

May 22, 2024

From: Undersigned Student and Civil Society Organizations

SENT VIA E-MAIL

To:

Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, **Ms. Irene Khan**; Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; **Ms. Gina Romero**; Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, **Mr. Balakrishnan Rajagopal**; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, **Ms. Mary Lawlor**; Special Rapporteur on the right to education, **Ms. Farida Shaheed**; Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, **Ms. Nazila Ghanea**; Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, **Ms. K.P. Ashwini**; Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, **Ms. Alice Jill Edwards**; Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, **Ms. Reem Alsalem**; Independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, **Mr. George Katrougalos**; Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity, **Ms. Cecilia M. Bailliet**; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, **Ms. Francesca Albanese**; Working Group on discrimination against women and girls; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

Re: Widespread, systematic human rights violations in the context of pro-Palestinian student protests across the United States

Dear Special Procedures Mandate Holders:

We write with urgent concerns about the human rights violations unfolding across the United States as students face unprecedented mass repression and violence for participating in political demonstrations, peaceful protests, and acts of civil disobedience in protest of Israel's genocidal war in Gaza and U.S. governmental and higher education institutions' complicity in it. The recent wave of student organizing in response to the atrocities committed by Israel in Gaza since October 7, 2023 has given rise to unprecedented harsh policing, resulting in over 3,000 [arrests](#), numerous reports of brutality, illegal and excessive uses of force, sexual harassment, violence against women (particularly Muslim women wearing headscarves), racial profiling, suppression of and retaliation for students' exercise of their rights to free expression of opinion, to peaceful assembly and association, and freedom of religion or belief. The disproportionate response from

university administrations has also included [illegally barring access to students' housing](#), as well as their access to food halls and educational facilities. Universities and colleges have levied threats to withhold degrees and bar students from graduation. Students have also been subjected by a violent mob of pro-Israel supporters from outside campus in at least one place, the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA) - as we describe below.

I. Purpose of this Communication

This letter attempts to provide a window into the widespread and numerous human rights violations visited on pro-Palestinian student activists over the last six weeks across the United States. We do not identify the impacted students by name in order to shield them from the [retaliation and doxxing](#) many have been experiencing as a result of their advocacy. What follows is by no means comprehensive, but we hope that it begins to illustrate the urgency with which UN Special Procedures mandate holders must act to curtail further violations and loudly condemn higher education institutions that have largely chosen to meet protests with repressive force rather than engage in good faith dialogue with students to reckon with their demands and arrive at a negotiated solution.

While many students are moving towards graduation or summer break, the harms flowing from the systematic and harsh treatment of pro-Palestinian student organizing and speech are far from over. There is concern that the brutal policing of peaceful protest on educational campuses and [weaponization of "antisemitism"](#) as a way to crack down on criticism of U.S. institutions' involvement in furthering Israel's [international legal violations as an occupying power](#) and [an ongoing genocide in Gaza](#) will lead to a new threshold of surveillance, police involvement in campus matters, silencing and criminalization that undermines the protection of human rights in the context of student activism. If not addressed now, there are real fears that this retaliatory violence will silence and shut down students' and others' right to protest the genocide being committed by Israel, marking a precedent of degradation of the rights to free expression and opinion, as well as peaceful assembly and association, among other rights discussed herein.

This Thursday, May 23, three more university presidents, from Northwestern University, Rutgers University, and the University of California-Los Angeles, [will be brought before a U.S. Congressional Committee](#) for a hearing on anti-Semitism on college campuses - the third of its kind. As these hearings, [criticized as political theater to serve ends other than ending anti-Semitism](#), have resulted in the resignations of the presidents of Harvard University and University of Pennsylvania, and – as widely believed – Columbia University President Minouche Shafik's decision to call in the New York Police Department to sweep Columbia's encampment, it is essential that additional attention be paid and action be taken by the human rights community in response to the events alleged in this letter.

This letter has five main parts: a background highlighting the context of the student organizing that is the subject of this letter, an outline of the human rights legal framework that underpins the rights discussed here, a section with case studies from six universities, a section with specific examples of violations of certain rights pertaining to some of your mandates, and a conclusion with specific requests. We note the May 14, 2024 [statement](#) by many of you, and write to request your further engagement with the undersigned groups on the tools that you, in your capacities as UN Special Procedures mandate holders, can deploy to repair, redress and ensure non-repetition of the violations discussed herein.

