

The Abduction of Mahmoud Khalil and Pro-Palestinian Repression in the U.S.

March 2025



London | Washington

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“My arrest was a direct consequence of exercising my right to free speech as I advocated for a free Palestine and an end to the genocide in Gaza, which resumed in full force Monday night. With January’s ceasefire now broken, parents in Gaza are once again cradling too-small shrouds, and families are forced to weigh starvation and displacement against bombs. It is our moral imperative to persist in the struggle for their complete freedom. [...]

My unjust detention is indicative of the anti-Palestinian racism that both the Biden and Trump administrations have demonstrated over the past 16 months as the U.S. has continued to supply Israel with weapons to kill Palestinians and prevented international intervention.”

Mahmoud Khalil
in a letter from ICE detention
on 18 March 2025.¹



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The U.S.' Abduction and Deportation of Pro-Palestinian Campus Activists



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01

The U.S.' Abduction and Deportation of Pro-Palestinian Campus Activists

Mahmoud Khalil

Mahmoud Khalil is a Palestinian activist who led the negotiations between the Colombia University administration and the students' encampment for Palestine.²

Khalil was studying a master's degree in International and Public Affairs at the time, and had previously worked as a programme manager for the Syria Chevening Program and the Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund at the Syria Office in the British embassy in Beirut from 2018 to 2022 – a position which required extensive security clearance from the British government.³

Pro-Israel lobbyists, including Colombia University staff Shai Davidai and David Lederer, had been publicly campaigning for the Trump administration to arrest Khalil, despite him not breaking any laws, and doxed his personal information.⁴

Three days before his arrest, Davidai reposted a video of Khalil speaking at a Barnard College protest on social media platform X, with the caption: "By the way - the terrorist supporter holding the megaphone is Mahmoud Khalil [...] Time for arrests and expulsions".⁵

The public persecution campaign led Khalil to contact Colombia University requesting protection and legal support.⁶ In an email written the day before his abduction, Khalil wrote: "I haven't been able to sleep, fearing that ICE or a dangerous individual might come to my home. I urge you to intervene and provide the necessary protections to prevent further harm".⁷

Days before Khalil's abduction, Colombia University published new protocol reversing their previous status as a sanctuary campus, which had protected students against Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on campus.⁸ The new protocol allowed ICE access to the Colombia campus without a warrant.⁹

On the evening of 8 March 2025, plainclothes counterterrorism officers followed Khalil and his eight-months pregnant wife, Noor, to their apartment - a Colombia University residence.¹⁰ As they entered their home, officers arrested and abducted Khalil, refusing to disclose the agency they were working for to his wife and hanging up on his lawyer.¹¹

After it became apparent that Khalil was a permanent resident, Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced that green card holders would also be liable for deportation, stating that the Trump administration would "be revoking the visas and/or green cards of Hamas supporters in America so they can be deported".¹² Khalil has never expressed support for Hamas; he has simply supported Palestinian liberation.¹³

Following Khalil's abduction, official social media accounts of the White House posted a disturbing image of Khalil with 'Shalom, Mahmoud' written in block capitals beneath.¹⁴ This bizarre use of the Hebrew greeting demonstrates the extent of Israeli influence over the White House.¹⁵

Since Mahmoud's arrest, ICE officers have conducted searches of two other students' residences on Colombia campus.¹⁶

The U.S.' Abduction and Deportation of Pro-Palestinian Campus Activists continued...

Ranjani Srinivasan

On 5 March, Indian doctoral student Ranjani Srinivasan had her student visa revoked for allegedly participating “in activities supporting Hamas”.¹⁷ She chose to self-deport from the U.S. on 11 March.¹⁸

Leqaa Kordia

On 14 March, ICE detained another Palestinian student at Columbia University, Leqaa Kordia from the occupied West Bank, for allegedly overstaying her student visa.¹⁹ She is currently being held in an ICE centre in Texas.²⁰

Dr Rasha Alawieh

On 14 March, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security forcibly deported Dr. Rasha Alawieh, a Lebanese professor at Brown University and kidney transplant specialist, upon her return to the U.S. after visiting her family in Lebanon.²¹

She was held at Boston airport for 36 hours with no access to legal counsel before her deportation.²²

Despite a court order blocking her deportation, officials deported her anyway, stating that they allegedly did not receive the court order until she was already deported.²³ In response, Brown and Yale universities have advised international students and staff against international travel.²⁴

The Department of Homeland Security justified her deportation based on alleged “sympathetic photos” of Hezbollah on her mobile.²⁵ She has stated that she is not related to Hezbollah politically or militarily.²⁶

Multiple patients had been waiting for her to perform kidney transplants.²⁷

Badar Khan Suri

On 17 March, Badar Khan Suri, an Indian postdoctoral fellow at Georgetown University on a student visa, was abducted by agents from the Department of Homeland Security.¹³³

For over a month, Suri and his wife, Mapheze Saleh, have been subject to a doxing campaign by far-right Zionist social media accounts, which included the publishing of their address, where they live with their three children.¹³⁴

Saleh’s father is Ahmed Yousef, a former political adviser to Hamas. It is likely that Suri is being targeted due to Saleh’s father’s former work, rather than any of his own actions.¹³⁵

Suri is being held incommunicado in the same ICE detention facility in Louisiana as Mahmoud Khalil, and is being detained on the same grounds as Mahmoud Khalil.¹³⁶

A spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security alleged Suri was “promoting antisemitism” and “spreading Hamas propaganda”, without providing any evidence.¹³⁷

“I did not feel safe. And that was the result of Colombia’s one-sided statements. What we are facing here is anti-Palestinian hate that’s taking multiple forms, whether it is Islamophobia, racism, antisemitism, and all. Yet Colombia has not acknowledged this pain, the pain of the Palestinian community at Colombia that are calling for an end to the genocide in Gaza.

