

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

BY JAMAL KANJ

09.05.2024

## American Universities: From Fighting South African Apartheid to Confronting Israeli Genocide



Image by Hany Osman.

American universities pride themselves on being a melting pot of free exchange of ideas and critical thinking. The U.S. university tenure system provides academic freedom for professors to instruct and encourage students to think outside the box, fostering the pursuit of ideas that might be considered unpopular or controversial. An environment that enables students to engage in academic learning and encourages involvement in social and political activism; to challenge and prepare tomorrow's leaders free of outside influence.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, recent student protests throughout the U.S. universities have exposed the limit of this academic freedom when confronting the Israeli Iron Curtain. Professors and students were brutally thrown to the ground, handcuffed and detained as if they were criminals. Police in full combat gear, flaunting guns and batons, with prisoner

buses lined up to intimidate protesters are reminiscent of scenes under dictatorships the U.S. condemns.

### **Bottom of Form**

The protests at U.S. campuses have revealed a sharp divide between those demanding an end to their university's complicity with the Israeli genocide and those who weaponize antisemitism to stifle criticism of Israel. Ironically, within the latter group, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has aligned with Democratic Israeli apologists and bona fide antisemitic Republicans to pressure U.S. academia to shut down the peaceful protests.

ADL and its cohorts flourish on Western antisemitism. They thrive on hate, much like an ant forage on aphids, ensuring that Jews in the West live in perpetual insecurity. ADL tolerates proven antisemites, such as evangelical Zionists and Donald Trump (aphids), when it benefits Israel. This explains why someone like Trump, who in the summer of 2017 described Charlottesville white supremacist, chanting "Jews will not replace us" as "very fine people," is by far the favored choice for Israelis and hardened American Zionists, to be the next U.S. president. Among Israelis who support the current racist Israeli government coalition, Trump's favorability jumps to a whooping 72 percent.

The AIPAC financed diabolical alliance, led by the ADL, and otherwise politically antagonistic politicians such as Republican representative Mike Lawler and Democrat Josh Gottheimer, were united in heeding Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's call to end student protests. They sought to inaugurate the Israeli Iron Curtain by decreeing that criticism of the Israeli government policies would violate American laws.

In his audacious sermon to Americans on April 24, Netanyahu demanded university leaders to take stiffer measures against the students and professors, while showering praise on "local, state, and federal officials" for cracking down on the peaceful protests. He also misidentified the actors when he compared American university protests to Nazi Germany. In fact, the only resemblance between the events at American universities today, and Nazi Germany in the 1930s is the suppression of free academia.

In 1930s Germany, voices that rejected Nazism were vilified, and "federal officials" ousted university presidents, banned professors from their classes, and Nazi mobs assaulted peaceful citizens. The Nazis did in German universities what Netanyahu solicited "local, state, and federal officials" to do — at U.S. campuses.

At the same time, the ADL and the parochial pro-Israel professional victims, waged a smear campaign slandering protesting students as antisemitic and accusing them of creating "unsafe and uncomfortable" environment for other students. Undoubtedly, demanding

ceasefire and protesting the use of starvation as a weapon of war would likely make those who support war and genocide uncomfortable, just as dictators would be uncomfortable when challenged. Nevertheless, the purported discomfort doesn't give "federal officials" the right to abridge freedom of speech, or silence criticism of a foreign government and its policies.

Since the start of the student protests, the "uncomfortable" herd, mostly non university students, has sought to provoke friction as part of a strategy to instigate chaos and disorder with the aim of compelling "local officials" to interfere. This is exactly what took place at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) around 2 a.m. on May 1<sup>st</sup>, when a masked mob of *non-student*, pro-Israel Jewish, and rightwing hate groups, attacked protesting students, resulting in serious injuries.

One day before the mob attack, pro-Israeli bullies harassed and called the protestors "animals" and yelled at a black student, "go listen to your master." Imagine if a similar derogatory language targeted a Jewish student; cable news and the print media would compete to interview the victim, you'd know their names, and they might even receive a White House invitation. But it is not the same when the victim happens to be a black person.

Still, the mainstream media rarely reports on the pro-Israeli outside agitators. When covering the middle-of-the-night UCLA assault, the media called it a "clash" and a counter-protest, conveniently failing to mention that the attackers were not students. Then, the police, who failed to protect the peaceful protesters, used the pro-Israeli precipitated bedlam as a pretext to raid the student encampment, arresting the victims rather than apprehending the trespassing assailants.

On May 6, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and the San Diego County Sheriff dispersed a peaceful protest at the University of California, San Diego. A day earlier a group of non-student genocide supporters attempted to provoke friction flaunting Israeli flags and harassing protesting students. Soon thereafter, and following a pattern similar to UCLA, the university administration declared the encampment illegal. Early in the morning, clad in full riot gear and armed with rifles, CHP and Sheriff closed off access to the university and canceled all in-class activities before raiding the protest site, brutally beating and detaining over 60 students.

Reminiscent of the American student protests in 1968, the current student movement, spreading like wildfire, in America and globally, are a natural response to the inept international system and governments led by compliant politicians. This phenomenon is described as the "eros effect" by my friend and scholar, George Katsiaficas. Professor Katsiaficas defines the eros effect as when an event sets off a chain of similar events,

triggering a sudden mass political awakening driven by a sense of injustice and international solidarity. At such a point, the entrenched system becomes imbalanced, and change is most likely to succeed.

In the 1960s, American students transcended the national divide, opposing an unjust war abroad, and inequality at home. In the 1980s, they protested and helped defeat apartheid in South Africa. Today, a new generation of American students stand united, facing formidable forces invested in privileges rooted in oppression and determined to end the Israeli-made starvation and genocide in Gaza.

*Jamal Kanj is the author of Children of Catastrophe: Journey from a Palestinian Refugee Camp to America, and other books. He writes frequently on Arab world issues for various national and international commentaries.*

MAY 8, 2024