II. Background

It is necessary to acknowledge at the outset the [devastating toll](#) of the genocide in Gaza to date—the underlying reason for which students on campuses across the United States have been protesting and setting up encampments. As of May 20, 2024, at least 35,562 people have been killed, including more than 15,000 children, and over 79,652 people have been injured. More than 10,000 people are missing. 1.7 million people have been internally displaced, with 1.1 million people facing starvation and food insecurity. On May 6, 2024, UN experts, including many of you, [condemned](#) the discovery of 390 bodies in a mass grave at Nasser and Al Shifa hospitals with signs of torture or being buried alive. More such graves continue to be discovered. The impact on the reproductive health of women and girls has also been catastrophic, with pregnant women giving birth in unimaginably horrific conditions and very little access to adequate healthcare. And yet, Israel [continues to press forward](#) in its genocidal mission despite [efforts by Egypt and Qatar](#) to broker a lasting ceasefire. On May 6, 2024, Israel [ordered tens of thousands of Palestinians to evacuate Rafah](#), as it planned an aerial and ground offensive into the city of Rafah — one of the last places to which Gazans have been able to flee after the devastation of much of the rest of the Gaza Strip. On May 7, 2024, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres [issued a speech](#) emphatically urging the Israeli Occupation Forces to stand down, stating, “Make no mistake – a full-scale assault on Rafah would be a human catastrophe.” On May 12, 2024, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk [issued an urgent call](#) for a ceasefire and return of the hostages, beseeching Israel to refrain from advancing a full-scale offensive on Rafah and citing the potential “catastrophic impact” of such a decision, including the “possibility of further atrocity crimes.” In the past two weeks, Israel has pushed deeper into Rafah, killing hundreds of Palestinians and [displacing 800,000](#) in the city. It has also continued to commit human rights violations in Northern Gaza, including [bombardment of the Jabalia Refugee Camp](#).

It is in this context that students at [more than 100 universities and colleges](#) in the U.S., and hundreds elsewhere in the world, have been engaging in sustained organizing and protest against the ongoing genocide in Gaza. Apart from calling for a permanent ceasefire, an end to the occupation of Palestinian territories, and the right of return to historic Palestine, students have

demanded, in general terms, disclosure of their institutions' investments; divestment from military industries and corporations that benefit from occupation, apartheid, genocide and war; divestment from all Israeli companies and institutions; amnesty from code of conduct disciplinary or criminal charges for students and faculty engaging in protests; and, in some schools, the abolition of campus police. Since October 2023, colleges and universities have systematically cracked down on pro-Palestinian activism, subjecting the students involved to discriminatory silencing, doxxing, profiling, attacks, and retaliation, with little-to-no protection. The U.S. Department of Education has initiated investigations into several colleges or universities for discrimination against Palestinian, Arab, Muslim, or allied students, including [Harvard](#), [Columbia](#), [University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill](#), [UCLA](#), [Emory](#), [University of Massachusetts-Amherst](#), and [three City University of New York \(CUNY\) campuses](#). To date, advocates and students have filed numerous complaints under Title VI (which bars programs who receive federal financial assistance from discriminating on the basis of race, color or national origin) to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights to investigate allegations of anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab, and anti-Muslim discrimination filed with the Department.

The most recent surge of campus activism [began around April 17, 2024](#), when hundreds of Columbia University students set up the "Gaza Solidarity Encampment" on the campus lawn the day that University President Minouche Shafik was called to testify about anti-semitism at Columbia before Congress in Washington, D.C. Upon her return, she made the historic decision to call in the New York Police Department (NYPD) for the first time since 1968 to conduct a [sweep](#) of the encampment, arresting 108 students and subjecting them to suspensions, disciplinary hearings, and lockouts from their campus housing with little-to-no notice. This set of events not only prompted students to reconstruct an "unauthorized encampment" on Columbia's campus once more, but it also catalyzed a movement of students who set up similar encampments on other campuses in New York City and throughout the entire country.

Though the specific details of how each university or college has responded to this uprising differs from campus to campus, the alarming speed with which campus administrations have resorted to calling on police forces, many of which are militarized (and [some trained by Israeli military forces](#)), to respond to students' peaceful protest has had the regrettable effect of generally abridging speech and assembly rights; making students feel unwelcome, targeted and unprotected on their campuses; compromising access to education; and normalizing shockingly repressive and violent tactics of protest-policing.

As brutal as the police response has been to these protests, even more appalling has been the impunity with which violent and inflammatory Zionist, white nationalist, and other counter-protestors have been treated. As the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education relayed in a [statement](#) at the conclusion of her country visit to the U.S. on May 10, 2024, "One of

my biggest concerns during this visit, as well as of the majority of international human rights mechanisms, is the increasing attacks on peaceful student protests across the country....The most appalling factor is the unequal treatment of protesters depending on their political position. Pro-Palestinian protesters are disproportionately affected by the harsh response, allegedly for their antisemitic views, paradoxically, even if they self-identify as belonging to the Jewish community or represent Jewish student associations.” Meanwhile, pro-Israel protesters have consistently engaged in outward anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab, and anti-Muslim rhetoric and behavior, prompting minimal backlash from their institutions. The following case studies illustrate in detail the numerous failures on the part of academic institutions, local authorities and police to safeguard an ensemble of rights that should be protected, especially in the context of people standing up in the interest of ending genocide and advancing international peace.

