also renewed attacks on northern and central areas of Gaza that were previously considered under army control. Palestinian fighters are now battling Israeli troops in Jabalia, northern Gaza, and southern Rafah city in some of the fiercest engagements of the war.⁶

At least 900,000 Palestinians have been forcibly displaced yet again over the past week as Israel ratchets up its deadly incursions into Gaza.⁷

Israeli forces intensified attacks across the Gaza Strip, killing at least 20 people in the Nuseirat refugee camp and nine Palestinians in Gaza City.

The attacks followed a day of relentless Israeli bombardment that killed at least 64 people across Gaza, including 28 people killed in a strike on a residential block near Kamal Adwan Hospital in the north and eight killed while queueing for water in al-Faluja, also in the north.

Fierce fighting is continuing across Gaza, with the Israeli military announcing that two of its soldiers have been killed in battle in southern parts of the enclave.⁸

On May 18, 2024, Israeli troops and tanks pushed into parts of a congested northern Gaza Strip district that they had previously skirted in the more than seven-month-old war, killing and wounding dozens of Palestinians, medics and residents said.

Armed forces edged into streets so far spared the ground offensive, residents said. In one strike, medics said 15 Palestinians were killed and dozens wounded.

The Gaza health ministry and the Civil Emergency Service said teams received dozens of calls about possible casualties but were unable to carry out any searches because of the ongoing ground offensive and the aerial bombardment.⁹

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) said more than 630,000 people had fled Rafah since the offensive began on May 6.¹⁰

Now with much of Gaza in ruins, the humanitarian crisis drawing criticism from even Israel's close ally the US, and Hamas's leaders on the ground neither killed nor captured, criticism of how Netanyahu is conducting the war is increasingly fierce and public.

As Israeli troops pushed into Rafah last week and returned to parts of northern Gaza it claimed were cleared of Hamas months ago, a former Mossad deputy director turned opposition MP described the campaign in Gaza as a political, economic, and military failure.¹¹ He claimed that:¹²

"This is a war without aim and we are unequivocally losing it. We are forced to go back and fight again in the same areas, losing soldiers, losing in the international arena, destroying relations with the US, and the economy is collapsing. Show me one thing we are succeeding in."

For months, Netanyahu has dodged questions about what will come after the war, saying Israel must focus on "destroying Hamas." Critics say he has no incentive to end a war when peace will bring an official reckoning with the political, military, and intelligence failures.¹³

As Israeli forces pushed further into Rafah, which had been the main gateway for aid into all of Gaza, humanitarian organizations warned that not enough food was getting into an enclave which the US says faces an imminent famine.

Philippe Lazzarini, the head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said that since Israel's Rafah operation began, there had been a massive movement of people. "Nearly half of the population of Rafah or 800,000 people are on the road having been forced to flee since the Israeli forces started the military operation in the area on 6 May," he said.¹⁴

Earlier, on May 17, 2024, invading Israeli forces battled Hamas fighters in Jabalia in the north of Gaza in some of the fiercest engagements since they returned to the area a week ago. Hamas says Palestinians will continue to confront the ground invasion of Rafah and other places in

Gaza “no matter how long the aggression lasts and regardless of its form.” More than 630,000 people had by then fled Israel’s advance on southern Rafah with another 100,000 had escaped from the ground assault on the north.

Today, the Israeli military is determined to take full military control of northern Gaza. Israel claimed its forces cleared Jabalia months earlier in Gaza, however, resistance fighters have continued to operate in the area and target invading forces.¹⁵

The Israel Defense Forces claimed troops killed more than 60 resistance fighters in Jabalia in recent days and located a weapons warehouse in a “divisional-level offensive” but failed to provide any evidence backing up their claims. A divisional operation would typically involve several brigades of thousands of troops each, making it one of the biggest of the war.¹⁶

Before the war, Jabalia was home to the largest refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, with more than 100,000 people packed into 0.5 square miles, according to the UN. Until recently, Israel claimed that the last four Hamas battalions were hiding out in Gaza’s far-southern city of Rafah, on the Egyptian border.¹⁷

Earlier, on May 17, the Israeli army invaded Rafah, vowing to wipe out Hamas, which had about 30,000 fighters in the Gaza Strip, before October 7.¹⁸ On May 17, 2024, Israeli tanks and warplanes bombarded parts of Rafah. The escalating assault has sent hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fleeing from what was one of the few remaining places of refuge.¹⁹

On May 17, 2024, aid trucks began moving through a temporary US-built pier off the Gaza Strip. There was now growing international pressure to get more supplies into the besieged coastal enclave, where hundreds of thousands face an acute humanitarian crisis.²⁰

At least 35,456 Palestinians have been killed and 79,476 wounded in Israel’s military offensive on Gaza since October 7, 2023. Some 1,139 Israelis were killed in the October 7 attacks and 250 people were taken hostage, with 132 still missing.²¹

In the last two days, at least 60 people were killed and 80 wounded by Israeli attacks. Gaza faces a humanitarian crisis, with the head of the UN’s World Food Program determining a “full-blown famine” is already underway in the north. About 80% of Gaza’s population has been driven from homes. Much of Gaza is damaged or destroyed, including nearly 90% of school buildings, according to aid group estimates. Earlier, Israel launched a large-scale offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip to retaliate against Hamas.²²

Meanwhile, an unprecedented phenomenon has appeared on the global landscape which wasn’t expected at all. A sudden wave of pro-Palestinian demonstrations and sit-ins spread at universities across the US and ten on several campuses worldwide. The credit for leading the global wave belongs to American university students who have a legacy of public protests emanating from their institutions that have been effective in the politics of the country. The

current protest movement is certainly a part and parcel of that proud legacy that makes the American university system the most prized in the world. It could have only happened in America. The students of the world admire this American tradition and wish to emulate it.

Let us briefly trace the development of the student protest movement to comprehend the phenomenon in a better manner.

The pro-Palestine protests at US universities began after the police crackdown was seen on demonstrations at Columbia University on April 18. Columbia University is one of the most prestigious universities in the US. It has now emerged as the center for student activism since Israel's war on Gaza began. On April 19, more than 100 protesters were arrested on the campus as police cleared an encampment set up by students.

Since then, hundreds of individuals have been detained as a result of protests that have appeared on college campuses around the country. Students at campuses across the U.S. responded immediately by setting up encampments and calling for their schools to cut ties with Israel and businesses that support it. The fresh wave of student activism against the war in Gaza was sparked by the arrests of at least 108 protesters at Columbia University on April 18, after administrators appeared before Congress and promised a crackdown. Since then, tensions between protesters, universities, and the police have risen, prompting law enforcement to act in some of America's largest cities.²³

What has changed the political landscape wasn't at all expected. In a perplexing and surprising development, protesting students began calling for their universities to divest from arms firms that supply to Israel and in some cases sever links with universities in Israel.²⁴

Students' protests were held from Columbia University in New York City to the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). Protests at Columbia University led the school to cancel its main graduation ceremony in favor of smaller gatherings.²⁵ On April 22, Columbia administrators announced that classes would be held in hybrid mode until the end of the spring semester. Students maintained a protest encampment in support of Palestinians on April 26, 2024, at Columbia University in New York. Large-scale protests on university grounds have spilled over to at least 50 other campuses around the world, including Yale University, Virginia Tech, University of Texas at Austin, University of California at Berkeley, American University, Arizona State University, Indiana University Bloomington, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Michigan State University East Lansing Campus, Morehouse College, New York University, Ohio State University, Rice University, Roosevelt University, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Stanford University, Swarthmore College, Temple University, The City College of New York, The New School, Tufts University, University of California Berkeley, University of California Los Angeles, University of Chicago, University of Colorado, University of Connecticut, University of Maryland Baltimore County, University of Michigan Ann Arbor, University of Southern California in Los Angeles, University of Texas Arlington, University of Texas Austin, University of Texas Dallas, Washington University, and George Washington University

By April 29, at least 900 students and faculty members had been arrested as protesters continued to demand a ceasefire in Gaza and divestment from companies enabling Israel's nearly seven-month war on Gaza. The protests have grown violent as law enforcement agencies have tried to remove students and faculty from encampments and protest sites.

Several students had been suspended, put on probation, and, in rare cases, expelled from their colleges. The protesting students received threats were subjected to abuse and received no protection from their institutions.

Some universities had had to cancel graduation ceremonies while others have seen their buildings, quadrangles, and courtyards occupied by the protesters and in some cases by encampments.²⁶

At least 900 students and faculty members have been arrested in the US over the past 10 days as protesters continue to demand a ceasefire in Gaza and divestment from companies enabling Israel's nearly seven-month war on Gaza. The protests have grown violent as law enforcement agencies have tried to remove students and faculty from encampments and protest sites.

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James J Zogby, in his insightful article "The impact of the student protests on Biden's re-election," published in the Washington Watch, published April 30, 2024, maintained that:²⁸

The leadership of the protesting students has been disciplined and eloquent in their demands for a ceasefire and an end to the genocide in Gaza. Many have also called on their universities to divest funds from entities contributing to the Israeli war effort. The protesters were peaceful, though purposefully disruptive. At times they've occupied central locations on campus. They've also chanted, as demonstrators won't do. Yet, as noted by respected observers who've visited the protest sites, the protests have been peaceful and orderly...With the ire of the students directed not only at Israel's genocidal behaviors in Gaza but also at how the Biden administration has enabled this war to continue, the way these campus protests are playing out does not bode well for the President during this election year.... Through it all, the Biden White House has demonstrated only limited concern, apparently convinced that they'll weather this storm and still defeat Donald Trump in November. They dismiss polls showing the President losing support among young and "minority" voters. This is a dangerous miscalculation. As primary elections in several states have demonstrated, there is a hemorrhaging of support for the President's reelection. And as repression against student demonstrators continues, that opposition is solidifying. Should the war continue for several more months and the scene at this summer's Democratic Convention in Chicago be as ugly as it was in 1968, many young voters will be hard-pressed to vote for Mr. Biden. They won't vote for Mr. Trump. Most likely they'll either vote for a third party or not vote at all.

By May 1, 2024, protesters had assembled across a minimum of 30 US universities in the past month, frequently setting up tent encampments to voice their dissent against the escalating death toll resulting from Israel's conflict in the Gaza Strip. 29

By May 2, student protests had escalated in the US. Students rallied or set up tent encampments at dozens of schools across the US, expressing opposition to Israel's war in Gaza and demanding schools divest from companies that support Israel's government. Many of the schools had called in police to quell the protests.30

Among an array of demands, several protest movements have called for their schools to divest from Israel or weapons manufacturers related to the war. They have accused administrators across the country of weaponizing public safety and disingenuous claims of "antisemitism" to crack down on protests.31

The most recent bout of arrests also included 14 protesters at Tulane University in New Orleans, as well as arrests at the University of South Florida and the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

But the White House appeared to back the crackdown on the protesters on May 1, 2024, linking the demonstrations to anti-Semitism.32

Meanwhile, the Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) group condemned both the NYPD and Columbia University's actions. Stefanie Fox, the group's executive director said, the school was on the wrong side of history once again as it was "in its oppression of the student anti-war movement of 1968, and wrong again in its oppression of the student movement against South African apartheid in 1985".33

After hundreds of arrests across American universities, tensions had been further escalated. Students are refusing to capitulate and end the stir over Israel's military actions in Gaza, with incidents of arrests in New York and clashes in California. In New York City, approximately 282 arrests were recorded by the NYPD at Columbia University and the City College of New York from very early May 1, 2024. This crackdown coincided with the clearance of students who had occupied Columbia University's Hamilton Hall since April 30.34

Once a symbol of activism during South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle, Hamilton Hall was dubbed "Hind's Hall" in memory of six-year-old Hind Rajab, tragically killed with her family by Israeli forces in Gaza. Many of those behind the protest were claimed to be "outside agitators" with no association with the university, according to New York City Mayor Eric Adams. Adams stated that young protesters "are being influenced by those who are professionals at radicalizing our children". 35