A lot of the Palestinian students here, they feel very uncomfortable, very, very uncomfortable participating and protesting the genocide of their people. Fearing that I will be arrested and ultimately deported from this country.”

Mahmoud Khalil
during an interview in April 2024.²⁸



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Previous Attempts to Falsely Prosecute U.S.-Based Palestinian Activists



02

Previous Attempts to Falsely Prosecute U.S.-Based Palestinian Activists

In 2003, the U.S. government began a decade long campaign to persecute Sami Al-Arian, a Palestinian professor of Engineering at the University of South Florida over falsified terrorism charges that alleged he supported the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.²⁹

Al-Arian had been an outspoken Palestinian liberation activist and was legally resident in the U.S. for almost three decades before his arrest.³⁰

Like Khalil, Al-Arian had worked extensively within existing political infrastructure, being a prominent supporter of Bill Clinton and later supporting George W. Bush's 2000 election campaign.³¹

Al-Arian was imprisoned in solitary confinement for three years prior to his trial and was subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment including regular strip searches, being denied normal visitation rights with his family, and being abused by prison staff.³²

At trial, Al-Arian was not convicted of any charges brought against him, but the U.S. government continued to detain him for over 18 months by bringing new charges against him for refusing to testify in another trial, due to his belief the organisation was also innocent of terrorism charges.³³

In protest of his imprisonment, Al-Arian went on hunger strike, losing 53 pounds and being rendered unable to walk or speak in a normal cadence.³⁴

In 2014, the government dropped all charges against Al-Arian.³⁵

After a 12-year witch hunt, in which the U.S. government failed to produce any evidence connecting Al-Arian to terrorism, he agreed to be deported to Turkey in exchange for regaining his freedom and "bring an end to his family's suffering".³⁶

“Repression of anti-Zionism has a long and ugly history in academe. It really started to pick up after 1967. Too many people to remember have been negatively affected.

But it’s worse now than I’ve ever seen it.”

Steven Salaita

Palestinian American scholar fired for his criticism of the IOF’s bombardment of Gaza in 2014.³⁷



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Biden's Role in Setting Precedent for Pro-Palestinian Repression



© Reuters, Ronen Zvulun

03

Biden's Role in Setting Precedent for Pro-Palestinian Repression

During Joe Biden's presidency, he continued many of the pro-Israel policies established under Trump's previous administration and directly funded and supported Israel's genocide in Gaza for over a year.³⁸

Biden's unwavering support for Israel's genocide in Gaza emboldened Zionist groups and lobbies in the U.S., and contributed to the dehumanisation of Palestinians and pro-Palestine supporters for over a year, which Trump has built upon with recent policies.³⁹

Support for Trump policies

Biden did not reverse Trump's relocation of the US Embassy in occupied Palestine from Tel Aviv to occupied Jerusalem, nor reopen the US consulate in occupied East Jerusalem.⁴⁰ Biden also did not reopen the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) office in Washington that Trump closed, or reverse Trump's recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.⁴¹

Biden also supported the "Abraham Accords" and attempted to expand them, in particular pushing for normalisation and collaboration between Saudi Arabia and Israel.⁴²

Support for Israel's genocide in Gaza

Biden's support for the Israeli Occupation Forces' (IOF) genocide in Gaza began immediately after 7 October.⁴³ On 18 October 2023, Biden travelled to occupied Palestine and was photographed hugging Polish-Israeli Prime Minister and wanted war criminal Benjamin Netanyahu.⁴⁴

Between 7 October 2023 and the end of his presidency, the U.S. gave \$17.9 billion in military aid to the IOF.⁴⁵ This included 50,000 tons of artillery, missiles, and bombs, of which 14,000 were 2,000-pound bombs and 6,500 were 500-pound bombs.⁴⁶

Although Biden temporarily delayed one shipment of arms to the IOF, this was merely a superficial pretence of concern about Palestinian civilians, and even after losing the 2024 presidential election, he continued to fast track weapons shipments to the IOF until Trump took office in January 2025.⁴⁷

By continuing to facilitate Israel's genocide for over a year, Biden created the conditions that forced pro-Palestine supporters to establish encampments on university campuses and demonstrate to end the genocide.⁴⁸

In July 2024, Biden invited Netanyahu to visit the U.S., despite international arrest warrants, and allowed him to address the U.S. congress.⁴⁹ This address signalled continued U.S. support for Zionism and growing influence over U.S. domestic policy, further enabling Netanyahu to spread Israeli lies to U.S. politicians and the public that would continue the demonisation and delegitimization of Palestinians and pro-Palestine protests.⁵⁰

During the speech, Netanyahu denied the IOF's forced starvation of Gaza, saying: "If there are Palestinians in Gaza who aren't getting enough food, it's not because Israel is blocking it. It's because Hamas is stealing it".⁵¹

Biden's Role in Setting Precedent for Pro-Palestinian Repression continued...

