

US STUDENT PROTESTS



KEY POINTS:

SINCE MID-APRIL 2024 PRO- PALESTINIAN STUDENT PROTESTS ACROSS US CAMPUSES HAVE TAKEN ON AN URGENT AND DISRUPTIVE FORM, LEADING THE POLICE TO ARREST MORE THAN 1300 PROTESTERS

THE PROTESTERS CHANT BLATANT ANTI-ISRAEL AND OFTEN ANTISEMITIC SLOGANS, AND DEMAND DIVESTMENT FROM ISRAEL AND COOPERATIVE INSTITUTIONS DUE TO THE WAR IN GAZA, LEAVING JEWISH AND ISRAELI STUDENTS FEELING UNSAFE

IN THE UK AND IRELAND PROTESTS AT UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES HAVE ALSO BECOME STRONGER IN RECENT WEEKS WITH ENCAMPMENTS AT THE UNIVERSITIES OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, UCL, EDINBURGH AND MORE

● Pro-Palestinian Student Protests across the U.S.

In the two weeks between mid-April and early May 2024, more than 1300 student demonstrators across US campuses have been arrested, most notably at Columbia University, City University of New York, UCLA but also elsewhere like the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and University of Arizona, Tuscon and more. The demonstrators were taking part in a week's-long pro-Palestinian protest movement since October 7th, which has intensified in recent weeks. The protests have led to tensions with university leadership and to clashes with the police.

Protesters, often organised and allegedly partly **funded by nation-wide groups like the National Students for Justice in Palestine (NSJP)**, have set up encampment zones at various campuses and intermittently taken hold of university buildings, causing chaos, disruption, damage to property, making campus feel unsafe in particular for Jewish and Israeli students.

● Who is Protesting?

University student groups and organised student coalitions such NSJP and Columbia University Apartheid Divest (CUAD). **Some university faculty and staff have also supported and joined the student protests.** Non-student groups like American Muslims for Palestine (AMP) or the non-profit New York Civil Liberties Union have also been supporting the current protest movement. Authorities in the US are looking into allegations that non-student bodies have been actively recruiting, organising and funding the protest on campuses.

● What are the Calls and Demands of the Demonstrators?

- Clear Pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel positions, which have been expressed both as concern for the humanitarian situation in Gaza and as solidarity with Hamas terrorist attacks, including the celebration of the atrocities it committed on 7th October.
- Calls to 'free Palestine', i.e. the delegitimisation of Israel's existence even with the 1967 borders
- **Targeting of Jewish, Israeli and pro-Israel students and staff**, at times preventing their access to areas on campus, as well as verbally abusing and threatening them with antisemitic and anti-Zionist slogans.
- Resonating with the **decades-long BDS movement**, the current protesters demand that US universities divest from Israel and any companies associated with it. For example, demands that Columbia University divest from companies doing business with Israel (Amazon, Google and Microsoft), as well as corporations in the defence, arms, information security and aerospace industries, who have allegedly been profiting from the war. These include Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, which manufactures Iron Dome, the Israeli missile defence system.
- Protests against the Biden administration and its support for Israel. Some protesters have been using the slogan "genocide Joe" in calls for him to leave office.
- In some cases (e.g. Yale University's Endowment Justice Coalition), decades-long calls for fossil fuel divestment now overlap with calls to stop supporting Israel's war in Gaza due to its supposed environmental impact.

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Further Resources:

- **US College Protests: Who are the student groups and others involved – [Reuters](#).**
- **Where are the US college campus protests and what is happening – [The Guardian](#).**



● How have University Administrations and the Police Reacted?

University administrators, such as Professor Nemat Minouche Shafik, president of Columbia University, have moved from negotiations with protesters to **dismantling their encampments, as well as partial suspension and expulsion of students from campus and courses**. Unsuccessful negotiations and ensuing chaos and vandalism on campus have led to administrators authorising police forces to enter the campuses, leading to clashes and over 1300 arrests.

This comes just four months after the [controversy](#) over the comments of three elite US university presidents made at a congressional hearing on antisemitism in December 2023, which led to the resignation of [two of them](#).

● What is the current situation at UK campuses and in Ireland?

In the days since late April 2024, protest encampments have been set up at the universities of Manchester, Sheffield, Bristol and Newcastle, among others. Jewish students have complained that the encampments create a toxic and hostile atmosphere for them on campus, while PM Rishi Sunak has pledged police clamp down should the protests create disorder. Since mid-April 2024 pro-Palestinian student protests across US campuses have taken on an urgent and disruptive form, leading the police to arrest more than 1300 protesters.

The chair of Trinity College Dublin’s Jewish Society, reports in the [JC](#) how Trinity College Dublin Student Union (TCDSU) fails to represent its Jewish students or to engage with opposition voices that oppose their year-long support for BDS or with the current announcement that they are planning “something massive” inspired by US student campuses.

● Reaction among Jewish Students and Civilian Bodies:

Recent reactions include:

- a [petition](#) by Hillel International to assist Jewish students and keep them safe.
- Jewish students using social media to report on their experiences, such as interviews given on the podcast [Unholy: Two Jews on the News](#) (from minute 15 onwards).
- The establishment of the “Intra-Communal Professorial Group” (ICPG) in the UK, in order to research, record and analyse the experiences of Jewish students, academics, and other staff on British university campuses, following the recorded increase in antisemitism since 7 October 2023. The ICPG will also make recommendations to UK universities and stakeholders about how to improve the experience of Jewish students and staff.
- “Anti-Jewish Racism Promoted On Campuses”, StandWithUs UK [statement](#).
- “Major US law firm sues Students for Justice in Palestine for alleged support of Hamas 'terrorist activities'”, [Fox News](#).