

New York City's Columbia University braces for anti-war protests as classes resume

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The photo shows pro-Palestinian supporters outside Columbia University on the first day of the

new semester in New York City, September 3, 2024. (By Reuters)

New York, September 4 (RHC)-- Columbia University in the city of New York is bracing for a resumption of anti-war protests, as students return to campus for the fall semester. Pro-Palestinian protesters demonstrated outside one of the school's entrances, with some beating drums, as classes resumed on Tuesday.

The university's gates were guarded and anyone entering the campus was subject to an identification screening.

The new school year at Columbia University began less than a month after its president Minouche Shafik resigned over extensive criticism regarding her handling of pro-Palestinian protests on campus.

The university faced criticism for its heavy-handed tactics against pro-Palestinian students protesting the genocide in Gaza. Shafik authorized New York police to move on to campus and violently break up their peaceful encampments.

The university's interim president, Katrina Armstrong, has embarked on listening sessions aimed at deescalating tensions, while circulating new protest guidelines meant to limit disruption. She has also met with students on both sides of the issue, promising to balance students' rights to free expression and a safe learning environment.

However, student organizers have vowed to ramp up their actions, including possible encampments, until the university agrees to cut ties with companies linked to Israel.

Mahmoud Khalil, a graduate student who represented campus protesters in negotiations with the university, said, "As long as Columbia continues to invest and to benefit from Israeli apartheid, the students will continue to resist."

The latest development comes as US campuses have already adopted tough rules to restrict criticism of Israel's genocidal war on the besieged Gaza Strip with the beginning of the first fall semester, after pro-Palestinian protests gained momentum throughout universities across the US in the last academic year.

This has caused widespread outrage on social media from students and supporters who perceive these recent moves as efforts to stifle the pro-Palestine student movement.

Columbia University in New York City was the cradle of pro-Palestine demonstrations in US campuses. The protests began on April 17th and spread across other campuses in the U.S. in a student movement unlike any other this century.

The protesters, who demanded an end to the U.S.-backed war, were met with brutal police violence.

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