Netanyahu also denied the deaths of Palestinian civilians, further promoting the genocidal lie that Palestinians in Gaza are legitimate targets, stating there were “practically no civilian deaths” during several of IOF’s operations, that the “war” had “one of the lowest ratios of combatants to non-combatant casualties in the history of urban warfare”.⁵²

These lies denying the IOF’s war crimes and genocide undermined not only pro-Palestine voices in the U.S. but the tireless work of several human rights organisations.⁵³

Netanyahu also demonised pro-Palestine encampments as foreign espionage, remarking that “Iran is funding and promoting anti-Israel protests in America”.⁵⁴ The public denouncement of pro-Palestine protests as Iranian proxies set the political stage for Trump’s employment of counterterrorism as a justification to suppress pro-Palestine protestors.⁵⁵

Demonisation of pro-Palestine protestors

Biden himself also repeatedly demonised student protestors for Palestine during his presidency.⁵⁶

On 30 April 2024, the White House released a statement condemning student encampments for Palestine as violent and dangerous: “President Biden has stood against repugnant, antisemitic smears and violent rhetoric his entire life. He condemns the use of the term ‘intifada,’ as he has the other tragic and dangerous hate speech displayed in recent days”.⁵⁷

On 2 May 2024, he depicted the student encampments as antisemitic and illegal: “Order must prevail. [...] Vandalism, trespassing, breaking windows, shutting down campuses, forcing the cancellation of classes and graduations—none of this is a peaceful protest. Threatening people, intimidating people, instilling fear in people is not peaceful protest. It’s against the law. [...] There should be no place on any campus, no place in America for anti-Semitism or threats of violence against Jewish students”.⁵⁸

“A new form of McCarthyism, in which accusations of anti-Semitism take the place of charges of pro-Communism, has been creeping to the fore for many years, but greatly accelerated after October 7. Among the faculty and students we are representing at a variety of universities, we are seeing accusations of anti-Semitism based on uses of the phrases and terms ‘settler colonialism’, ‘genocide’ and ‘Zionist’.”

Shay Negrón

a co-founding attorney of Parachute Project, a legal organisation providing support to activists, particularly those facing repression for their pro-Palestine activism, founded in response to a surge of attacks since October 2023.⁵⁹



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Police brutality against Pro-Palestinian Supporters



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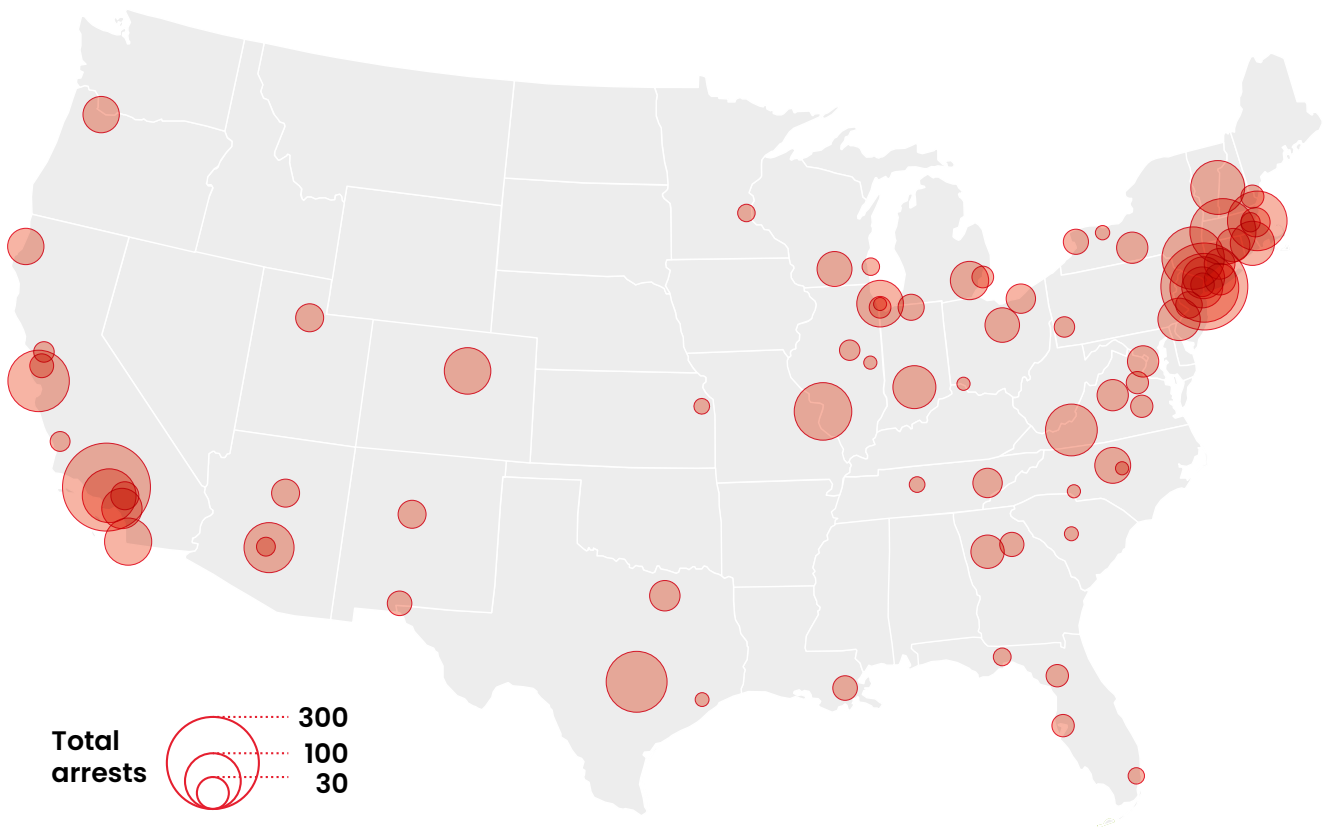
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Police brutality against Pro-Palestinian Supporters