III. Legal Framework - Rights Violations Alleged

The violations in this letter correspond to rights protected in several international human rights treaties that the United States has ratified: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), including:

- Rights to liberty and security of person, due process. (Arts. 9, 14, 15 - ICCPR)
- Prohibition of Excessive force and Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment (Arts 6, 7 - ICCPR, Arts 1, 16 - CAT)
- Freedom of Expression, Assembly and Association (Arts 19, 21, 22 - ICCPR)
- Right to Privacy (Art 17, ICCPR)
- Prohibition of Racial discrimination (Arts 2(1), 26 - ICCPR, CERD)
- Freedom of Religion (Art 18, ICCPR)
- Confinement conditions: prohibition of arbitrary arrest or detention; dignified and humane treatment (Arts. 9, 10 - ICCPR, Art 16 - CAT)

IV. Case Studies

Though there have been countless human rights violations that have taken place at campuses across the country over the last six weeks, we have chosen to zoom in on a few emblematic cases to illustrate in detail the harrowing events that students and supporters experienced in specific contexts. This section outlines examples of human rights violations that took place at the following campuses:

- **Case Study A:** Columbia University and Barnard College
- **Case Study B:** New York University

- **Case Study C:** City University of New York
- **Case Study D:** Tulane University
- **Case Study E:** University of California – Los Angeles
- **Case Study F:** Emory University

Case Study A: Columbia University and Barnard College

This account details violations relevant to the following mandates: the right to freedom of opinion and expression, right to freedom of assembly and association, right to religious freedom and belief, right to adequate housing, right to education, violence against women, attacks on human rights defenders, xenophobia and racism, cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment and torture, and arbitrary detention.

Columbia University (including Barnard College) violated many of the rights covered by your mandates long before the students began organizing the Gaza Solidarity Encampment on April 17, 2024. As the recently-filed [Title VI complaint](#) against Columbia University details, the University has fostered an unwelcoming and hostile environment to Palestinian, Muslim and Arab students by repeatedly failing to address or respond to: the [doxing](#) of students engaged in pro-Palestinian activities; racist harassment of pro-Palestinian or Muslim students wearing [keffiyehs](#) or hijabs; racist statements, posters or other speech by fellow students, university employees or invitees; the [spraying of a chemical substance](#) called “skunk” water against protestors participating in a Palestinian rights rally, causing several students to seek medical attention and some to experience ongoing trauma; [harassment by faculty member Shai Davidai](#) against Palestinian, Muslim or Arab students after months of complaints to the university administration. The complaint also details the differential treatment and access to resources for Palestinian students, as well as the differential treatment of organizations such as Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) and their members involved in pro-Palestinian activities with respect to discipline and event authorization.

Columbia University’s pattern of oppressive and discriminatory behavior escalated in response to the establishment of the Gaza Solidarity Encampment. On April 17, 2024, a group of student organizers belonging to Columbia University Apartheid Divest (CUAD) set up several tents on the east side of Columbia’s South Lawn to demand financial transparency, divestment from companies and institutions profiting from Israeli apartheid, and an academic boycott. The protestors were, by the [admission](#) of NYPD Commissioner Edward Caban, entirely peaceful. Indeed, all evidence suggests that the encampment continued [the long and storied tradition of peaceful protest](#) at Columbia.

Yet just over 30 hours later, during the early afternoon of April 18, University President Minouche Shafik took the extraordinary step of inviting the NYPD onto campus to clear the

encampment. Over [108 students](#) were arrested including 2 legal observers and charged with criminal trespass. The legal observers received misdemeanor obstruction charges in addition to their criminal trespass charges. By calling the police on her students, President Shafik broke a [50-year norm](#) of avoiding police intervention except in response to a “[clear and present danger](#).” Shafik’s stated justification—that the encampment “[create\[d\] a harassing and intimidating environment for many of our students](#)”—was made without the requisite investigatory process in compliance [with University policy](#). Moreover, the NYPD deployed its notorious Strategic Response Group to arrest the protestors, “[a unit that has a history of escalation and violence](#).” In short, the university’s response was clearly disproportionate to the supposed danger, and unnecessarily placed the students in harm’s way.

In another unprecedented step, the University issued a blanket suspension of arrested students, weaponizing existing disciplinary processes to further punish them for their participation in the encampment. Suspensions barred students’ access to all University facilities including campus housing and dining and restricted them from academic participation. In many cases, students recently released from jail found themselves with nowhere to go, cut-off from their residence halls, their personal belongings, dining halls, and classrooms. Barnard College was particularly cruel, providing students only “[15 minutes to gather what \[they\] might need](#)” from their rooms before escorting them off campus indefinitely. When some students appealed to the Dean and Vice President of Campus Life and Student Experience, Leslie Grinage, for alternative housing options, Dean Grinage informed them that the school would assist them in “[book\[ing\] a flight](#)” to return to the “state listed in their permanent address.” The University exploited its position in loco parentis—as caretaker for its students—to render them houseless and without access to food. In doing so, it threatened more than the students’ academic futures. It actively endangered their physical safety and security. Professor of Religion at Barnard College, Najam Haider, described the response as “[breathhtaking in its inhumanity](#).”

Undeterred by the arrests and threats of discipline, the Gaza Solidarity Encampment continued with a new group of students immediately taking the place of their arrested peers. As Columbia Public Safety officers dismantled the tents set up on the east side of Columbia’s South Lawn, students began trickling into the west side of the same lawn. They sat together continuing to chant for divestment and a free Palestine. On the evening of April 18, just hours after witnessing the arrests and subsequent sweep, CUAD held a press conference to demonstrate its unflagging commitment to the Palestinian cause in the face of the University’s brutal tactics and to outline new demands for amnesty for student activists. In full, these [demands](#) were:

1. Financial Divestment. Divest all of Columbia’s finances, including the endowment, from companies and institutions that profit from Israeli apartheid, genocide and occupation in Palestine. Ensure accountability by increasing transparency around financial investments.