Deputy Commissioner of Operations emphasized Columbia University's request for police assistance in reclaiming their campus for the NYPD, Kaz Daughtry, who stated that the police were "dispersing the unlawful encampment and persons barricaded inside of university buildings and restoring order." 36 Tensions soared at UCLA as pro-Israel counter-protesters clashed with pro-Palestine demonstrators. In response to escalating violence at UCLA, intervention was made by the Los Angeles Police Department at the university's request, addressing multiple incidents of aggression within the encampment. 37 Despite the turmoil, pro-Palestine demonstrators at UCLA remained steadfast, with their resilience highlighted by reporter Rob Reynolds amid adversity. Arrests extended beyond New York, with 14 protesters being detained at Tulane University in New Orleans, alongside arrests at the University of South Florida and the University of Wisconsin, Madison. The violence at UCLA was denounced as abhorrent and inexcusable by Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass. The police crackdown at Columbia University was defended by New York City Mayor Eric Adams, attributing the protests to individuals unaffiliated with the institution. 38

These protests have "presented a dilemma for university administrators as they navigate between upholding free speech rights and addressing concerns of criminal behavior, anti-Semitic rhetoric, and hate speech."39

As pro-Palestinian protests continue to rock universities across the US, the Biden administration, whose backing of Israel has sparked ire among many demonstrators, is also wrestling with finding a delicate balance on the issue.40

White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre on May 1, 2024, condemned "a small percentage of students" who have been disruptive after a night of clashes and arrests on several campuses. "Students have the right to feel safe. They have the right to learn and to do this without disruption. And they have a right to feel safe on campus," Jean-Pierre told reporters, adding: "We are going to be forceful here and continue to underscore how anti-Semitism is hateful speech."41 She also acknowledged the war in Gaza was "painful" and "assured that Biden supported the right to peaceful protest."42

An article entitled "As student protests shake US campuses, Biden mum," published in Inquirer, on May 2, 2024, aptly argued that:43

What does Joe Biden have to say about the rowdy student protests against Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza that have rocked American college campuses in recent weeks? Almost nothing. The US president has so far avoided the contentious subject as it is likely to complicate his reelection campaign...Biden's reluctance to weigh in on the biggest and most prolonged unrest to rock US campuses since the Vietnam War protests of the 1960s and 70s has not gone unnoticed by Trump....The protests put Biden in a difficult spot because, for his coalition of voters from 2020, he relied heavily on young people in addition to Muslims and Arab Americans," said Alex Keena, who teaches political science at Virginia Commonwealth University. James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute, said the White House is "apparently convinced that they'll weather this storm and still defeat Donald Trump in November." He added: "This is a dangerous miscalculation." Since the start of the war in Gaza,

which was triggered by the unprecedented attack by Hamas on Israel on October 7, Biden has faced criticism for his unconditional support for Israel. When Biden travels, he is often met by demonstrators chanting “Genocidal Joe” and demanding a ceasefire. A Harvard University poll published last month showed Biden was more popular with Americans under 30 than his rival, with 45 percent of respondents intending to vote for Biden and 37 percent for Trump. But the eight-point difference is much smaller compared to a similar poll four years ago when Biden led by 23 points. Biden could still win back the hearts of some young voters if a ceasefire agreement coupled with the release of hostages held in Gaza is reached between Hamas and Israel

Fawaz Turki, in his excellent article entitled “Student protests in the US against Israel’s Gaza War Evoke the spirit of ‘68” published in Gulf News, May 2, 2024, convincingly has argued that:⁴⁴

Since I was active in the Vietnam anti-war movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it may not seem surprising that news — not to mention striking images — of the pro-Palestinian student protests on campuses across the US represent for me, old geezer that I now am, not only a nostalgia for the absolutes of yore but also a time of reflection on the dynamic and relevance of student protests in social life. The round-the-clock tent encampments erected by students on quads and lawns at dozens of campuses across the country, all the way from Northeastern University in Boston to Arizona State University in Tempe, 2,500 miles away, are now a common sight — and headline news. These nationwide demonstrations, held by students to express their opposition to Israel’s genocidal war in Gaza, seem to have come out of left field soon after April 18 — all erupting, to everyone’s surprise, seemingly simultaneously and as if in lockstep. However, there was no steady hand at the helm directing them by any central body of student leaders.... Columbia has a storied history in protest folklore, a history that an old geezer like myself with a good memory can recall vividly... That was 1968, or if you wish, as called the era, the “Sixties”, and I tell you that no string of words can recapture the inner excitement and the passionate adventure of spirit unleashed by the student anti-war movement at the time, one that Columbia helped, single-handedly, to unleash across the country. Light show right now from the Columbia encampment at Columbia University outside of Hind’s Hall. Long live Hind’s Hall.... Just as, say, the Paris Commune of 1871 — crushed in blood after barely seventy days — has lived on in historical and popular memory, the student uprisings in 1968 still represent a hope that, even if students’ dreams (for human rights, racial justice, social equity, and a moral foreign policy) were not fulfilled, what they did was worth doing. Its memory would go on to teach and inspire. That is what happened in April 1968, almost exactly 56 years ago to the day, has bequeathed this new generation of students. It’s a legacy they are replicating on their campuses across the country, however harsh police crackdowns on them will become. I say all the power to you, kids, rock on.

By May 2, 2024, pro-Palestine protests in US universities had intensified with violence reported on campuses and over 300 being arrested. In recent days, students have rallied or set up encampments at dozens of universities expressing opposition to Israel's war in Gaza and demanding institutes divest from companies that support Israel's government.⁴⁵

On May 2, 2024, UCLA pro-Palestine protests continue after a stand-off with riot police. Law enforcement officers in riot gear massed by the hundreds on the campus, in preparation to clear out a pro-Palestinian protest camp attacked the night before by pro-Israel supporters. The chaotic scenes at UCLA came just hours after New York police burst into a building occupied by anti-war protesters at Columbia University, arresting over 300 protesters. Some of the activists on the UCLA campus were seen donning hard hats, goggles, and respirator masks in anticipation of the raid a day after the university declared the encampment unlawful, while others chanted "We're not leaving."⁴⁶ The protests on the UCLA campus have been going on for weeks.⁴⁷

College protests continue in the US. Clashes and arrests had occurred at UCLA and Columbia University. Meanwhile, campus demonstrations are intensifying across the US. Despite the pressure, the protests remain active and seemingly grow by the day.

By May 2, 2024, protests over the Israel-Hamas war have reached boiling point at US universities, leading to the arrests of hundreds of protesters on campuses across the country. Police had been involved in clashes with pro-Palestinian protesters who have set up encampments on dozens of campuses.⁴⁸

On May 3, 2024, Rutgers University leaders agreed to several of a 10-point list of demands from the protesters, including a commitment to explore creating an Arab cultural center, to implement support for 10 displaced Palestinian students to finish their education at Rutgers, and to follow university policy and review the student movement's main demand that universities divest from companies with business interests in Israel.⁴⁹

The students also demanded amnesty for all protest participants. The university said it would not retaliate by terminating jobs or reducing pay but said individual students "were subject" to the university's code of conduct.⁵⁰

As part of the agreement, Rutgers said it will "revisit and follow up on the relationship established in 2022 with Birzeit University to explore avenues of research collaboration and scholarly exchange and the feasibility of student exchange and/or study abroad through RU Global Studies." Birzeit is in the Palestinian West Bank.⁵¹

By May 3, 2024, more than 2,000 people have now been arrested during pro-Palestinian protests across dozens of US college campuses in recent weeks.⁵² More than 200 students

were arrested at the University of California, Los Angeles, as police cleared a fortified encampment, and more than 90 students were arrested at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. In Oregon, police moved into the school's library, which had been occupied by demonstrators earlier. Dozens more were arrested at the University of New Hampshire and the University of Buffalo.

President Biden said in a brief statement on May 3. "We are not an authoritarian nation where we silence people or squash dissent," said Joe Biden. "But" he continued, "order must prevail." Violent protest is not protected – peaceful protest is," he said. Biden criticized what he called "violent" protests. "Vandalism, trespassing, breaking windows, shutting down campuses, forcing the cancellation of classes and graduations – none of this is a peaceful protest." "There's the right to protest, but not the right to cause chaos," the US president said. In response to a reporter's question, he said he did not think it was the right time to call the National Guard.⁵³

In a May 3 report, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project said that although some clashes have broken out, the overwhelming majority have remained peaceful.

Student protests have grown across since mid-April. In many cases, faculty members have joined or supported student protesters, as police and universities have responded with force to demonstrations that threaten to continue into commencement season. These protests have become a major flashpoint in US politics.

At Dartmouth, where an encampment had only recently sprung up, a professor said the university responded with "full force" and posted a video of a white-haired colleague being grabbed and dragged away by police.

"In an hour or so it was allowed to exist, this was the model of a peaceful, inclusive protest," Jeff Sharlet, a professor at Dartmouth stated. "They obstructed nothing; disrupted nothing; menaced nobody; and neither used nor displayed hate speech."

Brown University in Rhode Island was the first US college to agree to a divestment vote in October. It was a rare example of authorities de-escalating protests. Demonstrators agreed to dismantle their encampment at Brown, which had been removed by April 30, and university leaders said they would discuss, and later vote on, divesting funds from companies connected to the Israeli military campaign in Gaza.⁵⁴

The agreement came even as scenes of chaos continued to overtake U.S. universities, with protesters at Columbia in New York and Portland State in Oregon occupying buildings, and demonstrators at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill replacing an American flag at the center of campus with a Palestinian one. More than a thousand people have been arrested over the past two weeks after a crackdown on a pro-Palestinian encampment at Columbia in New York resulted in a cascade of student activism across the country.⁵⁵

The agreement lays out a series of steps for the months ahead:⁵⁶

- In May, five students will meet with five members of the Corporation of Brown University to argue for divesting funds from companies connected to the Israeli military.
- In September, Brown's advisory committee on resource management will be expected to advise the university on the same issue.
- In October, the committee's recommendation will be brought to the corporation for a vote.

"Although the encampment will end, organizing to ensure that the Brown administration fulfills our calls to act on divestment will continue until the corporation vote in October," the Brown Divest Coalition said in a statement on April 30.

"The devastation and loss of life in the Middle East has prompted many to call for meaningful change, while also raising real issues about how best to accomplish this," Christina H. Paxson, Brown's president, said in the statement.

Authorities have also made arrests and cleared protest encampments at City College, Fordham University, and Stony Brook College in New York; Portland State in Oregon; Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff; Tulane University in New Orleans; and the University of Texas, Dallas.⁵⁷

On May 18, 2024, more than a dozen pro-Palestinian activists, including six students at the University of Pennsylvania, were arrested after attempting to occupy a hall on the university campus.⁵⁸

The action comes as the university is about to hold graduation ceremonies for students. It had now warned of likely disruptions in advance. Students nationwide are demanding that their schools disclose and divest themselves from assets affiliated with Israel and grant amnesty to those who have been disciplined or arrested. The university also said that 12 individuals were "issued citations for failure to disperse and failure to follow police commands and later released. Seven remain in custody awaiting felony charges, including one for assaulting a police officer."⁵⁹

The message from the students in encampments has been simple: they want their universities to stop doing business with Israel - or any companies that support its ongoing war in Gaza. The demand has its roots in the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement, a decades-old campaign against Israel's policies toward the Palestinians.

But the specifics vary from each set of protesters at different universities. Among them are these key demands:

- Be more transparent about what money is received from Israel and what it's used for.
- Stop investing college endowments with money managers who profit from Israeli companies or contractors.
- Stop doing business with military weapons manufacturers that are supplying arms to Israel. Stop accepting research money from Israel for projects that aid the country's military efforts.

The University of Southern California told its valedictorian, who publicly backed Palestinians, that she could not deliver her keynote speech at its graduation ceremony because of security concerns. It later canceled its main graduation ceremony.