U.S. police have used extensive force and brutality against peaceful protests for Palestine, repeatedly using tear gas, batons, extreme physical violence to attack protestors.⁶⁰

Between October 2023 and July 2024, U.S. police arrested over 3,552 pro-Palestine protestors across 81 U.S. college campuses, despite 98 percent of protests being completely peaceful.⁶¹ In instances where protests became not 'peaceful', this was due to police violence or pro-Israel counter protestors attacking pro-Palestinian students.⁶²

Police have arrested over 3,500 Gaza protesters across 81 US campuses



Source: Analysis of ACLED and media reporting as of 28 Jun 2024. Map recreation of: Stephen Semler

Police brutality against Pro-Palestinian Supporters continued...

In April 2024, U.S. police intervened against pro-Palestine protests over four times more frequently than they did with pro-Israel protests.⁶³

On 18 April 2024, counterterrorism police arrested over 108 Palestine protestors at Columbia University, after the University's president, Nemat Minouche Shafik, called the police to remove those occupying the campus on charges of trespassing and refusing to disperse.⁶⁴ The University also suspended many more students from their studies.⁶⁵

On 24 April 2024, police arrested a photojournalist covering student protests at the University of Texas.⁶⁶ The Society of Professional Journalists described the arrest as creating “a chilling effect on reporters covering protests and law enforcement's response to them, both during and beyond the current wave of campus demonstrations”, and sending “the message that police are free to interfere with journalists as they exercise their constitutionally protected right to inform the public”.⁶⁷

On 25 April 2024, police entered Emory University campus and used excessive brutality, with one officer using his knee to pin down a student protestor's head.⁶⁸ When an economics professor at the university, Caroline Fohlin, intervened to demand

the police stopped using such excessive brutality, the police arrested and detained her for almost 12 hours.⁶⁹ Officers also arrested almost 60 students.⁷⁰

From 25 to 26 April 2024, snipers took positions on top of university buildings at the Ohio State and Indiana University campuses, aiming their rifles at student encampments.⁷¹

On 30 April 2024, police refused to intervene when pro-Israeli groups attacked the UCLA encampment with tear gas, fireworks, mace, pepper spray, poles, wooden slabs, and other objects and chemicals.⁷² Over 150 pro-Palestinian protestors were injured, including 25 with fractures, deep lacerations, and chemical burns, whilst the police did not make any arrests.⁷³

On 1 May 2024, U.S. police fired rubber bullets at students in the UCLA encampment.⁷⁴

On 18 May 2025, the New York Police department beat protestors who had already been detained, including repeatedly punching a man in the ribs who was already restrained, and another who was hit on his head when already pinned to the ground.⁷⁵ Several protestors were arrested.⁷⁶

“For decades, anti-Palestinian racism has driven efforts to expand U.S. laws and practices that are being used to violently repress Palestinians, Arab Americans, and other communities. That is precisely why I am being targeted.

While I await legal decisions that hold the futures of my wife and child in the balance, those who enabled my targeting remain comfortably at Columbia University. Presidents Shafik, Armstrong, and Dean Yarhi-Milo laid the groundwork for the U.S. government to target me by arbitrarily disciplining pro-Palestinian students and allowing viral doxing campaigns – based on racism and disinformation – to go unchecked.”