2. Academic Boycott. Sever academic ties with Israeli universities, including the Global Center in Tel Aviv, the Dual Degree Program with Tel Aviv University, and all study-abroad programs, fellowships, and research collaborations with Israeli academic institutions.
3. Stop the Displacement. No land grabs, whether in Harlem, Lenapehoking, or Palestine. Cease expansion, provide reparations, and support housing for low-income Harlem residents. No development by Columbia without real community control.
4. No Policing on Campus. End the targeted repression of Palestinian students and their allies on and off campus, including through university disciplinary processes. Defund Public Safety and disclose and sever all ties with the NYPD.
5. End the Silence. Release a public statement calling for an immediate, permanent ceasefire in Gaza, denouncing the ongoing genocidal campaign against the Palestinian people, and call on government officials to do so too.

On April 21, 2024, after sleeping on nothing but tarps for three days, the new encampment finally began pitching new tents. This was despite having been informed by University administrators that students found re-pitching tents would be [“identified and subjected to disciplinary action.”](#) On April 23, 2024, the University issued the first of what would be several ultimatums [instructing students to clear the encampment or face discipline](#). In a menacing email addressed to the Columbia University community, President Shafik expressed that if discussions with encampment leaders proved unsuccessful, the University would be forced to consider [“alternative options”](#) for “restoring calm to campus.” On April 29, 2024, negotiations between Columbia University and the Gaza Solidarity Encampment leaders broke down. As President Shafik pledged [“not to divest from Israel,”](#) Gaza Solidarity Encampment leaders accused the University of negotiating in bad faith. Following the breakdown in communications, the University [issued another ultimatum warning students to leave by 2 p.m. or face disciplinary action](#).

The University’s refusal to continue talks with students and to seriously consider divestment directly preceded the occupation of Hamilton Hall. In the early hours of April 30, 2024, [nearly 50 student activists streamed into the building](#), barricading themselves inside. The protesters [unfurled a banner reading “Hind’s Hall” to cheers from students below](#). Students reclaimed the building in honor of Hind Rajab — a six-year old Palestinian girl killed by Israeli Occupation Forces. The University immediately moved to lockdown campus, restricting access to students residing in campus dorms. Then, the night of April 30, the NYPD arrived on campus at the [urging](#) of President Shafik. In her letter, President Shafik expressed her “utmost regret” for having to call on police, citing “serious safety concerns.” The disproportionate and militarized police response that followed exposed the deeply disingenuous nature of these “concerns.”

Less than 24 hours into the building takeover, the NYPD deployed a massive vehicle outfitted with a ladder to bust in a second-story window of Hind's Hall. In a dystopic scene, a line of officers in riot gear climbed the ladder one by one to enter the building. Hundreds more began flooding through the campus gates. By this time, most [legal observers, members of the press and emergency medical responders](#)—champions of police accountability—[had been cleared](#), giving the NYPD free rein to brutalize protesters.

Several student protesters sustained injuries from violent [encounters with the NYPD](#). In the process of clearing protesters from Hind's Hall, NYPD pushed multiple protesters down stairs, [leaving one student unconscious](#). Other injuries included [a fractured eye socket, concussions, an ankle sprain, cuts and injured wrists and hands from tight plastic cuffs](#).

On May 2, 2024, it was reported that [a loaded gun was accidentally discharged](#) by an NYPD officer in Hamilton/Hind's Hall during the sweep. The protesters were unarmed while the police had firearms with real bullets. This was not reported on the night of April 30 when it occurred. The NYPD continued to abuse the students in jail by reportedly [denying the students food and water and keeping them in solitary confinement](#).

The response also had an impact on the surrounding community. According to multiple news reports on May 1, Columbia University's president communicated to senior NYPD officials that “the group occupying Hamilton was not affiliated with the University.” This created a racially discriminatory chasm between predominantly white students and community members of color who are stereotyped as outsiders. Community members could not express concerns about policing policies that deny community members access to their own non-Columbia affiliated housing without providing identification and an explanation to police. Community members have not had a say when they are seen and feared as antagonists while accessing public streets and accommodations within their own community. Increased police presence continued to disrupt the neighborhood until May 17 — more than two weeks after the encampment was dismantled — due to [President Shafik's request for the NYPD to remain](#). In response, hundreds of faculty across Columbia schools - Columbia University, Barnard College and Teachers College - [had pledged to strike](#) until NYPD presence is removed from campus.

On May 4, 2024, exasperated and horrified by the events that unfolded in the weeks following the initial construction of the Gaza Solidarity Encampment (GSE), the Columbia College Student Council [published](#) an impassioned statement (passed by a vote of 22-4-2). The statement recounted the numerous missteps by the administration that sidelined students' concerns, noting that the April 30th raid had its roots in months of executive overreach and bad faith moves by senior administration officials that undermined what processes and procedures exist for shared governance. It also discussed the administration's failure to protect students' safety on campus and adhere to principles of academic freedom. This includes [a decision by President Minouche Shafik](#) to call the NYPD onto the campus [to dismantle the GSE](#) on April 18, 2024, despite a

unanimous veto by the university senate executive committee, which the [University Charter](#) requires the administration to consult before making a decision to invite police forces onto campus. Their concluding observations bear repeating here:

Right now we should be focused on our final exams. Instead, the university's actions have made it impossible for us to focus on anything besides our peers' physical safety and access to food. The misrepresentation of events perpetuated by administration has allowed them to justify extreme police force and brutality against their own students. The administration has betrayed us. As student representatives, we detest this false, harmful portrayal of our community. It is only because of student journalism, such as the Columbia Spectator and WKCR-FM's 24-hour radio coverage, that we have started reclaiming our narrative. We urge you to listen to us – not political figures, not the radical fringes and not misguided media.

