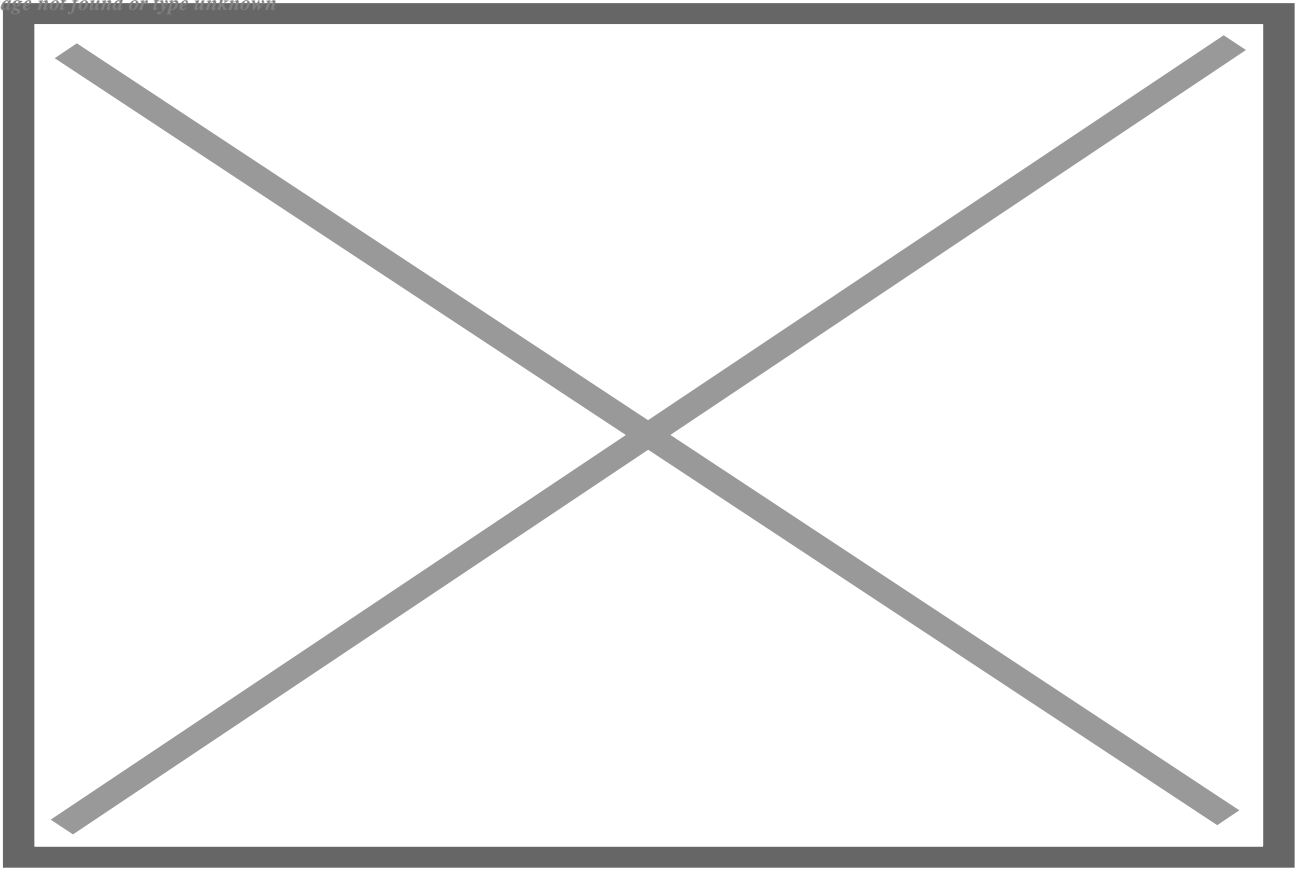


Police remove protesting students from Paris's Sciences Po university

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Paris, May 3 (RHC)-- French police officers entered the Paris Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po) in Paris and removed pro-Palestinian student activists who had occupied its buildings to protest Israel's war on Gaza.

Reporting from the French capital, Al Jazeera's Natacha Butler said that police on Friday "moved in" into one of the buildings and removed more than 50 students who were staging a sit-in, including some who had begun a hunger strike.

“They [students] have filtered out slowly. They were allowed to leave the scene. It seems that it had gone off peacefully,” she said.

James, a student at the university, told Al Jazeera that earlier on Friday, the school administrator held another round of talks with protesters, but negotiations to move the protest elsewhere on campus broke down. “There were no assurances given that there wouldn’t be a police intervention after people leave the rooms,” he said.

Another student named Lucas, who is studying for a master’s degree, told the AFP news agency that he witnessed how “some students were dragged and others gripped by the head or shoulders”.

Images captured by Al Jazeera outside the campus, also showed young protesters shouting pro-Palestinian chants as they faced off with police. Students from the university’s Palestine Committee had earlier told reporters they faced a “disproportionate” response from police, who had blocked access to the site before moving in.

They also complained of a lack of “medical assistance” for seven students who had started a hunger strike “in solidarity with Palestinian victims”.

Speaking before the police intervention, a Sciences Po spokesperson, said the university was seeking a “negotiated solution to end the standoff” with its students, and that some of its satellite campuses in Reims, Le Havre and Poitiers were also affected by protests.

The university was closed for the day on Friday, with a heavy police presence around its main building.

Sciences Po has become the epicentre of student antiwar protests in France over the institution’s academic ties with Israel. Last week, students blocked access to the university.

But Sciences Po’s director Jean Basseres rejected on Thursday the demands by protesters to review its relations with Israeli universities, prompting the students to continue their sit-in.

Although the protests have spread across the country, they have remained much smaller in scale than those seen in the United States.

Outside the Sorbonne University, a few hundred metres from Sciences Po in central Paris, members of the Union of Jewish Students in France (UEJF) were setting up a “dialogue table” on Friday. “We want to prove that it’s not true that you can’t talk about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” UEJF President Samuel Lejoyeux told broadcaster Radio J. “To do that, we have to sideline those who single out Jewish students as complicit in genocide,” he added.

In the northeastern city of Lille, the ESJ journalism school was blocked off, according to the AFP news agency.

Students at the city’s nearby branch of Sciences Po had their identities checked before they were allowed in via a back entrance to sit exams.

About 100 students had occupied a lecture hall at Science Po’s Lyon branch late on Thursday, while a blockade at a university site in nearby Saint-Etienne was cleared on Thursday morning by police.

French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal’s office said such protests would be dealt with using “total rigour,” adding that 23 university sites had been “evacuated” on Thursday.



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