

*Students demand release of 11
pro-Palestine protesters arrested
at U.S. university*



Student protests across several US campuses have picked back up, but administrators and police are cracking down quickly

University of California students in Irvine walk out of classes, carrying banners to commemorate one year of Israel's war on Gaza, on 7 October 2024 (Mike Blake/Reuters)

Minneapolis, October 25 (RHC)-- At the University of Minnesota (UMN), 11 protesters, both students and alumni, were arrested on Monday after temporarily occupying a campus building.

Images posted to the Instagram account for UMN Students for a Democratic Society show barricaded doors at the entrance to Morrill Hall, which they renamed "Halimy Hall" in honour of the popular Palestinian social media influencer, Medo Halimy. The 19-year-old died as a result of an Israeli air strike in Gaza in August.

The move echoed the renaming of Hamilton Hall at Columbia University in New York City to "Hind's Hall," in honor of six-year-old Hind Rajab, also killed by Israeli forces alongside her relatives.

At UMN, as with Columbia, police eventually stormed the building. But in UMN's case, there appeared to be no negotiation effort, and law enforcement was immediately called.

The protesters remain at Hennepin County Jail in downtown Minneapolis, and students have already distributed flyers for protests on Wednesday and Saturday to push for their release.

University officials said staff inside the building were prevented from leaving, creating a dangerous environment. But a video posted to Instagram by UMN Students for a Democratic Society shows a protester announcing over a microphone that anyone who wishes to leave Morrill Hall is free to exit.

In April, following in the footsteps of several elite universities across the US, UMN students began an anti-war encampment and demanded the university divest from companies profiting off of Israel's war on Gaza.

While several students were arrested and the encampment was cleared, another was launched nearby. By the beginning of May, protesters and university administrators came to an agreement that the students could address the Board of Regents directly with their grievances.

However, in August, the Board of Regents declined to divest from companies such as Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics and Honeywell.

In turn, the students said in a statement that "no administrative decision short of total divestment from Israel will stop our protest".

Middle East Eye reached out to the president's office at UMN as well as to UMN Students for a Democratic Society for comment but did not hear back by the time of publication.

At Northwestern University in Chicago, students erected a "Gaza Solidarity Sukkah" for the eight-day-long Jewish harvest holiday of Sukkot. They built a wooden hut on campus, intending to spend the night there, but it was promptly dismantled by police.

A similar structure went up on the campus of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where students demanded that their institution give up its business ties to companies linked to Israel.

The student newspaper said protesters had also erected several tents, and police quickly called on them to disperse. Pro-Israel counterprotesters had also gathered on the scene before the students began taking down the structures. One person was arrested.

A sukkah was also built at Brown University in Rhode Island by the group BrownU Jews for Ceasefire Now, and they have thus far been threatened with "conduct violations", according to the university newspaper.

Academic institutions across the country have introduced new rules for student protests, given the widespread, headline-grabbing student encampments for Gaza in the spring. The new rules include curfews and sometimes even pre-approval for written signs, which have caused concern among advocates of free expression.

When the student encampment in support of Gaza was dismantled at Brown in April, it was incumbent upon that very same request from protesters: that their university divests from companies linked to the Israeli military.

Earlier this month, the Corporation of Brown University held a vote behind closed doors on the issue and declined to divest.

In a statement emailed to MEE at the time, the Brown Divest Coalition (BDC) called the move an “extreme moral failure.” “In spite of direct evidence of investment in Israel’s apartheid system, military occupation, and genocide on Gaza, [Brown] will remain complicit in this violence,” the statement said.

Though their campaign was unsuccessful, students with BDC still made history by forcing the hand of their Ivy League institution to hold such a vote to begin with.

Several major academic institutions across the US have refused to entertain the prospect of divestment from Israel-linked companies, including the University of California system and the University of Michigan. They argue their endowments cannot be subject to political pressure.

Student encampments against Israeli occupation and the war on Gaza emerged on campuses across the country from March through May, dominating headlines, in a move never before seen on such a scale. Most were dismantled by force, at times in violent raids by police.

[SOURCE: MIDDLE EAST EYE]

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