On May 16, 2024, Columbia faculty [passed a vote of no confidence](#) in President Minouche Shafik with a [resolution](#) stating, “President Shafik’s violation of the fundamental requirements of academic freedom and shared governance, and her unprecedented assault on students’ rights, warrants unequivocal and emphatic condemnation.”

Columbia University, in its unfailingly callous treatment of students fighting for a free Palestine and an end to the University’s complicity in genocide, committed grave human rights violations. These include violations of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, right to freedom of assembly and association, and rights to religious freedom and belief. By siccing the NYPD on students not once but twice, during the April 17 encampment sweep and the April 30 campus raid, the University facilitated attacks on human rights defenders, xenophobia and racism, violence against women, and cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment. Furthermore, the University's repeated weaponization of disciplinary process to deny their students access to housing and food was in clear violation of their students’ rights to adequate housing and to education.

Case Study B: New York University (NYU)

This account details violations relevant to the following mandates: the right to freedom of opinion and expression, right to freedom of assembly and association, right to religious freedom and belief, right to adequate housing, right to education, attacks on human rights defenders, xenophobia and racism, violence against women, cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment and torture, and arbitrary detention.

The context for NYU’s response far precedes recent campus activism. On November 13, 2023, NYU [suspended](#) an 18-year-old, first-year, working-class, first-generation Muslim student for pro-Palestine expression on campus. The student has received death threats, calls for their

deportation, threats of assault if they ate in the NYU dining hall, and more. NYU made no accommodations to allow the student to attend classes or find alternative housing. Instead, the university [disciplined them with a suspension](#).

Prior to April 22, there had already been a slew of “[extraordinary measures](#)” enacted by NYU on students organizing for Palestinian liberation, including but not limited to suspensions and disciplinary hearings. Moreover, NYU summoned and/or permitted uniformed members of the New York Police Department to have a standing presence monitoring weekly “de-occupations” of an NYU (Paulson) building.

On April 22, NYU President Linda Mills [green-lit a police raid](#) on peaceful protesters at NYU’s Gould Plaza. Specific instances that occurred during this raid included:

- [Over 120 arrests](#) of students, faculty, and community members for their participation in the protest;
- A police officer [pulled a student protester by her hair](#) to the ground;
- A police officer [maced a student protestor](#) with medical needs; he had a seizure on the spot;
- Dozens of students [suffered medical injuries](#) as a result of the brutality they faced - let alone the severe mental and emotional trauma;
- The police [pepper sprayed](#) a Washington Square News student journalist;
- Plaza furniture and other encampment material were [thrown at students](#);
- The mass arrests happened during [maghrib prayer](#);
- The original planned time of administration escalation was [during the encampment’s Passover programming](#), potentially disturbing the demonstrators’ Pesach celebration.

That evening, students were [not allowed to enter or exit their residences](#) or other academic buildings, without any official statement from the university nor proper answers to the students left stranded outside their residences for over one hour. After the arrests, the university stated it was launching a “[forensic investigation](#)” against all those who participated in the encampment.

On April 23, 2024, administrators constructed a [wooden wall](#) blocking entry to Gould Plaza. On April 24, 2024, a [student received notice](#) that the FBI/CIA had images of them protesting. Furthermore, they were alerted to the fact that their devices were being tracked, tapped, and monitored.

On April 24, 2024, [a printed flyer containing an open call for violence against Palestinian and pro-Palestinian students on campus](#), was found in a bathroom of NYU Law’s Vanderbilt Hall. Two days after being notified of the threat, the office of the dean sent out an email making

reference to “despicable messages” on campus without any specific mention of Palestinian or pro-Palestinian students who were the target of the messages.

On May 3, when President Mills again invited the NYPD to sweep the second peaceful encampment located at 181 Mercer, the following incidents occurred:

- One student who was taken into custody was [not allowed to take their maintenance medication](#)
- Another student who was not arrested wasn't [allowed to get their wallet out of their backpack](#);
- Police discarded all property [in garbage bags](#);
- The [police rummaged through the ‘People’s Library’ and took photos of the books and other materials](#).

On the same day, President Mills sent campus-wide communication that grossly [misrepresented pro-Palestine protesters as violent, aggressive, and unruly](#), drawing on stereotypes that paint Palestinians and their allies as barbaric and uncivilized. On May 7, NYU began [disciplinary hearings](#) for students involved in campus protests. In a [press release](#), NYU’s Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine group called NYU’s punishments for arrested students – meted out through private corporations – “Orwellian.” As one article in *The New York Times* reported, “While the university eventually moved to have the criminal charges against the students dropped, it initiated a disciplinary process against some of them (the university will not disclose how many) that seemed as if it had been conjured in the writers’ room of a [dystopian sci-fi series](#).”

