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## American Intifada for Gaza: What Should We Expect?



NYU, April 23, 2004. Photo by Hany Osman.

The mass protests at dozens of US universities cannot be reduced to a stifling and misleading conversation about antisemitism.

Thousands of American students across the country are not protesting, risking their own futures and very safety, because of some pathological hate for the Jewish people. They are doing so in a complete rejection of, and justifiable outrage over the mass killings carried out by the state of Israel against defenseless Palestinians in Gaza.

They are angry because the bloodbath in the Gaza Strip, starting on October 7, is fully funded and backed by the US government.

These mass protests began at the University of Columbia on April 17 before covering all of US geography, from New York to Texas and from North Carolina to California.

The protests are being compared, in terms of their nature and intensity, to the anti-war protests in the US against the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 70s.

While the comparison is apt, it is critical to note the ethnic diversity and social inclusiveness in the current protests. On many campuses, Arab, Muslim, Jewish, Black, Native American and White students are standing shoulder to shoulder with their Palestinian peers in a unified stance against the war.

None of them is motivated by fear that they could be drafted to fight in Gaza, as was, indeed, the case for many American students during the Vietnam War era. Instead, they are united around a clear set of priorities: ending the war, ending US support of Israel, ending their universities' direct investment in Israel and the recognition of their right to protest. This is not idealism, but humanity at its finest moments.

Despite mass arrests, starting in Columbia, and the direct violence against peaceful protesters everywhere, the movement has only grown stronger.

On the other side, US politicians, starting with President Joe Biden, accused the protesters of anti-Semitism, without engaging with any of their reasonable, and globally-supported demands.

Once again, the Democratic and Republican establishments stood together in blind support for Israel.

Biden condemned the “antisemitic protests” describing them as “reprehensible and dangerous”.

A few days later, the speaker of the US House of Representatives, Mike Johnson, visited the university under tight security, using language that is hardly suitable for a country which claims to embrace democracy, respect freedom of expression and right of assembly.

“We just can’t allow this kind of hatred and antisemitism to flourish on our campuses,” he said, adding: “I am here today joining my colleagues, and calling on President (Minouche) Shafik to resign if she cannot immediately bring order to this chaos.”

Shafik, however, was already on board, as she was the one who had called for the New York Police Department to crack down on the protesters, falsely accusing them of anti-Semitism.

US mainstream media has helped contribute to the confusion and misinformation regarding the reasons behind the protests.

The Wall Street Journal, once more, allowed writers such as Steven Stalinsky to smear young justice activists for daring to criticize Israel's horrendous genocide in Gaza.

" Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis and others are grooming activists in the U.S. and across the West," he alleged, thus, once more taking a critical conversation about US support of genocide into bizarre and unsubstantiated directions.

US establishment writers may wish to continue to fool themselves and their readers, but the truth is that neither Hezbollah or Hamas 'recruiters' are active in Ivy League US universities, where young people are often groomed to become leaders in government and large corporations.

All such distractions are meant to avoid the undeniable shift in American society, one that promises a long-term paradigm shift in popular views of Israel and Palestine.

For years prior to the current war, Americans have been changing their opinions on Israel, and their country's so-called 'special relationship' with Tel Aviv.

Young Democrats have led the trend, which can also be observed among independents and, to some extent, young Republicans.

A statement that asserts that "sympathies in the Middle East now lie more with the Palestinians than the Israelis", would have been unthinkable in the past. But it is the new normal, and latest opinion polls regarding the subject, along with Biden's dwindling approval ratings, continue to attest to this fact.

The older generations of American politicians, who have built and sustained careers based on their unconditional support for Israel, are overwhelmed by the new reality. Their language is confused and riddled with falsehoods. Yet, they are willing to go as far as defaming a whole generation of their own people – the future leaders of America – to satisfy the demands of the Israeli government.

In a televised statement on April 24, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described the protesters as "antisemitic mobs" who "have taken over leading universities", alleging that the peaceful protesters are calling "for the annihilation of Israel". His words should have outraged all Americans, regardless of their politics and ideology. Instead, more US politicians began parroting Netanyahu's words.

But political opportunism shall generate a blowback effect, not just in the distant future, but in the coming weeks and months, especially in the run-up to the presidential elections.

Millions of Americans are clearly fed up, with war, with their government's allegiance to a foreign country, to militarism, to police violence, to the unprecedented restrictions on freedom of speech in the US and more.

Young Americans, who are not beholden to the self-interests or historical and spiritual illusions of previous generations, are declaring that ‘enough is enough’. They are doing more than chanting, and rising in unison, demanding answers, moral and legal accountability and an immediate end to the war.

Now that the US government has taken no action, in fact continues to feed the Israeli war machine in its onslaught against millions of Palestinians, these brave students are acting themselves. This is certainly an awe-inspiring, watershed moment in the history of the United States.

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