Mahmoud Khalil
in a letter from ICE detention
on 18 March 2025.⁷⁷



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Anti-Protest Legislation



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Anti-Protest Legislation

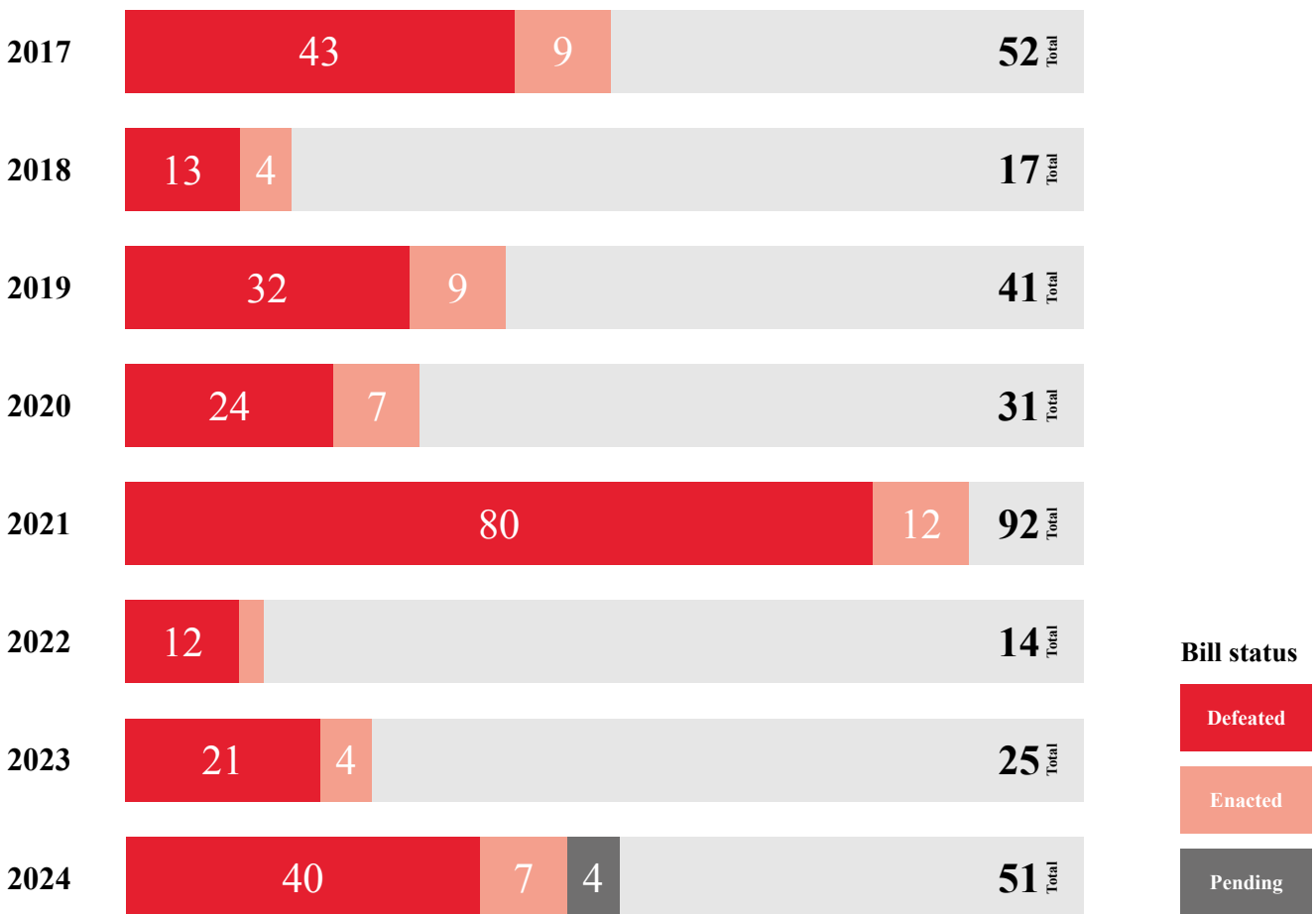
Whilst anti-protest legislation has increased significantly since 2017, more anti-protest laws were enacted than ever before under Joe Biden’s presidency.⁷⁸

Anti-protest legislation has aimed to prevent protestors interfering in traffic, occupying buildings and infrastructure, charging protestors for the costs of policing protests, and preventing face coverings.⁷⁹

This legislation facilitates the surveillance and criminalisation of pro-Palestine protestors, making it easier for the government to identify, detain, and suppress pro-Palestine demonstrators.⁸⁰

Trump’s repression of pro-Palestinian protestors has also been seen as a green light for further legislation to be introduced, with many currently going through the courts system.⁸¹

US Legislation affecting protest rights: By year



Source: International Center for Not-For-Profit Law

“If anything, my detention is a testament to the strength of the student movement in shifting public opinion toward Palestinian liberation. [...] Today, even if the public has yet to fully grasp it, it is students who steer us toward truth and justice.

The Trump administration is targeting me as part of a broader strategy to suppress dissent. Visa-holders, green-card carriers, and citizens alike will all be targeted for their political beliefs. In the weeks ahead, students, advocates, and elected officials must unite to defend the right to protest for Palestine. At stake are not just our voices, but the fundamental civil liberties of all.

Knowing fully that this moment transcends my individual circumstances, I hope nonetheless to be free.”

Mahmoud Khalil
in a letter from ICE detention
on 18 March 2025.⁸²



Repression of Pro-Palestinian Voices on U.S. University Campuses



Repression of Pro-Palestinian Voices on U.S. University Campuses

Attacks on pro-Palestinian students

U.S. universities repeatedly smeared their student protestors as antisemitic, intimidating, and conducting illegal activity, despite the majority being peaceful.⁸³ University heads repeatedly summoned the police to campuses against their own students, and made condemnatory statements against protestors.⁸⁴

In November 2023, three 20-year-old Palestinian students were shot near the University of Vermont campus whilst wearing a kuffiyeh.⁸⁵ They were students at Brown University, Haverford College and Trinity College.⁸⁶

On 14 March 2024, the University of Southern California prevented its 2024 valedictorian from speaking at graduation due to an anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian campaign against her for supporting campus Palestine protests.⁸⁷

On 13 March 2025, Columbia university expelled, suspended, and revoked the degrees of 22 students who participated in occupying Hamilton Hall, which was renamed by protestors as Hind's Hall, following the killing of Palestinian child Hind Rajab by IOF forces in Gaza.⁸⁸

