

New York police arrest dozens of pro-Palestine students at NYU campus

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New York, April 24 (RHC)-- U.S. police have arrested a multitude of pro-Palestinian protesters and students against Israel's genocidal war on the besieged Gaza Strip. Media reports said on Tuesday that

New York Police Department (NYPD) officers began detaining students who had set up a pro-Palestine protest encampment at New York University (NYU) campus in midtown Manhattan.

The student arrests, according to a NYU spokesperson, was at the behest of the university after additional protesters, many of whom were not thought to be affiliated with NYU, suddenly breached the barriers erected around the encampment.

The spokesperson said in a statement on the school's website on Monday that the breach of the barriers of the encampment "dramatically changed" the situation, prompting university officials to call the police.

The encampment had been set up by the NYU Palestine Solidarity Coalition, a newly formed on-campus group, comprising students and faculty from Students for Justice in Palestine, Faculty for Justice in Palestine, Law Students for Justice in Palestine, Shut it Down NYU, Jews Against Zionism and more than 20 other on-campus groups.

The spokesperson said: "Given the foregoing and the safety issues raised by the breach, we asked for assistance from the NYPD. The police urged those on the plaza to leave peacefully, but ultimately made a number of arrests."

NYU's student-run newspaper Washington Square News published an update saying "all visible protesters have either dispersed or been arrested." Students and faculty members were arrested by hundreds of policemen on charges of trespassing, media reported.

U.S. universities have been a hotspot for pro-Palestine debates and a focal point for anti-Israel protests since October 7th. Pro-Palestine student rallies also took place at Yale, Columbia University and other campuses over the Israeli war on Gaza.

Columbia's President Nemat "Minouche" Shafik announced in an official statement that all classes will be held virtually on Monday and that faculty and staff who can work remotely should do so. Monday marks Passover, a major Jewish holiday.

"Over the past days, there have been too many examples of intimidating and harassing behavior on our campus. Anti-Semitic language, like any other language that is used to hurt and frighten people, is unacceptable and appropriate action will be taken," Shafik said in a statement.

Days before the latest escalation in tensions on campus, leaders of Columbia University, including Shafik, appeared before a committee in the Congress to face questions about the alleged anti-Semitism on campus.

Before that, Shafik had pledged on April 17 to take firm action to combat anti-Semitism. She said Columbia had already suspended 15 students and had six on disciplinary probation. "These are more disciplinary actions that have been taken probably in the last decade at Columbia. And I promise you, from the messages I'm hearing from students, they are getting the message that violations of our policies will have consequences," Shafik said.

Pro-Palestinian protesters accuse Columbia of stifling their freedom of expression.

In November, Columbia suspended Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace. In March, the New York Civil Liberties Union said it would sue Columbia over the suspensions.

In January, the university banned a group of individuals from campus after they were accused of being involved in spraying pro-Palestinian protesters with a foul-smelling chemical.

NYPD, on Thursday, arrested more than 100 pro-Palestinian protesters from Columbia on charges of trespassing.

At Yale campus in New Haven, Connecticut, 60 people, including at least 47 student protesters, were arrested for trespassing after they blocked traffic around campus, according to a statement by Yale University President Peter Salovey on Monday. A pro-Palestinian encampment has been set up in Yale since Friday.

President Joe Biden has described the “blatant” anti-Semitism at Columbia University “reprehensible and dangerous,” saying “it has absolutely no place on college campuses, or anywhere in our country.”

But human rights activists and pro-Palestine protesters from across the globe have been calling for an immediate implementation of a complete ceasefire in Gaza.

Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Palestine, denounced the student arrests in an X post on Monday. “What lessons are Western universities and governments imparting to their young citizens and students when they attack the very values and rights that are said to be foundational to Western societies?”

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