Case Study C: City University of New York (CUNY)

This account details violations relevant to the following mandates: the right to freedom of opinion and expression, right to freedom of assembly and association, rights to religious freedom and belief, attacks on human rights defenders, xenophobia and racism, violence against women, cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment, and arbitrary detention.

Students and workers across the CUNY system established a Gaza Solidarity Encampment (CUNY GSE) on April 25, 2024 on the City College of New York (CCNY) quadrangle. This encampment lasted until Tuesday, April 30, when the New York Police Department and CUNY Public Safety officers raided the encampment by the sanctioned approval and request of CUNY Central and CCNY President Victor Boudreau.

Students and workers set up an encampment to pressure CUNY administration to fulfil [five demands](#) related to ending the genocide in occupied Palestine to:

1. Immediately divest from all companies complicit in the Israeli-led genocide and commit to full financial transparency regarding institutional investments;
2. Boycott all academic trips to Israel, including birthright, Fulbright, and perspective trips, and to ban all forms of cooperation with Israeli academic institutions;
3. Release a statement in solidarity affirming the rights of Palestinian people to national liberation and the right to return, and to protect students, workers, and professors advocating for Palestine by offering them amnesty and reinstating those who have been fired;
4. Demilitarize CUNY and Harlem by ending all collaboration with law enforcement - NYPD, IOF, CIA, Homeland Security, ROTC - and remove all forms of imperialism; and
5. Restore CUNY's status as a "People's School" by restoring its tuition-free status, protecting the PSC CUNY union, and adopting a fair contract for staff and faculty.

This account details the events that amount to violations of the following mandates during the police raid at CCNY on students and community members and the subsequent days that followed.

Prior to the establishment of the CUNY GSE, students at three CUNY campuses [filed Title VI complaints against their respective institutions](#) on the basis of anti-Palestinian discrimination. These schools are Hunter College, Queens College, and CUNY School of Law. The Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights has since opened investigations relating to the complaints on each respective campus. The CUNY GSE was established against a backdrop of mounting student pressure on CUNY administration to divest from Israel and arms manufacturers.

On the morning of April 25, 2024, students and workers set up tents on the CCNY quad and communicated their demands of disclosure, divestment, boycott, solidarity, demilitarization, within and for a People's CUNY. In the following days, representatives of the encampment engaged in negotiations with CUNY administration, but CUNY administration [chose to engage in negotiations in bad faith](#). Shortly after the establishment of the encampment, CUNY Public Safety officers closed two entrances to the CCNY campus, which began an increasing pattern of increased securitization of the campus throughout the days the encampment was present. By the third day of the encampment, [CUNY Public Safety erected barricades at the remaining entrances of the campus](#). In addition to preventing public access to the campus, CUNY Public Safety began to [deny access](#) to CCNY students who needed to access the CCNY buildings for restroom use. This was purposeful, as during negotiations with camp representatives, CUNY administration used restroom access as leverage in the negotiations. The CUNY administration offered restroom access, via *porta-potties*, to CUNY GSE representatives in exchange for the removal of [the Palestinian flag that had been affixed to the flagpole on the encampment quad](#). It was not clear if CCNY students lost access to restrooms altogether.

On Tuesday, April 30th, at 1:24 p.m., six days into the CUNY GSE, CUNY administration issued an ultimatum: dismantle the CUNY GSE by the start of classes on May 1st or CUNY

administration would use “all legal, disciplinary, and operations at [their] disposal.” However, only hours later, CUNY administration allowed the NYPD, with its full force, onto the CCNY campus, in violation of CUNY policies, namely the CUNY Manual of General Policy 7.071- Law Enforcement Intervention, by [failing to give notice to student leaders, including the chair of USS and respective student body presidents. This lack of communication even led to a student government president to travel to campus to check on the welfare of students, only for them to get brutally arrested by the NYPD. CUNY Public Safety worked hand in hand with the NYPD,](#) barricading students and community members onto campus. Only one entrance remained accessible for protestors to exit the CCNY campus.

Students and other protestors at the encampment were pepper sprayed and beaten by CUNY Public Safety, who deployed their batons and sprays. NYPD blockaded the campus before entering to sweep the encampment. No students, faculty members of the public, and members of the press [were allowed into the campus after 8 p.m.](#) Protests in solidarity with the CUNY GSE, which were formed outside of the CCNY campus, were met with an escalated police response by police in riot gear. This included numerous indiscriminate and violent arrests [witnessed by faculty members](#) without warning on the streets and sidewalks outside of CCNY. One CCNY student [told reporters](#) that she had been “pushed together by batons” by NYPD officers and that “the entire situation was precarious and the arrests were sporadic,” noting that it was not clear why protestors on the sidewalk were being arrested. Around midnight, hundreds of NYPD officers in riot gear entered the campus to [sweep the encampment.](#)

According to the NYPD, [173 arrests were made at CCNY.](#) NYPD and CUNY Public Safety [used excessive violence](#) on protestors and individuals clearly identified as members of the press that resulted in serious injuries including chemical burns, broken bones, concussions, bruises, and lesions. The NYPD brutalized one particular student so badly that her shoulders were dislocated. This student’s flex cuffs were on so tightly that her hands turned purple. She was left on a bus awaiting transport to the precinct for four hours. Another arrestee on the bus [reported](#) that the student was “crying and gasping and screaming out in pain,” while members of the NYPD laughed at her. According to [the faculty letter,](#) a CUNY worker’s ribs were broken in the course of their arrest, and another student’s ankle was broken.