At DePaul University in Chicago, graduation is more than a month away. But as the academic year closes, school leaders said on May 13, that they had reached an “impasse” with the school's pro-Palestinian protesters, leaving the future of their encampment on the Chicago campus unclear. The student-led DePaul Divestment Coalition, which is calling on the university to divest from economic interests tied to Israel, set up the encampment nearly two weeks ago. The group alleged university officials walked away from talks and tried to force students into signing an agreement, according to a student statement. 60

On May 15, 2024, in another dramatic campus showdown, hundreds of police officers descended on a pro-Palestinian encampment at UC Irvine which led to the dismantling of an encampment and the arrest of 47 protesters, including some faculty members. UCI joins several other California universities, including UCLA, UC San Diego, Cal Poly Humboldt, and USC, which resorted to mass police action to clear encampments. Protesters at UC Riverside and UC Berkeley agreed to remove their camps in exchange for concessions from the university. UCI announced that all classes would be held virtually and said employees should also work remotely.⁶¹

The UCI scene was calmer than other confrontations that have recently taken place on other college campuses in America which turned violent. The UCI action also coincided with the 76th anniversary of the Nakba, Arabic for “catastrophe,” referring to the estimated 700,000 Palestinians who were forced from their homes during the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. Protesters at UCI held signs and shared posts on social media referencing the Nakba while similar escalations citing the day's history occurred at other California campuses. Police suspect that there was “a level of coordination among various activist groups.” 62

At UC Santa Cruz, a group of protesters blocked a main intersection not far from its ongoing encampment, and at UC Berkeley, a group occupied an abandoned building on campus — despite university officials reaching an agreement the day before with pro-Palestinian encampment organizers. A UC Berkeley spokesperson said the group “vandalizing an unsafe, boarded-up” building was different from the coalition that agreed to pack up their encampment after a settlement with the university related to its weapons investments.⁶³

With that pact, the school joined at least four other California universities and several across the country that forged settlements with activists to end campus encampments that some Jewish students say have included antisemitic signage and chants. Although no schools have agreed specifically to divest from ties to Israel — among protesters' initial demands — each has indicated that it will explore proposals to tighten investment policies regarding companies that sell weapons. UC Irvine is not among those. Student representatives met with university leadership two weeks ago to discuss whether the school would agree to their divestment demands in exchange for an end to the encampment. But talks were not fruitful, according to student organizers, and their encampment persisted.⁶⁴

After weeks of intense protests, the demonstrations have become less intense. American universities have now gone on a summer break of several months' duration. However, students remain determined to continue the protests till there is a ceasefire in Gaza.

Earlier, the students had built encampments and were demanding that their institutions snap ties with Israeli companies that are funding them. Campus protests had led to the arrest of 2,900 to 3,000 protestors.⁶⁵

Emma DeSouza, in her excellent article "Protesting Israel's war on Gaza isn't antisemitic — it's a display of humanity," published in the Journal.ie, on May 15, 2024, convincingly argued that:⁶⁶

What began as a steadily growing wave of pro-Palestine protests at universities across the United States quickly swelled into a global student revolt as young people in Ireland, the UK, Australia, Spain, Canada, Germany, and beyond organized to demand action from academic institutions. This isn't student politics; this is a wake-up call for our collective humanity. Young people are demanding that their schools sever any direct or indirect financial and academic links with Israel, including by divesting from companies with ties to Israel. In the US, student protests have occurred in 45 out of 50 states and the District of Columbia, with encampments, walkouts, or sit-ins occurring on almost 140 campuses across the country. Despite evidence that the protests have been overwhelmingly peaceful, over 2,800 students have been arrested along with over 50 professors — professors and educators across the US have vocally defended their students' right to protest. Many governing boards, management committees, and university presidents who have asked the police to intervene have been accused of heavy-handed responses. University campuses in the US have long been vectors for political movements and protests, often with success; The anti-war protests during the late 1960s into the early 1970s ultimately resulted in the US government electing to withdraw their troops from Cambodia, and the 1980s saw students successfully pressure multiple universities nationwide to divest from South-Africa-related investments during the anti-apartheid movement. Time and again, young

people mobilize to collectively promote reform in the hopes of affecting positive change. With a global rise in pro-Palestine demonstrations and an increasing number of students demanding divestment from Israel, going forward many academic institutions will struggle to maintain their culture of moral complacency while the world is watching genocide in live action. Where is the wider public's collective horror? Our humanity? The student protests should remind us of all that we do have power in numbers, and together we must stand up for the people of Palestine.

By May 18, 2024, universities across the United States have adopted several tactics in recent weeks to prevent disruptions by pro-Palestinian protesters at graduation ceremonies. Some universities have reached agreements with on-campus demonstrators, while others have cited safety concerns and canceled, postponed, or relocated their schoolwide ceremonies. Several schools continue to grapple with pro-Palestinian protesters ahead of their spring commencement, subjecting themselves to internal scrutiny and public criticism.⁶⁷

On May 17, 2024, University of Pennsylvania police arrested 19 individuals, including seven students, following an attempt by pro-Palestinian demonstrators to occupy a university building. Penn Against the Occupation announced their intention to occupy Fisher-Bennet Hall in a post on the group's Instagram on May 17, 2024, calling for people to "flood UPenn for Palestine." The group called on the school's administration, in part, to divest from corporations "that profit from Israel's war on Gaza and occupation in Palestine and academically from Israel institutions, condemning the scholastic side of Palestinian scholars and universities." The arrests on May 17, 2024, followed the arrest of at least 33 people on May 10 when law enforcement broke down a pro-Palestinian encampment erected on campus.⁶⁸

The latest campus arrests also come just a few days before May 20, 2024's university-wide commencement ceremony, where students and their families will be subject to additional safety procedures described as "airport-style security screening," the university said in a safety update earlier this month. Guests and graduates will not be allowed to bring signs, posters, flags, and artificial noisemakers, according to school officials.⁶⁹

On May 16, 2024, the Academic Senate at the University of California, Los Angeles rejected resolutions of no confidence and censure brought against Gene Block, the school's chancellor. The resolutions were brought forward by the counter-protesters at an on-campus pro-Palestinian encampment on April 30 and claimed Block "failed to ensure the safety of our students and grievously mishandled" the situation.⁷⁰

The resolution to censure failed to get the majority of votes required to pass by the Senate. Chair Andrea M. Kasko in a statement "It is clear that we are not united in how we view the major events of the past weeks and the campus response to them." "I hope that we can try to find common ground as colleagues and have the courage to listen with open minds and open hearts even when we do not agree."⁷¹

On May 17, 2024, Mildred García, the chancellor of the California State University System, announced Sonoma State University President Mike Lee would be stepping down after he sent a message "concerning an agreement with campus protesters ... sent without the appropriate approvals."

The statement sent by Lee to the Sonoma State campus community included agreements to set up an advisory council of Students for Justice in Palestine as well as a review of the university's vendor contracts and investments. Lee said that "SSU will not pursue or engage in any study abroad programs, faculty exchanges, or other formal collaborations that are sponsored by, or represent, the Israeli state academic and research institutions," Lee added that the study abroad programs in Israel will be "terminated until further notice." Later, García announced Lee had been placed on administrative leave for "insubordination."⁷²

By May 18, 2024, these student protests were largely halted. Earlier, the commencement ceremonies at US universities saw some disruptions. However, they remained mostly peaceful.

At Duke University, several students left their seats in protest of the pro-Israeli speaker and comedian Jerry Seinfeld, who was a part of the ceremony as he was receiving an honorary doctorate, according to the Associated Press. This protest was carried out during their graduation ceremony in Durham, North Carolina on May 12. Palestinian flags were waved, and "Free Palestine" slogans were chanted. Jerry Seinfeld has openly supported Israel's invasion of Gaza. A

In Emerson College, Boston, protestors were seen wearing 'No grad in Gaza' shirts and 'divest' posters. Other students took off their graduation gowns after getting their diplomas. At the University of California, Berkeley, students chanted in favor of Palestine and even waved flags during their commencement.⁷³

Experts on protest movements are saying it is difficult to maintain the intensity of the demonstrations after the students are gone from the campus. They are also saying this might lead to a protest on the streets, but the on-campus protests might get a break. 74

Diane Fisher, an academic on protest movements, doesn't "see enough organizational infrastructure to sustain a bunch of young people who are involved in a movement when they are not on campus." 75

Fisher has also said the police response to these protests has further fueled the youth on the college campus. He said these protests are predecessors of a "long, hot summer of protests" in the US. 76

Michael Heaney, a researcher on the US protests and demonstrations, said there are more ways to protest and not just on campus. The movement has gone into deep pockets of the country and can take to other public spaces. ."77

Meanwhile, the protests are opposed by the Republican party leadership. Florida Senator Marco Rubio has "urged that the Biden administration withdraw visas for international students who participate in pro-Palestinian rallies on university campuses."

In his May 17, 2024, statement, he wrote, "For those international students who defied university orders, and police instruction, in favor of acting on pro-terrorist views, this should

result in immediate expulsion from their host institution and our generous country. No questions asked.”

According to him, "support for a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization" is grounds for canceling a visa and promptly deporting someone from the United States. "As pro-terrorist protesters continue to be arrested, I urge you to ensure those who are in our country on visas are placed into expedited deportation proceedings," said Rubio. 78

Pro-Palestinian college protests have been making headlines recently as administrations take action to break up demonstrations and manage the unrest on their campuses.

In May, Intelligent.com surveyed 763 current full-time U.S. college students to understand how they feel about the pro-Palestinian protests happening on college campuses. The survey disclosed that:79

- 55% of college students say there are pro-Palestinian protests on their campus.
- 65% of students are very supportive (36%) or somewhat supportive (29%) of the protests happening on college campuses.
- More than one-third of protest supporters are in favor of the use of violence and hate speech.
- More than half of protest supporters say they sympathize with Hamas.
- 1 in 10 protestors admit to having an unfavorable opinion of Jewish people.
- 9% of college students don't believe Israel has the right to exist; 19% are unsure, and 71% say it does.

Meanwhile, California's huge university system is facing widespread disruption after workers voted to hold a series of strikes in protest of its treatment of Gaza protesters. Members of the United Auto Workers (UAW), which represents 48,000 graduate workers throughout the system, voted to authorize a strike. On May 17, 2024, the union called on graduate workers at UC Santa Cruz to walk off the job on May 20, 2024. About 2,000 graduate workers are represented by the union at UC Santa Cruz. The vote was called in response to charges of unfair labor practices filed against universities over their response to Gaza protests where union members were attacked by counter-protesters and police.80

The UAW called for a ceasefire in Gaza in December. Best known for its representation of auto workers, the UAW is planning to engage in a series of "stand up" strikes where the union's executive board will call on campuses to strike on a rolling basis. The tactic was used in the UAW's successful strike against the big three US automakers late last year.

Graduate workers at UCLA, the University of Southern California, the University of California at San Diego, Brown University, and Harvard University have filed unfair labor practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board over how their university administrations unilaterally changed policies and responded to Gaza protests.81

According to the union, UC Riverside and UC Berkeley have been negotiating with protesters over their demands for transparency on university investments and divestment from Israel and weapons contractors and manufacturers contributing to the war in Gaza. The union is also demanding amnesty for all academic workers who face disciplinary action and arrest for participating in the protests.⁸²

The University of California administration has claimed the strikes are illegal despite the union classifying them as unfair labor practice strikes that are protected activities.

“The University strongly disagrees with the UAW that any exception to this general rule applies and strongly believes that the action is an unlawful strike,” stated the administration in response to the strike vote. “In response to an unlawful strike, the University will take action with the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) to assert that the strike is unlawful.”⁸³

US colleges have been using law enforcement, academic suspensions, and expulsions to quell student demonstrations since Hamas’ October 7, attack on Israel. The war has further fueled deeply held views of students and faculty on all sides.

