

Biden administration moves to clamp down on pro-Palestine student groups in the United States

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By Shabbir Rizvi *

Washington, November 9 (RHC)-- Since the onset of the Al Aqsa Storm Operation more than one month ago, the U.S. has seen an unprecedented level of support and solidarity for the Palestinian people and resistance.

Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets in different U.S. cities, not only condemning the Zionist regime for its horrific war crimes in the besieged Gaza Strip and the ongoing occupation but for the U.S. government's direct role in supporting such crimes.

A particular note has to be made regarding the role of young people - specifically university student groups and coalitions - who have organized marches, rallies, speakouts, walkouts, and more.

Organizations such as the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), Muslim Students Association (MSA), Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and others have not only devoted much of their time and energy

championing the Palestinian cause on campuses - but have done so with tremendous bravery.

These demonstrators have been braving great risks and threats from pro-Israel lobbies. Anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are conflated in the political mechanisms of the United States. These political tendencies, which are really just Zionist propaganda points, are also disseminated into college campuses through special interest organizations and the academic curriculum itself.

Pro-Palestine organizers put themselves at great risk with their activities - groups like the "Anti-Defamation League" or other Zionist groups often target activists to smear or doxx them. Despite this, the Palestinian cause has become unshakable on campuses. From prestigious universities like Harvard to the small-town community college, the Palestinian struggle is making itself known - and it has turned heads. So much so that the federal government is now taking action to clamp down on it.

The Joe Biden administration, revising Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, asserted a new, egregious clarification to the 1964 law - insisting it prohibits "certain forms of antisemitic, Islamophobic, and related forms of discrimination in federally funded programs and activities."

As the chorus for an end to the Israeli regime's genocidal campaign in the besieged Gaza Strip grows louder, it is becoming increasingly clear who the real protagonist is - the United States.

It is worth noting that the update to the civil rights legislation is being done directly through the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights. Clearly, the ongoing struggle for Palestinian freedom has struck a nerve with the Biden administration.

Adding this clarification would threaten universities with having federal funding pulled - which many universities cannot exist without - if the federal government deems the university is breeding "anti-semitism."

Through this egregious conflation, Zionist groups can play the victim as they notoriously do and claim that cases of anti-semitism are on the rise when that is simply not the case. Calls for Palestinian liberation is on the rise, which the state - through its legal definition - deems as "anti-Semitic."

The definition lays the groundwork for enforcing a total ban on all pro-Palestine student activity as the very nationhood of Palestine is under direct threat by the US-backed Israeli occupation regime.

Every and any act of solidarity with Palestine on university campuses could mean arrest or expulsion.

Through bureaucratic measures, the Biden administration - and those that would follow after - could crack down on Pro-Palestine groups within universities by forcing the university to either comply with its new definition of anti-semitism - or face all of its federal funding being revoked.

Universities would then be the ones forced to stop Palestine solidarity demonstrations - and not an arm of the state, which would likely invite different legal hassles and challenges.

The Biden administration is moving fast to enforce this unpopular measure - more than 200 security experts at the Department of Homeland Security have now been deployed to schools to "monitor antisemitism" according to a White House official.

The state is acknowledging that it is devoting a significant amount of resources to prevent the spread of the Palestinian freedom movement.

And as such, some universities are already caving into Zionist and state pressure. Brandeis University, in Massachusetts, has completely banned the Students for Justice in Palestine organization. The local SJP chapter was then forced to cancel a vigil they had planned for last Monday night to honor the 10,000 Palestinians killed in Gaza by U.S.-funded bombs used by the Zionist regime.

Other states are experiencing more heavy-handed repression. Florida governor and presidential candidate Ron DeSantis has issued a complete ban on Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP).

Of course, legal action is always an option on the table. But the process can be lengthy, and full of different obstacles - such as money, time, and ongoing threats from the state and Zionist lobby.

This is by design - slowing down the rapidly growing march of the Palestinian cause on universities is pivotal for the Biden administration as it brazenly defends Israeli war crimes. So even if the student groups could win a legal case, this critical moment in US politics would be something the student organizations could not legally pursue through campus mechanisms.

The binding false definition that ties anti-Semitism to anti-Zionism will be the primary legal hurdle, and not just in universities. By using this standard on campuses, it is plausible to extend it to cities too - threatening to cut federal funding for city projects if local authorities do not crack down on Palestinian groups and their activities.

It is a dangerous precedent being set and lays bare the hypocritical nature of freedom of speech and assembly in the United States. The silver lining here is perhaps tied to that exactly - never before has the Palestinian cause been so powerful in the United States as it is today.

With Biden's tanking numbers in the polls ahead of an election year, complimented by hundreds of thousands attending Palestine marches in the streets, this legislation has the potential to backfire against not only Biden but the US political apparatus as a whole.

Only time will tell what legal battles will arise from this political fiasco. But one thing is for certain: the road ahead is long, and the state should expect a fierce fight from activists who are already willing to risk their lives for Palestine.

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