Members of the press [were pushed back](#) by the NYPD, impeding their ability to document arrests. Street medics, local parlance for certified first aid volunteers, were blocked from offering medical treatment by the NYPD. After police sprayed students with mace and pepper spray, one medic was informed that someone was suffering from an asthma attack, but they were [not allowed to provide medical assistance.](#) Street medics provided assistance at a jail, where they treated protestors that were released after hours of detention. A paramedic on the ground reported that one of the students released, who was victim of a baton strike to the head, [had a decreased Glasgow Coma Score, indicating decreased mental status.](#)

In addition to the physical violence of the arrests, NYPD officers also violated different protesters' right to freedom of religion. [One protestor had her hijab ripped from her hair, and another protestor had his kippa forcibly torn from his head.](#)

Distrust in CUNY administration has only heightened after the NYPD raided the CUNY GSE. CCNY students have voiced their outrage and betrayal because of the institution's decision to allow NYPD on campus to brutalize them. One CUNY faculty member present at CCNY on April 30th said that the NYPD response, "[felt like a military invasion. It was terrifying.](#)" In addition to the police brutality students and workers encountered at CCNY during their arrests, some of those [arrested were held for over 36 hours and now face felony charges](#), a sharp [contrast from the treatment of protestors arrested at Columbia University](#) that same night.

The actions of the NYPD and CUNY Public Safety were brutal and unforgiving. The events of that night reveal many human rights abuses, including violations of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, right to freedom of assembly and association, and rights to religious freedom and belief. The raid also resulted in attacks on human rights defenders, xenophobia and racism, violence against women, and cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment.

Case Study D: Tulane University

This account details violations relevant to the following mandates: the right to freedom of opinion and expression, right to freedom of assembly and association, right to adequate housing, right to education, attacks on human rights defenders, xenophobia and racism, violence against women, arbitrary detention and cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment and torture.

Tulane University has consistently restricted the freedom of opinion and freedom of assembly rights of its students who wish to express pro-Palestinian sentiments since Oct. 7, 2023. In October of 2023, Tulane University Police Department (TUPD) arrested four protesters and charged five for activities related to a non-violent pro-Palestine action. On March 16, 2024, [TUPD erroneously arrested Toni Jones](#), a Black transgender woman organizer with New Orleans for Community Oversight of Police. Video evidence confirms that she was simply standing on the edge of a sidewalk, at a protest exercising their right to free assembly for Palestine. The protest called for Tulane to denounce professor and board member [Walter Isaacson, who had assaulted a protester earlier in the week](#), and for Tulane to divest from its investments in Israel. Students also called for the city to investigate the death of [Tawfic Abdel Jabbar, a 17 year-old Palestinian New Orleanian](#), who was killed when he was shot in the head by the Israeli army near Ramallah in the occupied West Bank.

The Tulane University student Gaza Solidarity Encampment (GSE) began on April 29, 2024 and lasted for 33 hours. As students were first setting up tents on the Tulane campus, the university immediately sent in police officers on horseback to attempt to dismantle the encampment. Brenna Byrne, a former student at Tulane, [told Al Jazeera](#) she saw a police horse's hooves nearly

come down on the head of one student who had been detained on the ground. Afraid the student would be killed, she moved forward to help and saw her own sister also on the ground being arrested, and a police officer kneeling on her head. She was charged with resisting arrest and was barred from accessing her home in a dormitory owned and managed by Tulane University. Five others were also arrested.

By the next day, April 30, 2024, a high-volume noise machine had been erected to drown out the encampment, as students attempted to perform both Jewish and Muslim prayers. A large billboard-sized LED sign had also been erected with a trespassing warning. The encampment continued peacefully throughout the day with teach-ins, facilitated conversations, prayers, songs, music and meals. Silas Gillett, a Jewish sophomore, [told Al Jazeera that](#): “Multiple people came up to us and said they felt more safe that day than they ever had on campus. Tulane is, usually, a very hostile place for Palestinians, Muslims and students of color.”

Late that night, at 3:00 am on May 1, 2024, the university sent in more than 100 Louisiana State Troopers (LST) — a notorious police force that responds directly to the authoritarian-leaning Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry—notably, not Tulane University’s own police nor the New Orleans Police Department. LST arrived in riot gear, carrying automatic weapons, and backed by heavily armored vehicles. “A riot cop pointed a sniper rifle at my head,” Loyola Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) student Juleea Berthelot [reported to The Lens](#). “I was scared for my life.” After storming the encampment, LST arrested 14 students who had been peacefully protesting. [Al Jazeera reviewed video](#) showing state police pushing one student to the ground, and reported reviewing their medical records showing they were later diagnosed with a concussion as a result of assault. The student believes they were targeted because they were filming the police at the time. At least one student arrested was a bystander who was not given pre-arrest warnings or the opportunity to disperse.

Campus disciplinary proceedings are pending for dozens of Tulane students and at least seven have been suspended so far for their roles in the encampment. Of those seven, Tulane evicted those who lived on campus. The university also suspended staff that had been supportive at the Office of Gender and Sexual Diversity and other departments. Tulane rescinded the “registered student organization” status of one of the protest’s main organizers, the Tulane Chapter of Students for a Democratic Society.