In early May 2024, students across the US rallied or set up tents at dozens of universities to protest the months-long war in Gaza and call on President Joe Biden, who has supported Israel, to do more to stop the bloodshed in Gaza. While demands have varied among schools and even within protest movements, students demonstrating across the US have called on institutions to divest from companies and other entities that they say support or benefit from Israel's war in Gaza.

They also demand their schools divest from companies that support Israel’s government, such as the arms suppliers. More than 2,000 people have been arrested nationwide as students continue protests calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. Campus protests have emerged as a new political flashpoint during a hotly contested and deeply divisive US election year.⁸⁴

Students waved Palestinian flags and chanted anti-war slogans during a ceremony at the University of Michigan. The student protests have been most intense in American universities. Meanwhile, American activism also “highlighted the lack of protest in support of Palestinians in the Arab world.”⁸⁵

Earlier, police had arrested at least 25 pro-Palestinian protesters and cleared an encampment at the University of Virginia (UVA) as campuses across the US brace for more turmoil during graduation ceremonies. Tensions flared at UVA’s campus in Charlottesville, where protests had been largely peaceful until Saturday morning, when police officers in riot gear were seen in a video moving on an encampment on the campus’s lawn, cuffing some demonstrators with zip ties and using what appeared to be chemical spray. The UVA said in a statement that protesters had violated several university policies, including setting up tents and using amplified sound.

UVA President Jim Ryan wrote in a message that officials had learned that “individuals unaffiliated with the university” who presented “some safety concerns” had joined the protesters on the campus. It was not immediately clear how many of those arrested were UVA students.⁸⁶

A pro-Palestinian protest at the University of Mississippi was met by a larger crowd of counter-protesters singing the national anthem and carrying US flags.⁸⁷

Police cleared up a pro-Palestinian tent encampment at George Washington University in Washington DC. Officers had given warnings to demonstrators that all who remained at the encampment would be arrested.⁸⁸ Nearly 30 people were arrested as police used pepper spray to contain the crowd.⁸⁹

In early May colleges and universities were holding graduation ceremonies as pro-Palestinian protests continued on campuses across the US. In Los Angeles, police cleared out a protest encampment at USC but did not make any arrests. The university has called off its main commencement ceremony,

At the University of Michigan, banners with opposing messages flew overhead and some protesters were removed during the school's main graduation ceremony. A smaller ceremony held at the school was also interrupted.⁹⁰

On May 5, 2024, Evergreen State College in Olympia finally reached an agreement to divest from Israel, making it the university the first in the US to do so. Earlier, the student-led group took over the school's Red Square on April 26. Subsequently, the Memorandum of Understanding was struck. It says that:⁹¹

“The Investment Policy Disappearing Task Force will plan to divest from some companies. The Grant Acceptance Policy Disappearing Task Force will decide what criteria will be applied for accepting or refusing grants “based on the purposes of the grant.” This will be presented to the board of trustees by the task force in the fall...Criteria would include such considerations as whether grants facilitate illegal occupations abroad, limit free speech, or support the oppression of minorities.... Evergreen will now stop approving study abroad programs in Israel, and students will not be allowed to go to Gaza or the West Bank for study abroad programs. The college is committed to diversity and the prohibition of discrimination based on shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, including Jews and Palestinians.

Evergreen would need to make a statement defending the rights and free speech of students. This has to include a paragraph from the president, which would say, “Like many, I am horrified and grief-stricken by the violence and suffering being inflicted due to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I wish to see an end to the violence and restoration of international law, including respect for the March 25 United Nations resolution. Specifically, the resolution called

for a lasting, sustainable ceasefire honored by all parties, immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, expanded humanitarian assistance, and the protection of civilians. Additionally, I mourn the destruction of universities and hospitals, the (killing) of journalists, and want to see the release of any prisoner being held without due process.”⁹²

The University of Southern California (USC) has seen major protests against Israel's war in Gaza over the past several weeks. The prestigious school's president has times. On May 5, 2024, police cleared the protest encampment at the University of Southern California without making any arrests. Joel Curran, the school's senior vice president of communications, said the Los Angeles Police Department provided security as the encampment was cleared "peacefully."⁹³

On May 9, 2024, the president of the University of Southern California was censured by the school's academic senate after weeks of turmoil on campus.⁹⁴

Emma Tucker in Her article “Police Tactics at Campus Protests Reveal Disparities and Lessons Learned post-George Floyd’ published in CNN on May 5, 2024, has compelling argued that:⁹⁵

As universities and colleges across the US turn to police to clear their campuses of protests over Israel’s assault on Gaza, the response by law enforcement is under heightened scrutiny after thousands were arrested since mid-April... The wide range of police tactics seen on campuses nationwide reveal the disparities between police agencies in their training and understanding of the generally accepted best practices in dealing with protests and crowd control issues, law enforcement experts told CNN. Still, the experts said, police were largely measured in their approach and showed restraint in using force – a direct result of lessons learned during the widespread protests after the police killing of George Floyd nearly four years ago. Those protests were bigger, fiercer, and more sustained than prior demonstrations.

Meanwhile, at Columbia University dozens of protesters entered the university’s Hamilton Hall and barricaded themselves inside before the institution asked for the New York City Police Department’s assistance. A total of 282 people were arrested at the pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia as well as The City College of New York, according to the NYPD.⁹⁶

Approximately 50 people were arrested outside the Art Institute of Chicago during a demonstration. Police have cleared out pro-Palestinian protesters and taken down tents near the center of the University of Virginia’s (UVA) campus. Earlier, a group called UVA Encampment for Gaza posted a statement on Instagram calling for the university to divest from Israel.⁹⁷

Pro-Palestinian protests that have fanned across US universities for weeks are now more muted after a series of clashes with police, and mass arrests. Joe Biden delivered his most extensive remarks on the protests and directed to restore order, drawing a line between what he called

peaceful and violent protests, repeating his support for Israel, and dismissing calls for the National Guard to intervene at universities.⁹⁸

Aaron Zitner, Stephen Kalin, Tarini Parti, and Sabrina Siddiqui, “For Biden, College Protests Mean Few Good Options, Lots of Risks”, Wall Street Journal, May 2, 2024, aptly said that:⁹⁹

President Biden’s fragile bid for a second term is under new threat from the powerful combination of two conflicts he has little direct control over Israel’s war with Hamas and the deepening rift in the U.S. over America’s role in it. The two crises, unfolding thousands of miles from each other, are merging to crystallize a wider set of divisions in U.S. society that are challenging Biden’s already shaky political standing. Americans had already been debating the limits of free speech on campus, the balance between protest and public order, and the U.S. alliance with an obstinate Israeli government.

Kim Bellware, in his outstanding article “College students are protesting schools’ ties to Israel. Here’s why,” published in The Washington Post, on May 4, 2024. explained that:¹⁰⁰

Students have largely demonstrated in a show of solidarity with Palestinians displaced or killed in the Israel-Hamas conflict. Protesters, especially at wealthy schools such as Yale and Columbia, have also demanded that their university endowments divest from military weapons manufacturers and defense contractors with ties to Israel. The protesters have largely demanded that universities stop their endowments from supporting Israeli-linked companies or institutions. Such divestment can be complicated when a university’s financial relationship with a targeted company is not direct but through an investment in an index fund. Some schools, such as New York University, have balked at recent calls to change their investments, The Washington Post reported, but there is precedent. Columbia, the University of California system, and Yale have committed to divesting from assets tied to contentious issues including fossil fuels, prison holdings, and tobacco sales. At Cornell University and other schools, students have identified ties to specific companies, such as the weapons manufacturers Lockheed Martin and Raytheon.... While divestment is the major demand of student protests across the country, students are also calling for changes that are specific to their campus communities’ particular relationships to Israel, weapons manufacturing, and issues like militarization and occupation that are viewed as relevant themes to Palestinian freedom.

In the second week of May 2024, faculty members at The New School in Manhattan had set up what may be the first professor-led pro-Palestinian encampment on a college campus since the Israel-Hamas war has prompted waves of protests at schools across the country.

The New School’s urban campus in Greenwich Village lacks the open spaces that the other universities had for their protest encampments, so the professors set up their camp inside the lobby of a university building.¹⁰¹

Soon eight tents were visible on the same spot where some of the school’s students had previously set up a lobby encampment for several days. Earlier, the university had called in the

police to remove it and arrest the student protesters. One green-and-white tent had “faculty against genocide” written in red on it. Several posters were affixed to the building’s windows, including one that read “All Eyes on Rafah.” “We call on faculty across all universities to escalate and take risk in solidarity with the student movement, their demands, and the people of Palestine,” the protesting faculty wrote in a social media post.¹⁰²

Faculty unrest at the New School, which has about 10,000 students, has been a feature of the historically progressive university in recent years. By May 10, 2024, 2,700 people across the country had been arrested or detained in recent weeks for their involvement in similar encampments on college campuses.¹⁰³

Earlier, New School students had set up the university’s first indoor encampment in April to show their solidarity with Palestinians and publicize calls for the university to divest from companies connected to Israel, among other demands. In support, New School faculty passed a vote on May 2 in favor of the school divesting.

The faculty named their encampment after Refaat Alareer, a Palestinian professor and writer who was killed in December 2023 during an Israeli airstrike in northern Gaza. Later the school also moved some graduation ceremonies off campus.¹⁰⁴

Meanwhile, in response to ongoing student-led protests, police departments across North America conducted violent, and, in many cases, tear gas-filled raids of anti-genocide encampments. In addition to the arrest, many students are facing suspension from their universities for participating in demonstrations.

Since the initial arrest of 108 students in the Gaza Solidarity Encampment at Columbia University on April 18, police in the US have arrested over 2,800 people. On May 10 police swept the anti-genocide encampment at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge. MIT campus police, assisted by the Massachusetts State Police, arrested at least 10 people. At least nine more people were arrested the night before while protesting inside a parking garage on campus. An unspecified number of MIT students had been suspended for participating in the protests.¹⁰⁵

The university suspended students involved in the protest. The Harvard Palestine Solidarity Committee reported that the suspensions were “effective immediately.” The committee added, “Students are now at risk of degree withholding, eviction, food insecurity, and deportation.”

Dozens of riot police arrested 33 anti-genocide protesters at the University of Pennsylvania. At least six students have been placed on “mandatory leave” from the university for participating in the encampment.

At the University of Arizona’s Gaza encampment, at least two professors were arrested by police. The encampment in Tucson, organized by the Students Against Apartheid, was the

second one established at the university, after the first encampment was violently swept by police officers on May 1.

Police assaulted the encampment and liberally deployed “less-lethal” munitions. Police used tear gas and rubber bullets against the crowd of over 100 people, mostly students, some of whom were wearing gas masks and using their plywood signs to protect themselves. Signs carried by protesters read:

“All Eyes on Rafah,” “Tucson P.D., KKK, IDF, You’re all the same,” Free Gaza,” and “Free Palestine.”