Firing and Suspension of Pro-Palestinian Faculty

Multiple faculty members at U.S. colleges and universities have been fired for speaking out in support of Palestinian liberation, typically after online campaigns by Zionists smearing the academics as antisemitic.⁸⁹ Although increasing since October 2023, academic staff have been fired for expressing support for Palestine since at least 2014.⁹⁰

July 2014

The University of Illinois fired Palestinian American scholar Steven Salaita over his tweets criticising the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF)'s bombing of Gaza in 2014, in response to pressure from wealthy donors. Salaita sued the university and won \$845,000.⁹¹

January 2024

New York University suspended Palestinian professor Amin Husain over statements condemning Israel's genocide in Gaza, following an online doxing campaign, and a Zionist petition calling for his removal.⁹² After his suspension, his contract was not renewed.⁹³

April 2024

The City College of New York (CUNY) fired Danny Shaw, a professor of Latin American and Caribbean Studies for criticising Israel's genocide in Gaza, despite having worked for CUNY for over 20 years and winning teaching awards.⁹⁴

After October 2023, Professor Shaw organised demonstrations, teach-ins, and conferences against the genocide, and regularly tweeted about Zionism.⁹⁵ He was subject to an online smear campaign by Zionists before he was fired.⁹⁶

May 2024

Tenured professor Maura Finkelstein was fired from her position at Muhlenberg College, a liberal arts school, over an Instagram story she shared that reposted a quote from Palestinian poet Remi Kanazi.⁹⁷

The post read: "Do not cower to Zionists. Shame them. Do not welcome them in your spaces. Why should these genocide loving fascists be treated any different than any other flat out racist?"⁹⁸

Repression of Pro-Palestinian Voices on U.S. University Campuses continued...

Finkelstein had been subject to a campaign of thousands of anonymous, bot-generated emails sent every minute for over 24 hours to the college administrators, local news outlets, and politicians, demanding the professor's removal and accusing her of "Jew hatred".⁹⁹

DePaul University fired Anne d'Aquino for an optional course assignment, which was accompanied by the following description: "Today, Israel rejected a ceasefire deal and continues to bomb Rafah, where over 600,000 children are currently sheltering [...] many view this as the last phase of the genocide/ethnic cleansing of indigenous Palestinian people. [...] I encourage students to use scientific analysis and critical thinking to understand and communicate the impacts of genocide on human biology, and the creation of a decolonized future that promotes liberation and resists systemic oppression".¹⁰⁰

DePaul University justified firing D'Aquino for adding an assignment "that was unrelated to the course objectives and microbiology".¹⁰¹

March 2025

Yale Law School suspended Helyeh Doutaghi, a scholar of international relations and economics, three days after an AI-powered Zionist outlet accused her of having "terrorist" affiliations.¹⁰² This organisation has previously been highlighted by a media watchdog as spreading misinformation from unverified X accounts.¹⁰³

Doutaghi was hired in October 2023 as deputy director of a project focusing on "racial, gender, and economic injustice".¹⁰⁴

Suspension of Student groups for Palestine

Several colleges and universities have suspended their university's Palestine solidarity groups since October 2023.¹⁰⁵

In November 2023, Brandeis, Columbia, and George Washington suspended Students for Justice (SJP) in Palestine on their campuses, on baseless accusations of antisemitism.¹⁰⁶

In April 2024, the University of Pennsylvania banned SJP and Harvard University suspended its Palestine Solidarity Committee.¹⁰⁷

In May 2024, the University of Vermont suspended SJP.¹⁰⁸ In September 2024, when Vermont refused to lift the suspension for the 2024-2025 academic year, students decided to sue the university.¹⁰⁹

In October 2024, Brown University suspended SJP and placed the group under an external investigation.¹¹⁰

“If I can be fired for criticising a foreign government, calling attention to a genocide and using my academic expertise as an anthropologist to draw attention to how power operates, then no one is safe. I wasn’t fired for anything I said in the classroom. I was fired because of a charge brought by a student I had never met, let alone taught, who had been surveying my social media account for months. This isn’t about student safety, this is about silencing dissent. We are witnessing a new McCarthyism and we should all be terrified of its implications.”

Maura Finkelstein

a formerly tenured professor at Muhlenberg College who was fired for retweeting a Palestinian American poet.¹¹¹



