

Defiant Columbia University students chain themselves to gate in support of Mahmoud Khalil

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New York, April 3 (RHC)-- In New York City, police have attacked Columbia University students, who chained themselves to the university gates, demanding the immediate release of Mahmoud Khalil, a pro-Palestinian student activist detained by U.S. authorities.

The protest, which took place on Wednesday evening at the university's St. Paul's Chapel, saw several students chain themselves to the campus gates, demanding that the institution release the names of the trustees "who gave Mahmoud Khalil's name to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)."

The demonstrators waving Palestinian flags, held banners reading "Free Mahmoud now" and "Free Palestine," which were hung along the gates. Video footage captured the moment when university security intervened, forcibly removing the students and cutting the chains binding them. In one instance, a security officer was seen carrying a female protester out of the area.

One protester, identified as Carly, told reporters: "We, as Jewish students, demand transparency in that process. ... You know, as Jewish students and to the Jewish people at large, being political pawns in a game is not a new occurrence, and that's something that we very much so are here to say, 'Hey, you cannot weaponize antisemitism to harm our friends and peers.'"

Students continued their action into the early hours of the morning, even after Columbia security and NYPD arrived on the scene to cut the chains and forcibly remove protesters.

In response to Khalil's detention, the Columbia Palestine Solidarity Committee took to social media platform X, vowing to remain chained to the campus gates until the university discloses the identity of the trustee responsible for reporting Khalil to ICE. "We will not leave until our demand is met," they stated in a post on X, which garnered significant attention.

The Columbia Palestine Solidarity Coalition wrote in a Wednesday news release, "We refuse to accept the ongoing genocide in Gaza, carried out through the investments of our trustees, as normal," adding, "We refuse to accept the kidnapping of our friends as the new normal."

A spokesperson for Columbia University clarified that no member of the university's leadership or board of trustees requested the presence of ICE agents on campus, emphasizing, "This includes enforcement actions against students or any other member of our community."

Mahmoud Khalil, a prominent pro-Palestinian activist who helped with negotiations between university officials and pro-Palestinian student protesters, was arrested on March 8 after a rarely used provision of immigration law was invoked.

His detention has raised significant concern among students, especially considering recent actions by the Donald Trump administration, including those by Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Rubio confirmed that the administration had revoked the visas of "maybe more than 300" individuals allegedly connected to pro-Palestinian demonstrations at various universities.

The protest at Columbia University is part of a larger wave of student activism across the country, as students seek to challenge the government's approach to immigration enforcement and advocate for the rights of marginalized communities.

The administration's crackdown has targeted not only Khalil but also several other foreign-born students residing in the United States, including Alireza Doroudi, Rumeysa Ozturk, Helya Doutaghi, among others.

According to media reports, an AI-assisted initiative has been launched to identify and annul the visas of individuals claimed to support Hamas and the Palestinian resistance.

The Trump administration has accused universities, including Columbia, of failing to adequately address "anti-Semitism" during campus protests against Israeli military actions in Gaza.

As the university community rallies for pro-Palestinian activists' release, the situation highlights the growing tensions surrounding immigration, free speech, and the complexities of political activism on

college campuses in the United States.

[SOURCE: PRESS TV and NEWS AGENCIES]

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