The University of Arizona stated that it was fully backing the police. It read that the University President Robert C. Robbins has “initiated a zero-tolerance approach to enforcing its campus policy.”¹⁰⁶

However, the mass arrests and attacks on students have not stopped anti-genocide encampments and anti-war protests from forming. An analysis by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) found that pro-Palestine demonstrations involving American students had nearly tripled in April compared to March. Student protests since October have remained peaceful 99 percent of the time, with the only notable exception being the UCLA encampment from April 30 to May 1. Of the over 700 student-led protests tracked by ACLED, “over 90% have shown support for Palestine.” Police officers and university administrators have clashed with pro-Palestinian protesters on dozens of college campuses in recent weeks, arresting students, removing encampments, and threatening academic consequences. More than 2,900 people have been arrested or detained on campuses across the country.¹⁰⁷

Daniella Silva and Alicia Victoria Lozano, “College students who protested and those who didn’t share in disappointment at the response from schools, May 18, 2024, NBC News, brilliantly summed it all up. They stated that:¹⁰⁸

Since mid-April, there have been dozens of protests over Israel’s war in Gaza at universities and colleges nationwide. The protests, which included confrontations between students and clashes with police at some of those campuses, have led to nearly 3,000 arrests, according to an NBC News tally. While many universities have defended the decision to call in law enforcement, the intensity of the police response in some instances has drawn harsh criticism from protesters, activists, and their allies, particularly after police were called in to clear a building at Columbia University that had been occupied by protesters....Universities have also drawn the ire of both Jewish and Muslim students who believe their warnings about rises in antisemitism and Islamophobia on campus since the start of the Israel-Hamas war on Oct. 7 have gone unaddressed....Dozens of encampments, many of which sprang up at campuses across the country last month as protests intensified, have been cleared this month ahead of graduation season. With their removal, some schools have reported reaching agreements with protesters on lists of demands. Many protesters had called on their schools to Israel. Harvard

University announced this week that it would meet with protesters to begin to discuss disclosure and divestment. It said would also hold reinstatement proceedings for suspended students. At the University of California, Berkeley, protesters began dismantling their encampment Tuesday after the school agreed to support and initiate a “rigorous examination” of the school’s investments. The school chancellor would also issue a public statement calling for a cease-fire. No school has fully agreed to divestment thus far.

To understand the protest phenomenon, one must try to know the context of these student demonstrations, which is only possible by carefully listening to the arguments available from the participants themselves. After all, something very significant had galvanized them into the serious action they have taken to be effective, as they see it. Perceptions matter in politics as they shape the reality of participants in complex ways.

Richard Fausset, *From Free Speech to Free Palestine: Six Decades of Student Protest*, New York Times, May 4, 2024, has convincingly argued that:109

The protests against Israel’s war in Gaza that have erupted on college campuses around the United States are merely the latest in a tradition of student-led, left-leaning activism dating back at least to the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War protests of the 1960s. Often, the protests have played out on college campuses, and sometimes in the same building as previous years: Hamilton Hall at Columbia University, was taken over by students in the protests of 1968 as well as this past week and at least four times in between. Sometimes the protests have seemed to be off-campus adaptations, like the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations of 2011 or the racial justice demonstrations of recent years. Like today’s protests, most of the older movements were highly polarizing. Some observers at the time praised protesters for their courage and idealism, while others criticized them for being misguided, self-indulgent, or guilty of flirting with — or embracing — irresponsible and even dangerous rhetoric and ideas. A high propensity to offend can seem inextricably intertwined with the fresh thinking that college-age students often bring to the world’s most difficult questions. “When you’re talking about college students, you are talking about people who are barely out of childhood,” said Rick Perlstein, the historian and author, in an interview this week. “People who are barely out of childhood and basically on their own for the first time, and exploring ideas for the first time, sometimes say crazy things.” Some of the student protests, like the Civil Rights and anti-apartheid movements, helped achieve tangible goals that have become broadly accepted over time. Others continue to stir debate about their wisdom and efficacy. The current movement is notable for the way it has divided not only Americans in general but also Americans who identify as liberal, over the thorny question of when criticism of Israel veers into antisemitism. Like the older movements, the current one is likely to be the subject of decades of research into its origins, its aims, and its aftereffects. In the short term, politicians, including the presumptive Republican and Democratic presidential nominees, are implicitly acknowledging its potential power to sway elections Trump has called the protests a “disgrace to our country.” In the 1970s and 1980s, student-led movements sprang up on numerous college campuses calling on schools to divest from companies that did business in South Africa, which at the time was under white apartheid rule. Students on many campuses erected shanties in solidarity with poor Black South Africans, and

several schools divested, at least partially, from companies with investments in South Africa. Though they were only one factor that led to the fall of apartheid in the early 1990s, the South Africa divestment movement directly inspired the current demands that schools divest from businesses connected to Israel. These demands are part of the broader effort targeting Israel known as the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement, which calls upon nations, businesses, and schools to sever links with Israel unless it meets several demands, including ending its occupation of all land captured in 1967 and allowing Palestinian refugees and their descendants to return to properties from which they were displaced during the period that Israel was established....Black activists in the United States have a long and complicated history when it comes to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Soon after the 1967 war between Israel and neighboring Arab states, leaders of the S.N.C.C., which had grown increasingly radicalized, stated that Jews were “imitating their Nazi oppressors” by using terror tactics on Arabs. Such statements led to denunciations from more moderate Civil Rights forces just as comparisons of Israelis to genocidal regimes are making more moderate liberals queasy today.

Lucas Lin, in his article “Revisiting Duke’s student movements demanding divestment from Israel,” published in *The Chronicle*, on May 16, 2024, aptly argued that:110

In recent months, pro-Palestinian demonstrations on college campuses across the country have demanded universities disclose and cut off dealings tied to Israel, but institutions including Duke have not called. On May 12, 2024, Duke graduates staged a walk-out during the Class of 2024 Commencement Ceremony to call on the University to divest from its holdings in Israel. Earlier on April 26, a coalition of Duke students, faculty, staff, and community members organized a pro-Palestinian rally on Abele Quad calling on the University to divest — one of the largest protests on Duke’s campus since the start of the Israel-Hamas war on Oct. 7.

This is not the first time Duke students have mobilized in support of divestment from Israel. Student protests for divestment on the matter can be traced back to over two decades ago with the start of the Duke Divest movement in 2003. University administration has continued to firmly reject any form of divestment and has upheld civil dialogue and academic freedom as a more effective response than withdrawing its assets from companies tied to Israel....Widespread engagement with the Israel divestment movement at Duke began in January 2003 when Duke Divest organized a teach-in forum, sparking debate among panelists and the audience. The campaign, led by students, faculty, and staff members, demanded that the University “divest from military ties to Israel.” The movement to divest from Israel first gained traction across college campuses in May 2002 when faculty members from Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology created a petition urging the government to financially sanction Israel for the “IDF[’s] reoccupation of Palestinian areas” and failure to comply with United Nations Resolution 242 amidst the second intifada. The movement quickly spread to college campuses across the country, including the University of California, Berkeley, Columbia University, the University of Michigan, and Princeton University. DukeDivest organizers pointed out that the institution holds stock in companies such as Caterpillar Inc., which has contributed

to the state's violation of human rights in the Gaza Strip....The movement also raised concerns about the University's lack of transparency regarding its investment records. As a private institution, Duke is not obliged by law to disclose its investment portfolio and ties with corporations. Many public universities also have private ones. Students in favor of divestment from Israel sought to replicate the success of the South Africa divestment campaign in 1986. In the aftermath of a series of protests in the 1980s featuring anti-apartheid shanties and resulting in student arrests, the Board of Trustees eventually announced that it would sell its holdings in companies tied to South Africa. However, the Israel divestment campaign did not receive the same response from the University.

Karim Safieddine in his article "4 lessons from the Palestine solidarity student encampments", published in WNV, on May 13, 2024, brilliantly argued that: 111

The Palestine-solidarity movement is not merely building on its isolated movement; it is directly benefiting from and enhancing a wider political ecosystem within the U.S. context, including movements protesting the carceral state, gender-based violence, war, and neoliberal economic structures. In that sense, the movement is part of a wider web of decentralized yet more-or-less organized "political workers" building locally and speaking globally. These workers are simultaneously building local communities and generating a transnational public opinion that is attempting to rethink and counter ongoing colonial violence, which in turn is quite clearly protected by authoritarian and securitized systems of policing and economic systems of inequality and exploitation. In light of the wider movement community of those opposing U.S. imperial aggression, state violence, and economic inequality, Palestine's friends can be found among feminists, abolitionists, anarchists, unionists, and progressives challenging systems of exploitation, authoritarian governance, and bodily coercion. Nevertheless, it's not easy to sustain that ecosystem. True solidarity does not rely on reproducing a language of activism that is only intelligible to a subset of professional intellectuals and organizers. Solidarity in practice needs to intersect with the silent majority of Americans who want the war to stop but are not equipped with highbrow social science discourse on social movements and decolonization. Americans, like all people, know what they want; the polls all show it. Most want jobs, healthcare, infrastructure, a sustainable future, and an end to violent conflict. The Palestine movement here in the U.S. is mainstream because it naturally intersects with the values of Americans who hope to see a ceasefire, i.e., an end to the killing. Speaking to the majority does not mean diluting the movement's ambition and high ceiling (which accompanies the political messaging of intersectional solidarity); it means highlighting slogans (such as "Ceasefire NOW") that resonate with most Americans.... A project for politics can't be replaced by a project for identity. If there is anything we have learned from the crisis of "social justice politics" in the past decade, it's the fact that a moral hierarchy and set of norms acknowledged by a tight circle of activists won't necessarily be accepted by wider society. We also learned that creating an oppositional front against a form of injustice doesn't necessarily translate to a political project with concrete principles and a particular constitutional and social trajectory. In other words, Zionism, a project that cannot be understood without understanding its incorporation of European colonialism and ethnic supremacy, cannot be replaced by an

alternative identitarianism that solely centers victimhood as its primary focal point. We need an alternative to Zionism. It can't be a chauvinistic, ethnoreligious alternative that doesn't responsibly think of the future of the region. It can't be an authoritarian alternative that reinforces U.S. or Russian-backed dictatorships in the Middle East. It has to, at the very least, respect part of the historic legacy of some of the Palestinian Liberation Organization's main leftist factions: freedom from the river to the sea entails a democratic, secular alternative that centers the socio-economic and political rights of workers and citizens regardless of their background and history.

Tom Sandborn, in his article "Gaza, and the West Bank continue to drown in blood today," published in the rabble.ca, on May 13, 2024, has persuasively argued that:¹¹²

Palestinians, seeing Gaza rapidly leveled and casualties mounting, understandably see this war as a genocidal exercise in ethnic cleansing, yet another extension of the Nakba. Meanwhile, mainstream media attention in the West has been distracted by handwringing about whether student anti-war demonstrators have been rude and punditry about how the horrors in Palestine will affect the American elections in the fall. The lives and deaths of the dark-skinned colonized can only hold Western attention just so long before our gnat-like attention span moves onto the next viral event online, it would seem.

But whether or not we pay attention, the genocidal war against the Palestinians continues. It continues with political support and military aid from many Western nations, most prominently the US, but with significant Canadian involvement too. Both US and Canadian tax dollars and public statements have helped underwrite the genocide, and we all are complicit unless we speak up and act to end it. ...A powerful international protest movement is calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the West Bank and an end to the ongoing genocide. It is vitally important that this global solidarity movement be informed, and that means that those of us outside Palestine who want to offer support need as much input from Palestinians as we can get. The wave of student protests is unprecedented and is largely due to the global media coverage of the Gaza war, and the power of the new social media increasingly used by youth in the developed world.

Demonstrations in solidarity with Palestinians under Israeli siege in Gaza have spread across university campuses around the world in recent weeks. The movement was unprecedented and surprising. Somehow, the repressive response from American campus representatives sparked a movement in Europe, and elsewhere. Students at various European universities, inspired by ongoing demonstrations at US campuses, have been occupying halls and facilities, demanding an end to partnerships with Israeli institutions because Israel assaulted Gaza.¹¹³

Although demands among protesters vary at each university, the majority of demonstrations have called for colleges to divest from companies that support Israel and the war in Gaza.

Over the past few weeks, pro-Palestinian protest camps have appeared in at least seven universities across Australia. The University of Queensland in Brisbane has become a gathering

point for rival camps pitched around 328 feet from each other – one populated by supporters of the Students for Palestine UQ, and another smaller cluster of tents with the Israeli flag among others strung between trees. They were erected in solidarity with Palestinians under Israeli siege in Gaza and student protesters in the US, but some Jewish groups say they're causing unnecessary tension on campus and Australia's opposition leader has called them "racist" and "antisemitic." "Students for Palestine UQ want the university to disclose all links to Israeli companies and universities and to cut ties with weapons companies. So far, violent scenes that have erupted at universities across the US have not been repeated in Australia."¹¹⁴

At the University of Sydney, about 50 tents line the quadrangle where up to 100 protesters are sleeping each night. On May 3, Jewish groups held a counter-protest against what they said was "a disturbing trend of antisemitic and anti-Israel activities" at the university.

