

New York protesters besiege Citigroup HQ over ties with Israel

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Anti-war and climate activists converge in front of the Citigroup Headquarters for a months-long demonstration against its involvement with the genocidal Israeli regime in New York City, the United States, on June 18, 2024. (Photo by Anadolu Agency)

New York, June 23 (RHC)-- Anti-war protesters and climate justice activists have converged outside the Citigroup headquarters in New York City to demand the U.S. finance corporation cut ties with the Israeli regime.

The protesters also called on the company to sever its trade with arms manufacturing companies supplying weapons to Israelis, and Israeli-linked fossil fuel firms. They blockaded every entrance of the Citigroup headquarters in New York on Friday, preventing employees from getting to work.

Protesters from across the United States are expected to converge on New York City next Friday, June 28th. The protesters will travel from around the country to engage in a nonviolent demonstration outside the Citigroup building in what organizers "expect will be one of the largest mass climate civil disobedience actions in the U.S. in many years."

"We understand that there is no climate justice without a free Palestine," said one of the organizers interviewed by media named Liv. "Palestinians will be the first people to experience the harshest impacts of climate change," Liv added.

Layla, another organizer of the protests, described the climate crisis and devastation in Palestine as inextricably intertwined. "The corporations and institutions that are profiting off of the genocide and the ongoing war are also profiting off of the destruction of the environment and the planet," she said.

"We know our struggles are interconnected. Our victory is one and our enemy is one," Layla said, adding, "We have a collective responsibility to our people back home to be organized, unified and mobilized to put an end to this genocide."

The New York Police Department formed a protective line outside of Citibank headquarters this week with its Strategic Response Group, outfitted in riot gear, arresting several protesters after warning them to disperse.

Despite the police crackdowns, pro-Palestinian protests have continued across the United States, especially at universities, demanding divestment from companies profiting from the war in Gaza.

The ongoing 12-week-long protest in New York, titled Summer of Heat on Wall Street, began on June 10th and targets Citigroup and its affiliates, including its subsidiary, Citibank.

American mega-banks underwrite billions of dollars in Israel bonds despite U.S. colleges and university campuses witnessing massive protests.

Citibank's website boasts the largest presence of any foreign financial institution in Israel and offers corporate and investment banking services to leading Israeli corporations and institutions and global corporations operating in Israel. It serves as the fiscal agent, paying agent, transfer agent, and registrar for U.S. banks involved in underwriting billions of dollars in Israeli bonds.

The protesting groups, which have been endorsed by over 100 different organizations, including ANSWER Coalition, Extinction Rebellion United States and the Sunrise Movement, are calling on Citibank customers to close their bank accounts and cancel their credit cards in solidarity with the Palestinian people and in protest against the bank's complicity in the genocide taking place in Gaza.

According to Banking on Solidarity, "Citibank is deeply invested in Israel's infrastructure as the largest US banking institution in the country, especially in its role funding the "tech-washing" of Israeli apartheid by investing heavily in Israel's tech sector."

"Citibank has also actively facilitated billions in Israeli military weapon funding, helping to financially power the infrastructure that keeps apartheid running," it added.

The notorious pro-Israeli bank, just days after the regime's finance minister Bezalel Smotrich called for a Palestinian village to be "wiped out" last year, "very publicly decided to hold cordial meetings with Smotrich to calm the markets."

Climate justice activists say the New York-based Citibank is not just funding the current destruction of Gaza and decades-long occupation of Palestine by supplying money for arms, ammo, and other activities related to warfare, it is also the largest financier of fossil fuel expansion worldwide, annually investing about \$25 billion to the fossil fuel industry.

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