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Anti-BDS Legislation

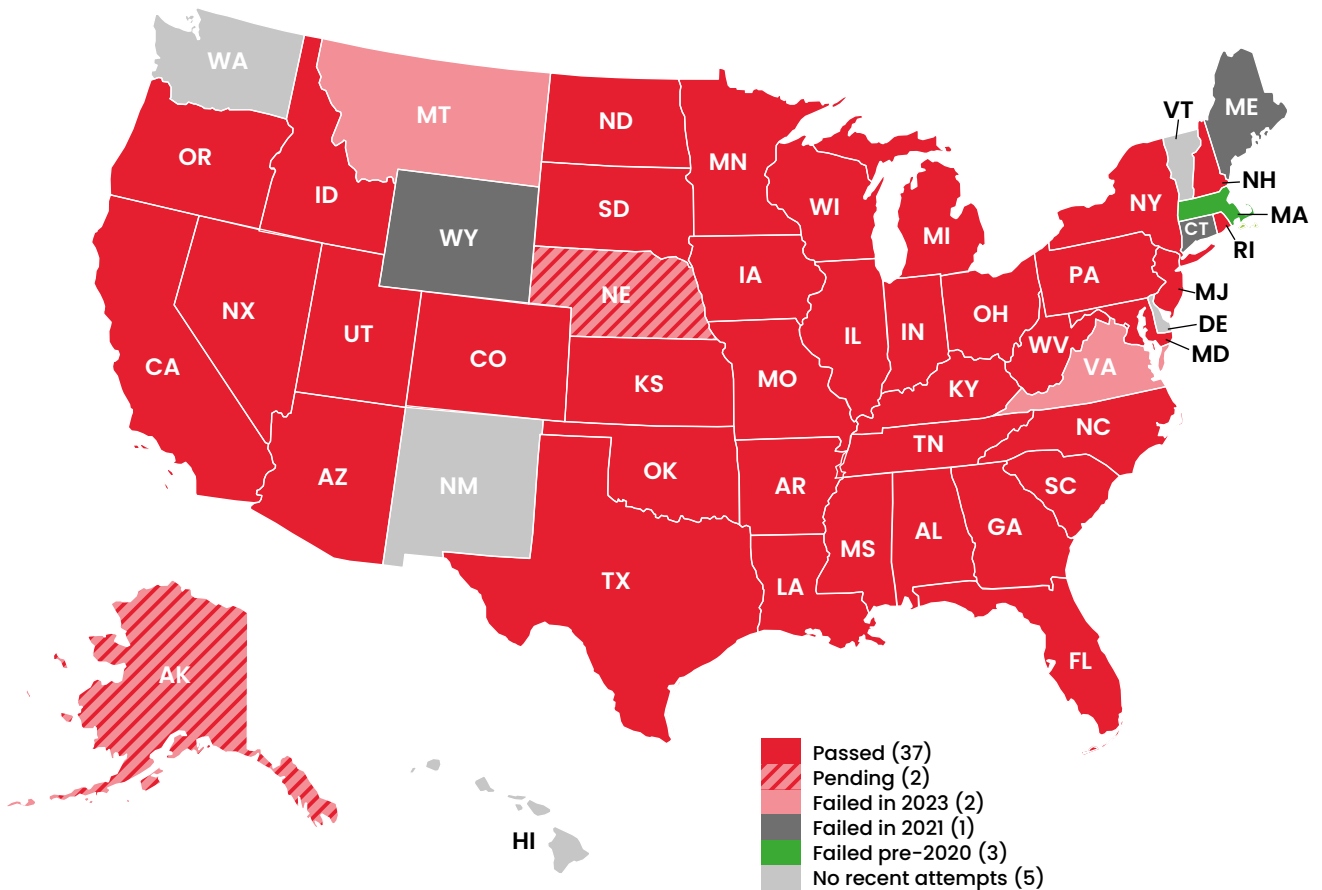


Anti-BDS Legislation

38 U.S. states have passed legislation criminalising boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) on Israel.¹¹²

Most anti-BDS laws target government contractors and public investment funds, mandating that government contractors or public investment funds avoid entities boycotting Israel.¹¹³

Anti-BDS Laws in the U.S.



Bills were considered to have failed if they had been tabled indefinitely and/or if the State Legislature's recordkeepers had marked them as defeated or "likely dead".

“My name is Mahmoud Khalil and I am a political prisoner. I am writing this to you from a detention facility in Louisiana where I wake to cold mornings and spend long days bearing witness to the quiet injustices underway against a great many people precluded from the protections of the law.

Who has the right to have rights? It is certainly not the humans crowded into the cells here. It isn't the Senegalese man I met who has been deprived of his liberty for a year, his legal situation in limbo and his family an ocean away. It isn't the 21-year-old detainee I met, who stepped foot in this country at age nine, only to be deported without so much as a hearing.

Justice escapes the contours of this nation's immigration facilities.”

Mahmoud Khalil
in a letter from ICE detention
on 18 March 2025.¹¹⁴



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Denying Palestinians Entry to the U.S.



© Stella Ragas, Photo Editor

Denying Palestinians Entry to the U.S.

Since October 2023, an increasing number of Palestinians have been denied entry upon arrival to the U.S., despite having a U.S. visa.¹¹⁵ However, Palestinians have been repeatedly denied entry to the U.S. for years.¹¹⁶

In April 2019, co-founder of the BDS movement, Omar Barghouti, was denied entry to the U.S. upon arrival to Ben Gurion airport, despite having a valid visa.¹¹⁷ He had been travelling to speak at the Arab American Institute in Washington DC, New York University, and Harvard University, and attend his daughter's wedding.¹¹⁸

In August 2019, 17-year-old Palestinian Ismail Ajjawi, who had been admitted to Harvard University, was detained for hours at Boston airport and refused entry to the U.S., based on his friends' social media posts against the U.S.¹¹⁹

He was sent back to Lebanon but was eventually able to return after the U.S. embassy in Beirut reissued his visa following a Harvard student petition.¹²⁰

In January 2025, President Trump signed an executive order to revoke international student visas over 'pro-Hamas' social media posts flagged by artificial intelligence.¹²¹

“They may strip me of my rights and privileges, but my commitment to a free Palestine and to the complete dismantling of U.S. imperialism across the world is not contingent on institutional recognition or material stability.”