More than 200 people, some wearing Israeli and Australian flags, gathered at the Sydney campus, but there was no direct encounter between them and the pro-Palestinian group, which had urged followers to help them "defend" their camp.¹¹⁵

Pro-Palestinian protests have been held at universities across the United Kingdom since the early days of Israel's war in Gaza, with some setting up encampments in recent days.

At Newcastle University, a small pro-Palestinian encampment has been set up on a lawn in front of the college's buildings, videos and pictures on social media showed. The X account "Newcastle Apartheid Off Campus" shared images of their encampment, which shows around a dozen tents on the lawn, some adorned with Palestinian flags. The group describes itself as a "student-led coalition fighting for an end to Newcastle University's partnership with defense companies supplying Israel."

Students in the English cities of Leeds, Bristol, and Warwick have also set up tents outside their university buildings to protest the war in Gaza. The campus protests in Britain have received criticism from some Jewish student groups amid calls for universities to take their duty of care to Jewish students more seriously.¹¹⁶

In Paris, pro-Palestinian protests erupted at the Sciences Po University and the Sorbonne University in late April. On April 29, French police cleared protesters from the Sorbonne, one of the country's most prestigious universities. A video geolocated showed officers dragging two demonstrators out of tents and along the ground. Riot police had cleared the main hall of Sciences Po, with protesters shouting "shame!" and "free Palestine!" though the removal otherwise appeared to take place calmly.

Dozens of students had begun a sit-in inside the university the previous day, prompting the closure of the campus, a Sciences Po spokesperson said. One protester said a student had begun a hunger strike in protest at the university's response to "students wishing to support Palestine."

Students carrying placards calling for an end to “genocide” in Gaza and the boycott of Israeli universities.¹¹⁷

Sciences Po is one of France’s most highly-ranked universities and the alma mater of a slew of presidents including incumbent leader Emmanuel Macron. It has strong ties to Columbia University, where students have been staging widespread pro-Palestinian protests.

Amid the protests, the Ile-de-France region president said the university will no longer receive funding from the Parisian regional authority, “until serenity and security are restored to the school.” Samuel Lejoyeaux, president of the Union of Jewish Students of France, called for more dialogue between protesters on both sides of the ideological divide.

He said pro-Palestinian protesters needed to do more to “clearly denounce anti-Semitism” but that sending in police was not the answer.

“I’ll never be happy to see CRS [riot police] entering a campus,” he wrote. “More than anything, I believe in dialogue. The great social advances in France have always been the fruit of militancy and debate,” he added.¹¹⁸

Protests happened in India also. Demonstrations had been held at the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi, India, in solidarity with students protesting at Columbia.

The protests coincided with an expected visit to the campus by US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti, which was postponed.

“JNU’s premises shall not provide a platform for administrations and personnel representing nations complicit in terrorism and genocide committed by Israel,” said a statement from JNU’s student union on April 29. The union has also expressed solidarity with protesters at Columbia. The JNU has been at the forefront of several protest movements, including 2019 demonstrations against a controversial law that critics say discriminates against Muslims.¹¹⁹

Two student political parties at Jamia Milia Islamia University in New Delhi also expressed solidarity with pro-Palestinian protesters.

“We also denounce the stance taken by our BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party)-led government in supporting Israel, which deviates from India’s historical position,” said a statement from the Communist Party-affiliated Students’ Federation of India.¹²⁰

Protests against Israel’s war in Gaza have also swept campuses across Canada.

At McGill University in downtown Montreal, pro-Palestinian student protesters have set up an encampment on the front lawn.

Like their counterparts in the US, students are demanding the college divest from companies with ties to Israel. The university had attempted to disperse the protesters, saying it had

requested police assistance after dialogue with student representatives failed to resolve. On May 2, a Quebec Superior Court judge rejected an injunction request that would have forced the pro-Palestinian protesters to leave their encampment.

Pro-Palestinian protesters have also set up encampments at the University of Toronto's downtown campus and the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, among others, according to public broadcaster CBC News.¹²¹

Protests have happened in Lebanon. Hundreds of students gathered at campuses in Lebanon in late April, waving Palestinian flags and demanding their universities boycott companies that do business in Israel. In Beirut, images showed students at the American University of Beirut protesting the war in Gaza outside the gates. Some protesters said they were inspired by protests on US campuses.

"We want to show to show the whole world that we have not forgotten the Palestinian cause and that the young generation – which is aware and cultured – is still with the Palestinian cause," Ali al-Muslem, 19, told Reuters.¹²²

Indonesia has also seen numerous large-scale pro-Palestine rallies since the war began on October 7. The campus demonstrations were the most widespread, coordinated protests the country has seen in recent months. The rallies took place at 172 higher education institutes affiliated with Muhammadiyah, Indonesia's second-largest Muslim organization, and were carried out by both students and school officials." We ask the UN to facilitate an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Palestine," Ma'ruf Sya'ban, vice-chancellor of the University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya, told protesters at his campus on May 9."We strongly condemn Western countries like the US, the UK, France, and Germany for their continued support of the Zionist state of Israel."¹²³

The organizers of the latest campus protests in Indonesia said they were influenced by their example." We chose to act in solidarity with students elsewhere who are sick and tired of Israeli atrocities against Palestinians," said Wahyudi Kholilullah, president of the executive board of students at Surabaya's University of Muhammadiyah."Our hope is for other Indonesian universities to follow suit and hold their own (pro-Palestinian) protests," Wahyudi said.¹²⁴

Apart from the protests, boycotts of goods and services by companies deemed affiliated with or supportive of Israel have been taken up by large numbers of Indonesians. They have targeted international F&B brands including McDonald's, KFC, and Starbucks, as well as multinational conglomerates such as Unilever and Danone.¹²⁵

But in addition to Israel and the usual Western targets, the Muhammadiyah rallies also aimed at Muslim organizations that protesters feel have not been doing enough. Professor Ma'mun Murod Al Barbasy, chancellor of the University of Muhammadiyah Jakarta, claimed the 10-point demands made during the protests were "fair" because they were critical of all stakeholders in the conflict. "Apart from Israel and its allies, we also condemned the Muslim World League (MWL), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) as well as Arab countries that have acted feebly against Israel." Among their 10 demands, the protesters issued a warning to the Indonesian government against "any attempt to pursue or normalize diplomatic relations with Israel. "That follows reports from earlier this year, which has been denied by Indonesian officials, that the country was planning to normalize relations with Israel as a prerequisite to joining the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Radityo praised the students' strategy of using public protests to "keep the issue alive" but doubted they would have an impact on Western governments." The real problem lies with Israel's intransigent attitude. Even its allies have shifted their stance and called for a cessation of hostilities, but their entreaties have fallen on deaf ears in Tel Aviv.¹²⁶

Meanwhile, the boycott of Israeli-affiliated products remains strongly supported by Indonesians, which has reportedly taken a significant economic toll on the targeted businesses, the parent company of the brands Pizza Hut, Taco Bell, and KFC, reported in early May a global drop in sales ranging from two to seven percent. Pizza Hut Indonesia also claimed a loss in sales due to the boycott in December but did not specify how much. Unilever, a producer of consumer goods and beauty products, announced in February their sale in Indonesia had fallen by 17 percent due to the boycott." Protestors felt thoroughly vindicated that their efforts contributed to this result.¹²⁷

Student protests began happening in Britain. Scores of Pro-Palestine students have also gathered in protest on university lawns across Britain to take a stand against Israel's war in Gaza following violent demonstrations at campuses in the US. Tents have been pitched outside university buildings by protestors who are calling on their universities to divest from Israel in response to its military operation in the Gaza Strip.

Students from the University of Manchester (UOM) have filled Brunswick Park with banners, plaques, and Palestinian flags to call for the university to 'end its partnership with systems which support Israel.' One banner read: 'UOM blood on your hands', while another said: 'UOM supports Israeli Genocide.'

On May 9, multiple people were arrested at the University of Calgary's Gaza encampment in Alberta, Canada after riot police deployed "non-lethal munitions" and tear gas on a crowd of less than 200. Justifying police actions in a press conference on May 10, 2024, Alberta Premier Danielle Smith declared laws do not allow the blocking of "critical infrastructure" and "private property." She stated that she doesn't want to take a chance, but that she has found some of the slogans in the protest are advocating antisemitism and hate crimes. 128

In the second week of May, elite UK universities including Cambridge and Oxford joined the protests, while in Ireland students at Trinity College Dublin (TCD), Queen's University Belfast, and now University College Dublin (UCD) launched sit-ins and encampments. After just five days of protests, TCD stated that the university "will complete a divestment from investments in Israeli companies that have activities in the occupied Palestinian Territory and appear on the UN blacklist in this regard." It was a surprisingly quick concession considering the university had issued a €214,000 fine to the Students Union over alleged university losses in tourist revenue due to protests over student fees, the cost of rent, and Israel's war in Gaza.

At Queen's University Belfast, an agreement was reached even quicker with an announcement one day following the sit-in that the university would "divest investments" from companies listed by the UN as being involved in actions in Palestine. The university also said it would "strongly support a program to restore educational structures in Gaza as soon as this is possible," including an offer to establish a partnership with a university in Palestine. Students at UCD set up an encampment over the weekend, the initiative is backed by the university's Students' Union.

Pro-Palestine protesters occupying a University of Melbourne building had vowed to dig in and risk arrest, defying a warning from campus authorities that police would be called in if they did not leave.

A group of about 100 students shifted their protest inside the Arts West building at the university's Parkville campus, staging a sit-in as tensions over the war in Gaza take hold at the city's universities.

At Deakin University's Burwood campus, there was a separate peaceful protest of about 100 people, with campus security and police monitoring. Thousands of demonstrators also took to CBD streets, gathering at RMIT University's student encampment before marching to Melbourne Central. Despite a warning from Melbourne University administration that students had to leave the building, more than 100 remained inside the Arts West building into the night.¹²⁹

The students staging the sit-in said they were willing to risk arrest. A small number of police officers attended, but there were no signs of violence, and they did not intervene. Some protesters inside the Arts West building were wearing Palestinian keffiyeh scarfs; others could be seen in goggles. They used megaphones to chant slogans, banners were unfurled, and tents were set up inside the building. The University of Melbourne described the sit-in as "unacceptable" and said it would be investigated.¹³⁰

Tensions on university campuses around the country have been mounting in recent weeks as tent cities of students protesting against Israel's military action in Gaza grow. On some occasions, the encampments have attracted counter-protesters supportive of Israel's action in response to the Hamas terrorist attacks of October 7.¹³¹

Deakin University became the first Victorian university to order those in the pro-Palestinian encampment to leave its campus, citing safety and security amid allegations of antisemitism against some within the protest movement. The Melbourne University protest is aimed at the university's long-standing research agreement with aerospace and defense manufacturer

Lockheed Martin. The University of Melbourne said it welcomed the debate and peaceful protest on campus – provided it did not extend to violence, threat, or intimidation. Deakin University issued a ban on its encampment, citing the safety, security, and amenity of all campus users.

Thousands of pro-Palestine protesters took to city streets. There was a strong police presence at the shopping center and some traders closed their doors while the rally took place, but the gathering was largely peaceful. The activists also staged a brief sit-in at a city intersection before dispersing.¹³²

Despite police violence, protests calling for an end to the war in Gaza, including in Israel, continued this week. In solidarity with other encampments, on Thursday, students and faculty at the University of Haifa in Israel held a protest in favor of a ceasefire and end to the war. One demonstrator held a sign that read “Stop the genocide.”¹³³

Dutch police said 169 people had been arrested when they broke up an encampment at the University of Amsterdam. Police filmed baton-charging protesters and smashing up their tents after they refused to leave the campus.

