

## II. United States

# U.S. Campus Protests Reject Genocide, Pose Serious Threat to U.S. War Machine

by Harley Schlanger

May 15—The wave of campus protests in the United States against U.S. support for Israel’s deadly assault on the population of Gaza began inauspiciously with the takeover of the Brown University administration building on November 8, 2023. Among the demands of the students was a demand for a printout of the university’s financial relationship with the Israeli government and military establishment, and of the investment of university funds in firms connected to the U.S. Military-Industrial Complex (MIC).

As the death toll in Gaza climbed above 20,000 by December 22, ferment among youth against the U.S. complicity in Israel’s genocidal policy grew. But it wasn’t until April 17, six months into the invasion of Gaza by Israel, that the campuses exploded, with protestors setting up encampments on more than 140 U.S. campuses. In addition to demanding a ceasefire and an end to the occupation of Palestine by Israel, the call for university divestment from the war machine also became one of the central demands for many of the protests.

April 17 was the day an encampment went up on the Columbia University campus, and many other campuses did the same. The student protesters were soon supported by professors, who expressed dismay and anger over the slaughter of civilians, and the refusal of the U.S. to cut off aid to Israel. The dismay and anger became more intense when the U.S. House passed the \$95 billion supplemental military aid package on April 20 by an overwhelming majority, with \$25 bil-



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*Student encampment at Columbia University protests Israeli genocide against Palestinians.*

lion slated for Israel.

The growing demonstrations produced two hostile reactions: slanders that the protesters were “pro-Hamas,” “pro-terrorist” and “anti-Semitic”; and a decision to call on law enforcement to close the encampments. On April 30, police cleared student demonstrators from Hamilton Hall at Columbia University, and a pro-Israel mob of thugs attacked the encampment at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), while police stood by for three hours, doing nothing to protect demonstrators from the thugs’ assaults. Similar police action to clear away protesters was taken nationwide, with a total of more than 2,900 arrests by May 9.

On May 1, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill defining opposition to Israel as “anti-Semitism.” The bill would establish “anti-Semitism monitors” to spy on students, and authorized cuts in funding to any

university which did not rigorously monitor speech. Despite the obvious intent to deprive protesters of the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech, the vote was 320 to 91.

The shift in tactics by administrators to use of police force and threats of expulsion occurred as sympathy for the demonstrators and the cause of justice for Palestinians grew. The narrative that Israeli aggression was justified by the brutality of Hamas' October 7 attack was eroded by images of streams of helpless, hungry Palestinians seeking shelter and food while being shot at and bombed, and the hypocrisy of Biden officials pleading for more "humanitarian" treatment while flooding Israel with U.S. weapons and funds. That young Americans were capable of empathy for the Palestinians was seen as a definite threat to the pro-Israel narrative.

But the other factor that precipitated the crackdown is that the call for divestiture of funds from the war machine was taking hold. Universities with huge endowment funds refused to say where those funds were invested, out of fear of exposure that they have been incorporated into the war machine. Further, panic developed over public awareness that the "MIC" had expanded, to what peace activist Ray McGovern calls the MICIMATT—the Military-Industrial-Congressional-Intelligence-Media-Academia-Think Tank Complex—with funds from college endowments invested in "tech" firms, such as Google, Amazon, Cisco and Palantir, which have joined traditional military contractors, such as Boeing and Raytheon, as part of the new MIC. The Hollywood and media image of universities as centers of learning is in danger of being replaced by the reality that they have become a central part of the Anglo-American killing machine, committed to upholding the "rules" imposed to preserve the Unipolar Order.

At Columbia, for example, the president of the university, Minouche Shafik, who called in the police, is



*Destruction of Gaza University by the IDF on Jan. 17, 2024.*

a walking interface with the British imperial war machine. A baroness with a seat in the House of Lords, she was formerly Vice President of the World Bank, Deputy Managing Director of the IMF, and Director of the London School of Economics, a key institution in the imperial tradition of the City of London. The Columbia board of trustees includes Jeh Johnson, who served the Obama administration as counsel to the Defense Department and then Secretary of Homeland Security, while also being on the board of directors of military contractor Lockheed Martin and a partner in leading Wall Street law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind.



*World Economic Forum*

*Columbia University President Minouche Shafik, a member of the British House of Lords. On May 16, the Columbia Faculty of Arts and Sciences voted up a motion of no confidence in her by a landslide—65 percent.*

Students at other campuses are pushing for transparency and divestiture. By focusing attention on the interface between higher education and the military-security establishment, academic institutions are being exposed as complicit in war crimes. Perhaps cash-strapped parents may begin to ask why they must go into debt to the tune of \$60,000 per year to pay tuition so their children might receive what Lyndon LaRouche referred to as a "terminal degree" from institutions complicit in the commission of war crimes.