Helyeh Doutaghi

former scholar at Yale Law School,
suspended after a Zionist smear campaign.¹²²



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Trump's Advancement of Pro-Palestinian Repression



© Andrew Caballero-Reynolds, AFP

Trump’s Advancement of Pro-Palestinian Repression

Since entering office in January 2025, the Trump administration has accelerated the anti-Palestinian repression of the Biden administration.¹²³

On 29 January, President Trump signed an executive order to combat alleged antisemitism, which instructs federal agencies to identify civil and criminal authorities with the power to deport foreign U.S. residents who participated in pro-Palestine protests.¹²⁴

The order also instructs the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate ‘pro-Hamas’ graffiti and intimidation, particularly on college campuses.¹²⁵

On 4 March, Trump threatened to terminate all federal funding for any college or school allowing “illegal protests” – in reference to pro-Palestine protests – and promised to imprison “agitators” on campus.¹²⁶ He also demanded the banning of facemasks for protestors.¹²⁷

On 13 March, the Trump administration demanded that Columbia’s Middle East, South Asian, and African Studies department must be placed under an “academic receivership” for a minimum of five years and a new department chair selected by the government.¹²⁸ This will result in the university ceding control of the department and an outside chair appointed by the government will manage everything from curriculum design to the hiring and firing of faculty members.¹²⁹

The Trump administration is also pressuring Columbia to formally adopt a definition of antisemitism, referencing the Zionist IHRA definition of antisemitism, which conflates criticism of Israel with antisemitism.¹³⁰

Project Esther

One strategy being employed by the Trump administration to advance pro-Palestinian repression is ‘Project Esther’, a strategy proposed by the Zionist pro-Trump think tank, The Heritage Foundation.¹³⁸

The strategy categorises all organisations supportive of Palestinian liberation as “Hamass Support Organisations (HSO)”, and part of a “Hamass Support Network”.¹³⁹

These organisations and their membership are thus rendered liable for legal and criminal prosecution due to their supposed links to a terrorist organisation.¹⁴⁰

This strategy weaponizes false cries of antisemitism to disrupt these organisations’ communications, restrict their protests, and organise far-right and fascist counter protestors against anticolonial resistance movements.¹⁴¹

Project Esther also aims to eliminate anticolonial perspectives from the U.S. education system, limit the dissemination of anticolonial information within American society, and restrict pro-Palestinian advocates influence over the U.S. public.¹⁴²

On 20 March, Trump’s executive order to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education can be regarded as the first step towards enacting Project Esther’s strategy to control critiques of colonialism in the U.S. education system.¹⁴³

“Being Palestinian is an experience that transcends borders. I see in my circumstances similarities to Israel’s use of administrative detention – imprisonment without trial or charge – to strip Palestinians of their rights. I think of our friend Omar Khatib, who was incarcerated without charge or trial by Israel as he returned home from travel. I think of Gaza hospital director and paediatrician Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, who was taken captive by the Israeli military on December 27 and remains in an Israeli torture camp today. For Palestinians, imprisonment without due process is commonplace.”

Mahmoud Khalil
in a letter from ICE detention
on 18 March 2025.¹³¹



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U.S. Media Bias

© Fox News



TRUMP ADMIN PROBING 60 COLLEGES OVER ANTISEMITISM

EDITORIAL REPORT

10

U.S. Media Bias

Spreading Government Propaganda Smearing Mahmoud Khalil

Instead of expressing alarm at the Trump administration's fascist disappearance of Khalil, U.S. media outlets have uncritically spread Trump's lies about Khalil that justify his kidnapping.

 CNN US

Free speech advocate talks " Hamas propaganda " in Khalil case

 FOX NEWS

Democrats under fire for backing arrested pro-Hamas agitator

 NBC NEWS

White House says pro-Hamas propaganda was handed out at rallies organized by detained Palestinian activist

U.S. Media Bias continued...

Depiction of pro-Palestinian Student Protestors as Terrorists or Terrorist Sympathisers

U.S. media outlets paved the way for Khalil’s detention under the pretence of counterterrorism by depicting pro-Palestine protestors as terrorists or terrorist sympathisers.

 CNN Politics

Justice Department is investigating bringing terrorism charges against pro-Palestinian protesters at Columbia University

 NBC NEWS

When does free speech cross the line into breaking U.S. anti-terrorism laws?

U.S. Media Bias continued...

Depiction of pro-Palestine protestors as antisemitic

U.S. media outlets have repeatedly villainised and demonised pro-Palestine protests as antisemitic, delegitimising their opposition to Israel's genocide in Gaza and Zionist occupation of Palestine more broadly.

The New York Times

After Antisemitic Attacks, Colleges Debate What Kind of Speech Is Out of Bounds

CNN World

Jewish students fear climate of antisemitism on campus stoked by Israel-Hamas war

CNN US

Department of Education investigating 60 colleges and universities over antisemitism claims

NBC NEWS

Education Secretary Linda McMahon warns 60 colleges over antisemitism on campus

“I will live. We will continue to live. The Palestinian people have been under occupation, ethnic cleansing, and all sorts of crimes since 1948, and we prevailed. We will prevail no matter what will happen”.

Mahmoud Khalil
in an interview in April 2024.¹³²



Footnotes

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