Before the police intervention, violence also erupted briefly when a small group of counter-protesters wielding flares stormed the main protest.

Several hundred protesters calling for a ceasefire resumed the demonstration around the university campus, erecting barriers to access routes amid a heavy police presence.

About 50 demonstrators were also protesting on Tuesday outside the library at Utrecht University and a few dozen at the Technical University of Delft.

In the eastern German city of Leipzig, the university said in a statement that 50 to 60 people occupied a lecture hall, waving banners that read: “University occupation against genocide”. Protesters barricaded the lecture hall doors from the inside and erected tents in the courtyard, according to the university. The university called the police and filed a criminal complaint. A pro-Israeli counter-protest also took place in the area, involving about 40 people. Criminal proceedings have been initiated against 13 people who were in the lecture hall on suspicion of trespassing. No arrests have been made so far.

Earlier, at Berlin’s Free University, police cleared a demonstration after up to 80 people erected a protest camp in a courtyard of the campus. The protesters, some of whom wore the keffiyeh scarf that has long been a symbol of the Palestinian cause, sat in front of tents and waved banners. They later tried to enter rooms, and lecture halls, and occupy them, according to the university, which said it then called in the police to clear the protest.

The university said property was damaged while classes in some buildings were suspended for the day. Berlin police said they made some arrests for incitement to hatred and trespassing.

The protests spread to Europe, the French protests, much smaller in scale than those seen in the US, began at elite political science faculties, but have spread to other universities in recent

days. The government in France – which is home to the largest Jewish population outside Israel and the US, and to Europe’s largest Muslim population – has said it would be extremely firm and stop any blockades and sit-ins. Some university heads have called in police to clear buildings.¹³⁴ The protests are happening against the backdrop of the European elections, with the government minister for higher education accusing the leftwing party France Unbowed and its leader, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, of stoking the protests for its electoral gains. The party said the protesting students were the “honor” of France. ¹³⁵

Police on May 7, 2024, intervened twice at Paris’s prestigious Sciences Po university to disperse about 20 students who had barricaded themselves in the university’s main hall. Police moved in to allow other students to take their exams and made two arrests, according to Paris prosecutors. The university said the exams were able to proceed without incident.¹³⁶

Police had intervened several times at Sciences Po, where protesters were demanding the university reveal its partnerships with Israeli institutions. Thirteen students were on a hunger strike. At the nearby Sorbonne University building, police moved on to eject about a hundred students who had occupied an amphitheater for two hours to protest about Gaza.¹³⁷

In Switzerland, protests on May 7, 2024, spread to three universities in Lausanne Geneva, and Zurich. The University of Lausanne said in a statement that it “considers that there is no reason to cease these relations” with Israeli universities, as protesters demand. In Austria, dozens of protesters have been camped on the campus of Vienna University, putting up tents and stringing up banners. More than 100 students were also occupying Ghent University, in Belgium, in both a climate and a Gaza protest.¹³⁸

Encampments have also been set up and protests have taken place at universities in other European countries over the past weeks including Ireland, Finland, Denmark, Italy, Spain, and the UK.

Clashes also broke out between police and protesters during a pro-Palestinian rally in central Athens on Tuesday. More than 300 people carrying Palestinian flags and banners reading “Hands off Rafah!” rallied outside the parliament building in the Greek capital.¹³⁹

Campus protests by pro-Palestinian activists have further spread across Europe, as some called for a break of ties with Israel over the war in Gaza. Student protests demanding that universities sever ties with Israel over the Gaza war have spread across Europe, sparking clashes and arrests as new demonstrations broke out in the Netherlands, Germany, France, Switzerland, and Austria.¹⁴⁰

On May 9, 2024, students against the war in Gaza began taking down the camp after Trinity College Dublin said it would divest from three Israeli companies.¹⁴¹

German police broke up a protest by several hundred people who had occupied a courtyard at Berlin’s Free University. Protesters also occupied a university building in Amsterdam hours after police detained 169 people at a different campus location. Elsewhere in Europe, some student camps have been allowed to stay in places like the lawns of Cambridge. By May 8, 2024,

students had held protests or set up encampments in Finland, Denmark, Italy, Spain, France, and Britain.¹⁴²

A small handful of occupations and protests have sprung up at UK universities, which included the following as of May 1, 2024:

Warwick University, University of Leeds, University College London

What about other protests around the world?

There have been occupations and sit-ins at universities from France to New Zealand, including the following:

France: Paris Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po), Sorbonne University

Italy: Sapienza University, Rome

New Zealand: University of Auckland

Australia: University of Melbourne, University of Sydney, University of Queensland, Australian National University in Canberra

Canada: McGill University, Concordia University, University of British Columbia, Vancouver

Thirty-two people were arrested as Dutch police broke up a Gaza war protest at the University of Amsterdam, in a second day of unrest over the conflict. Police said the offenses included public violence, vandalism, and assault.

The video appeared to show officers in riot gear striking protesters and police knocking down makeshift barricades of desks, bricks, and wooden pallets that seemingly had been used to set off fire extinguishers in hopes of pushing them back. The footage appeared to also show police dragging several students away as hundreds shouted: "Shame on you!"

The Dutch prime minister, Mark Rutte, said events at the university had crossed a line. "Demonstrations are allowed. Always. But using violence against the police and causing destruction is never allowed. Stop that!" he media. Rutte also asserted that "more and more often, and with increasingly harsh words, the violence in Gaza is being blamed on Jewish Dutch people," describing this as unjustified and a "form of antisemitism that we must continue to fight loudly and clearly."

About 30 miles south, at Utrecht University, students occupied a building in protest while in Belgium, dozens of students had continued to occupy Ghent University in a three-day protest that had fused demands about Gaza and the climate crisis.

Tensions over Gaza also spread to the Eurovision Song Contest in Malmö, Sweden, where the climate activist Greta Thunberg joined thousands of pro-Palestinian demonstrators to protest against Israel's participation in the competition.

"Young people are leading the way and showing the world how we should react to this," said Thunberg.¹⁴³ The protest came as Israeli contestant, Eden Golan, 20, prepared to perform her song Hurricane in the second semifinal.

In Spain, demonstrations and encampments continued at several campuses across the country. At the University of Valencia, where tents were set up 11 days ago, about 50 people are calling on Spain to sever ties with Israel.

At Madrid's Complutense University, about 200 students crammed into 80 tents in an encampment launched this week. Similar initiatives have sprung up in Barcelona and the Basque Country.

A non-profit association representing 77 universities across Spain, both public and private, said in a statement that its members would review and, where appropriate, suspend agreements with Israeli universities and research centers that had not expressed "a firm commitment to peace and compliance with international humanitarian law."¹⁴⁴

The protests in Spain received a boost from the country's minister of science, innovation, and universities, Diana Morant, who said she was "proud" of the students for mobilizing. Spanish universities should not only be "a place for academic formation, but also critical thinking," she added.

Spain, along with Ireland, has for months been among the EU's sharpest critics of Israel's response to the terrorist atrocities of 7 October. The two countries were prepared to recognize Palestinian statehood as early as May 21, 2024.¹⁴⁵

Talks had intensified between Spain and Ireland, as well as Slovenia and Malta, and all of the four countries had already signed on to a March statement declaring they were ready to recognize Palestinian statehood when "the circumstances are right".

Ireland's prime minister, Simon Harris, said he had spoken to his Spanish counterpart, Pedro Sánchez, regarding their shared wish to push forward with Palestinian statehood. "We are both eager to make progress on this very shortly and our governments remain in close contact," he said on social media.

In the run-up to plans to put forward a draft resolution that would recognize Palestine as qualified to become a full UN member at the UN general assembly, Albares said Spain was prepared to vote in favor. The commitment was echoed in Ireland, where Micheál Martin, Ireland's Tánaiste, told a meeting of the Green party that Ireland was set to vote in favor of Palestinian membership at the UN gathering.

The potential acceleration of Palestinian recognition comes as EU leaders fend off growing pressure to respond to Israel's operation in Rafah.

At least 67 MEPs have signed a letter urging EU leaders to convene “an urgent meeting” to discuss the EU's “response to the events in Rafah”. The MEPs, belonging to the Greens, Socialists, radical left, and a few liberals, had called for EU sanctions against Israel as “the only adequate response to this horrendous and reckless military campaign in Rafah and the rest of the Gaza Strip.”

However, EU governments, who have the power to impose sanctions by unanimity, are highly unlikely to impose sweeping sanctions against Israel. Instead, the letter offers a testament to the strength of feeling on the left of the parliament.¹⁴⁶

educational institutions.

By mid-May demonstrations and sit-ins were taking place on campuses across Europe, including in France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, as part of a larger protest against Israeli attacks on Gaza. Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice. An interim ruling ordered Tel Aviv to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza.¹⁴⁷

Amid the growing student movement in the US and Europe, a pro-Palestinian protest at the University of Helsinki in the Finnish capital continued on May 16. The protesters in the Finnish university demand that the university terminate all exchange student agreements and research collaborations with Israeli educational institutions. Those taking part in the demonstration pointed out that Israeli universities are complicit in the violence in Gaza.

According to the demonstrators, Tel Aviv University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem have been involved in developing weapon technologies used against people in Gaza and training military personnel in collaboration with the Israeli army. Despite calls, the Board of Governors delayed a decision on a demand to cut ties with Israeli universities after a meeting.

Demonstrators said there was a lot of excitement in the air as the board met to discuss the issue, but the evening ended in disappointment when it became clear that a decision would not be reached.

"Given the urgency of the issue, we had hoped for a clear position already. We don't know what the content of the statement will be, but in general, people here are disappointed now," Kevin Soovik, spokesman for Students for Palestine, told the Swedish-language newspaper Hufvudstadsbladet.

The Chair of the Board of Governors of the University of Helsinki, Emeritus Professor Niklas Bruun, said the issue prompted a lengthy, in-depth discussion at the meeting.

"This raises concerns on major issues of principle. It is a serious matter. The board took this very seriously," he said.

Bruun refused to say how discussions would proceed or how the board members viewed the issue. He did, however, confirm to Hufvudstadsbladet that a statement of guidelines will be issued within a few days.

However, students are sticking to their demand, stating that the demonstration will continue until the university agrees to cut off academic ties with Israeli universities, Anadolu Agency reported.

"Cooperation with Israeli universities violates the University of Helsinki's ethical principles because these universities are complicit in genocide, apartheid, and violations of international human rights," Vilja Hermansson, a member of the student group, said. According to the group, Finnish higher education institutions should act similarly to those in neighboring Norway, where five universities severed ties with Israel in February.

In neighboring Sweden, pro-Palestinian demonstrations were being held across the country, with university students pitching tents to protest Israel's ongoing offensive on the Gaza Strip.

Around 400 academics from Swedish Lund University protested alongside students, urging the university administration to clarify its position on the Gaza war and cut ties with Israel.

Amidst the global wave of protests, students from various universities in Karachi gathered outside Karachi University to demonstrate their solidarity with Palestine against Israel's actions in Gaza. The demonstration resonated with pro-Palestinian sentiments as students carried banners and placards depicting the plight of Gaza. A week prior, over two hundred professors from Karachi University, including several deans and senior academics, along with the president of the KU Teachers Society, penned a letter expressing solidarity with ongoing protests in US campuses against Gaza atrocities.¹⁴⁸

In Bristol, hand-painted banners were erected between tents, emblazoned with messages of defiance as students lobbied their university to cut ties with arms companies and back calls for a ceasefire as the war rages on in the Levant.¹⁴⁹

Large crowds have also been forming in Newcastle, as students say their protest will 'highlight the institution's investment strategy and its complicity in the Israeli military's war crimes in Gaza and the West Bank'.

Elsewhere, several students walked out of lectures at Sheffield University yesterday to take part in the demonstration and are refusing to leave until the universities meet their demands.

Leeds students also announced plans to camp 'indefinitely' outside their student union, occupying land opposite the building and pledging to remain until the university, in their view, is 'no longer complicit in the oppression of the Palestinian people'.¹⁵⁰

Thousands of university and college students across Bangladesh staged demonstrations on May 8, 2024, joining the wave of pro-Palestine international student protests. The students also condemned the brutal police crackdown on students at university campuses and colleges across the US where they are also campaigning against Israel's barbaric war.

Dhaka University was the main center of May 8, 2024's protests with students participating from other campuses and colleges. According to the Bangladesh-based New Age, other demonstrations were held at universities in Jahangirnagar, Chittagong, Comilla, Rajshahi, and the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology.¹⁵¹

Significant numbers of students also protested at Shah Azizul Haque College in Bogura and Mymensingh's Agricultural University. Palestinian students enrolled at these universities and university lecturers also participated.

The students at the rallies and marches carried banners with slogans such as "Free Palestine, Stop Genocide! Down with Zionism! Ceasefire in Gaza now!" The rally at Dhaka University, which was joined by several university lecturers, was under the banner "Solidarity with Free Palestine Movement in American Universities!"

On May 8, 2024, nationwide demonstrations were preceded by an anti-genocide protest by Dhaka University students on May 7. The protests were mainly organized by the Bangladesh Students' League, the student wing of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling Awami League. Its president, Saddam Hussain, read out a "Memorandum of Peace" at the end of Monday's protest at Dhaka University.

The memorandum condemned the witch-hunting of students at US universities, noting the students were defying "intimidation and repression, demanding divestment from the arms that fill the machinery of oppression and genocide." Hussain called for these imperialist powers "to stand in solidarity with the oppressed, to fight for justice, peace, and equality now."¹⁵²

On May 2, Prime Minister Hasina also criticized the arrest of the US students as a "breach of human rights" and questioned whether it was "part of the US democracy." Hasina's comments about "human rights" and "democracy" are completely hypocritical and exposed by her government's repression of opposition parties and its violent assaults on the basic rights and jobs, wages, and living standards of Bangladeshi workers and the poor.¹⁵³

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and the World Socialist Web Site have called on students to turn to the international working class, the only social force that can halt the Netanyahu regime's criminal attacks.¹⁵⁴

On May 14, 2024, students at the University of Ljubljana occupied the main lecture hall at the Faculty of Social Sciences (FDV) in protest over Israeli military operations against Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip. Students demand that the FDV and the university, Slovenia's main education institution, denounce the strikes in Gaza as genocide and back the rights of the Palestinians. The protest has been supported by six departments at FDV as well as by the student council and seven departments from other universities.

Slovenia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Tanja Fajon, from Robert Golob's center-left cabinet, is on a tour of the Middle East and met with her Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry in Cairo on May 12, where she expressed concerns over the stalled negotiations between Israel and Hamas and warned against the offensive by the Israeli military in Rafah. Fajon also visited the Rafah crossing on May 11, calling for the reopening of the crossing to enable aid deliveries into Gaza. The Rafah crossing had been previously taken by the IDF.¹⁵⁵

Golob and Fajon also welcomed the UN General Assembly vote in favor of a resolution backing Palestine's full membership at the UN. Slovenia has parted ways with Central European

countries such as Czechia and Hungary in their staunchly pro-Israeli stance and has pushed for the recognition of Palestine.¹⁵⁶

Amid protests at universities first seen in the United States and spreading worldwide against Israel's invasion of the Gaza Strip, increasingly more students at Japanese universities are joining the movement.

Peaceful protests took place at Aoyama Gakuin University's campus in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward on May 10. At the University of Tokyo's Komaba campus in the capital's Meguro Ward, a "Palestine solidarity camp" is being run in solidarity with the efforts at American universities. On May 6, the students submitted a document to the university, echoing the demands of those in the U.S., calling for disclosure of information on the faculty's alignment with Israeli companies and related firms and for divestment of funds, while condemning Israel's invasion of the Gaza Strip and urging the university to respond.¹⁵⁷

A group of mainly international students in solidarity with Palestine was established at Waseda University and has been meticulously preparing for demonstrations since spring break. More than 200 people gathered for the event, surpassing expectations, and indicating a high level of interest among students, according to Toda.

Meanwhile, Western public opinion has shifted, which is now becoming "more inclined to support the Palestinians and lift the injustice inflicted on them".¹⁵⁸ In a changed tone Biden told a graduation ceremony at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, that he would listen to "non-violent" protests after demonstrations over Israel's war in Gaza roiled US campuses in recent weeks. "I support the peaceful non-violent protest. Your voices should be heard, and I promise you I hear them." ¹⁵⁹

President Biden said, "What's happening in Israel and Gaza is heartbreaking." In his address, Biden called for an immediate ceasefire and said his administration is working on a deal "as we speak" so that Israelis taken hostage can be returned home and more humanitarian aid can get into war-torn Gaza. Biden said he's also working on a two-state agreement to create "everlasting peace" between the Israelis and Palestinians in the region in a post-Hamas era so that both sides can have "security and dignity."¹⁶⁰

"It's one of the hardest, complicated problems in the world," Biden said of the ongoing conflict. He expressed empathy with student and faculty members who've participated in the pro-Palestinian demonstrations on campus, saying, "I know it angers and frustrates many of you, including my family." First lady Jill Biden has reportedly been urging her husband to stop the suffering in Gaza. "But most of all, I know it breaks your heart. It breaks mine as well," Biden said.¹⁶¹

The unprecedented student demonstrations and the seriousness of the situation in Gaza are having an impact. Several universities have agreed to the protesters' demands:

The unprecedented show of support for the Palestinian cause by students worldwide will have a further impact as the world leadership is forced to listen to their viewpoints. Such is the way of democracy and enlightened rule.

Meanwhile, Israel has failed to achieve its war objectives including destroying Hamas and is now mired in fighting that has dragged on for more than seven months. Negotiations over a ceasefire and hostage releases have virtually stalled, with Hamas and the Israeli government blaming each other.¹⁶²

On May 18, 2024, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met with Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MBS) in Saudi Arabia.

On May 19, Saudi state media reported that Sullivan and the country's de facto ruler Prince Mohammed discussed a "semi-final" version of a deal that is likely to increase the security ties between the two nations. That deal is seen as a major part of the efforts made by Washington to bring Riyadh around a mega-deal in which the state of Israel gets recognized for the first time.¹⁶³

The completion of a historic bilateral agreement has long been a top priority for President Joe Biden as it would begin a parallel track to normalize relations between the Kingdom and Israel. However, that is dependent upon a pathway to a Palestinian state.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken recently described that part of the vision as requiring both "calm in Gaza" and a "credible pathway to a Palestinian state." Sullivan is later expected to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to discuss the proposed deal.

Saudi Arabia has made clear that nothing can move forward without a two-state solution that includes Palestinian self-rule in both the West Bank and Gaza. Putting aside the Palestinian issue is nearly impossible now due to the widespread outcry in the Arab world over the immense humanitarian toll on Palestinians in Gaza since Israel invaded the enclave on Oct 7.

On May 20, 2024, United States President Joe Biden's National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan appealed to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to link the ongoing Gaza war with a "political strategy" for the future of the territory.

Sullivan also discussed the "potential" of reaching a normalization deal between Israel and Saudi Arabia, said the White House on May 19. Later, Sullivan briefed Prime Minister Netanyahu and his team on these.¹⁶⁴

Israel did not immediately react. The country has pushed back Biden's appeal for restraint in Gaza. During his visit to Israel, Sullivan had "reiterated the president's longstanding position on

Rafah,” appealing to Israel to “avoid any such offensive.” It had recently paused the shipment of bombs to its ally amid concerns that they may be used for bombing Rafah.

Sullivan "reaffirmed the need for Israel to connect its military operations to a political strategy that can ensure the lasting defeat of Hamas, the release of all the hostages, and a better future for Gaza,"¹⁶⁵

Given Netanyahu's stated opposition to a Palestinian state, it isn't clear what he will agree to, but he is faced with increasing domestic political crises. Two of the three unity war cabinet ministers have openly questioned Netanyahu's Gaza strategy this past week. Minister Benny Gantz threatened to quit by June 8 if vital decisions were not made. Gantz has already called for elections in September and is widely seen as a replacement for Netanyahu. Gantz has also been speaking with Sullivan about the Saudi deal.

The Biden administration hopes that “the politically embattled Netanyahu will view the significant security and diplomatic win of normalizing with Saudi Arabia as an opportunity and a reason to make a compromise on Palestinian issues despite the danger of alienating right-wing members whose support is critical to the survival of his fragile coalition government.”¹⁶⁶ Israel's Netanyahu doesn't have any plan for a 'day after' the war on Gaza. Nor is the Biden administration any better. It is stuck on an old and decadent paradigm of American supremacy, exceptionalism, and global influence. Most importantly, the Biden administration is simply bending to the exigencies of local politics being scared of the disruptive politics of the rival Republican party in an election year. There is now a serious rift within the Israeli cabinet as the defense minister is openly criticizing Netanyahu over the absence of an exit plan for the Gaza war. Meanwhile, as Israel crushes Gaza, there are now many questions about when it will stop and what it will do next.¹⁶⁷ The US and Israel have serious differences about the issue. For the first time, the Biden administration is questioning Israeli leadership on the conduct of the Gaza war.

Given the strong student protest movement in the US, President Biden is shifting his policy on the issue of Palestine and the outright support to Israel in its conduct of the Gaza war. On May 19, 2024, Joe Biden delivered a commencement address at Morehouse College, a venue offering the U.S. president an election-year opportunity to address anger over his support for Israel and to repair bonds with young Black men.¹⁶⁸

Biden has maintained longstanding U.S. arms support for Israel despite the increasing death toll of its Gaza war campaign. However, he has also threatened to cut off aid if Israel pursues its offensive in Rafah, where many civilians are taking refuge. He has also reiterated support for a two-state solution and backed humanitarian relief for Gaza.¹⁶⁹

Given the strong sway of public opinion in support of Palestine in the world, the global leadership is expected to act. However, it remains to be seen whether the world's leadership can meet these extraordinary challenges, and the world is watching how the leaders act to meet them, or otherwise.

Given the large scale of the student protest phenomenon, it can have influence now as it is becoming increasingly popular with the people. It will be more effective in the West, as the

policymakers succumb to sheer political pressure from within. Also, the leadership of the Arab and Muslim world is apt to listen increasingly to their people who are making a strong statement in favor of Palestinian independence. Some recent developments lead to hope that a tipping point of sorts has indeed been reached on the Palestinian issue.

On May 16, 2024, the Manama Arab League summit produced good ideas about a UN conference to be followed by a new UN peacekeeping force. Therefore, the global leadership must now follow up on the Bahrain Summit at the level of experts to formulate an action plan to first end the Gaza war, and then establish an interim setup to rule the enclave, as per the aspirations of the Palestinian populace. Nothing else will be sufficient to meet the rising expectations of the world public. It is global public opinion that has galvanized in an unprecedented manner against the atrocities and callousness of Israel in Gaza. For the first time in history, student demonstrations have simultaneously shaken up the ruling elites of so many countries to do something for the Palestinians in their hour of intense suffering and need. It is hoped that the Bahrain summit will be the catalyst for robust united global action leading to an effective outcome leading to an eventual two-state solution. It is earnestly hoped that this time around there will be serious action by the global leadership. Given the troubled history of the Middle East region, only an independent and sovereign Palestine can bring the volatile region to peace and security. Nothing else can work. Much depends on the next steps taken to achieve tangible outcomes of the Bahrain Summit declaration. The impetus of the whole new movement rests on just a few countries, the US, the UK, France, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, and Qatar. The leadership of the new effort rests on the shoulders of two world leaders: Primarily, President Biden and secondary Saudi Arabia's MBS alone. Whether they will be able to deliver remains to be seen. The world anxiously awaits and hopes they will succeed somehow. Bold action and single-minded focus are now needed to bring an end to the Gaza war and the establishment of an independent Palestine, ushering into regional peace and security.

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