Case Study E: University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA)

Students formed the Palestine Solidarity Encampment (also known as the Liberated Zone) atop Dickson Court, a central grassy quad of UCLA on April 25th. The Liberated Zone represented the continuation of student organizing focused on [divestment](#) from holdings in corporations tied to Israel and transparency in financial ties. They also demand the University call for a permanent

Ceasefire, end ties with the Los Angeles Police Department and stop policing pro-Palestinian activities on campus.

As the Washington Post documented, several days after the encampment formed, pro-Israel agitators tried to enter the encampment and student organizers faced consistent heckling and harassment, even [violent threats and attacks on the encampment](#). To the dismay of students and faculty, UCLA administrators approved a permit for a large counter-protest on April 28th in an area adjacent to the Liberated Zone. At least one high level administrator naively remarked in an email that the permitted group didn't want to "pick a fight." Yet the group of counter-protesters set up a jumbotron to play images of the October 7 Hamas attack and assembled hundreds (maybe thousands) of pro-Israeli demonstrators. They yelled racial slurs and sexually motivated taunts at pro-Palestinian community members and students passing by their designated area and pushed down barricades set up to separate the protesters. The violent and insidious threats continued that night and into the following days. [Mice](#) in a backpack were released near the encampment. A group of agitators attempted to enter the space in the dead of night.

In the [evening of Tuesday, April 30, 2024](#), the UCLA administration declared the encampment illegal without acknowledging the preceding and mounting violence and harassment. Around 11pm, pro-Israel agitators [began attacking the encampment](#). According to [one vivid description](#), under the cover of night, dozens of men wearing white plastic face masks attacked students (many sleeping) with bear mace, pepper spray, laser lights, and wooden planks. Fireworks were shot into the encampment and the masked group used wooden poles and boards to beat the barricades without regard for students in their path. The attackers used [loud noise](#) as another tool— a baby crying, loud sirens, and an eagle screeching. [This went on for hours](#), while private security and other law enforcement stood observing. [The LA Times](#) reported that cries of "second Nakba" were hurled at students during the attack. The [Nakba](#) (meaning "catastrophe" in Arabic) refers to the forced displacement, dispossession and killing of 800,000 Palestinians in 1948 in relation to Israel's formation as a Jewish state. Palestinians refer to the Nakba as an ongoing process of ethnic cleansing. In [a letter](#) from editors in chief of UCLA law journals, the experience was described in these harrowing terms:

The aggression extended beyond mere words, as counter-protestors unleashed endless terror. Live mice were released, noxious gasses were deployed, and fireworks ignited and thrown at our peers. Barricades were relentlessly assailed, and our peers faced danger from projectiles ranging from wooden planks to electric scooters. The sanctity of religious observances were violated, as counter-protesters heckled Muslim students during prayers and Jewish students during their Passover Seder. The attack on April 30th alone resulted in counter-protesters injuring 200 individuals, 25 of whom required hospitalization.

White supremacists came to the encampment, hurling the n-word (hard-r) and telling our Black peers to “go back to their master” and “go back to South Central.” In another act of calculated cruelty, this time with University approval, counter-protestors raised upwards of \$90,000 to install an audio-video display to conduct nonstop torment of those within the encampment.

Around 1:00 am, Karen Bass' Deputy Mayor of Communication noted that "[LAPD is responding](#) immediately to Chancellor Gene Block's request for support on campus." The California Highway Patrol (CHP) and LAPD began to assemble near the encampment, but did not move in to stop the violence until [3](#) and a half hours after a neighboring business owner's first 911 call. The police response took over 4 hours and agitators were still present through the late night. To date, none of the agitators have been arrested.

On Wednesday, May 1, leadership of the encampment received notice from administration and journalists indicating that dispersal orders would begin at 6:00 pm. UCLA Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Darnell Hunt [visited the camp](#) in the late afternoon. Students asked him questions and advanced their demands, but he was unprepared to meaningfully negotiate.

At 6:00 pm, UCPD gave the first verbal warning declaring the encampment unlawful. Those who remained would face consequences. Police in riot gear began advancing towards the Liberated Zone from two sides at 1:00 am. They first attempted to enter through the rear of the encampment through the Tongva steps but retreated when they were unable to break the large supportive crowd. Simultaneously, students held the line near Dickson Court for two hours. Eventually police began tackling students to the ground. [In violation of California law](#), law enforcement used “less-lethal” and chemical weapons to disperse the crowd. [Police launched](#) consecutive flash-bangs and rubber bullets (10 people sustained head injuries), beating students with metal clubs, and shoving people to the ground.

Around 6:30 am the following morning, community members began mobilizing to support arrested protestors upon their release from jail. The [medical needs were dire](#). Encampment medics at a later press conference [reported](#) treating facial fractures, subarachnoid hemorrhages, police-induced trample injuries, and asthma attacks from chemical irritants. Police also caused severe contusions and musculoskeletal injuries. More than a dozen students were evaluated for rubber bullet injuries, including golf ball-sized contusions, potential bone fractures, and severe lacerations to the eye, face, scalp, and body that required immediate emergency care. At least fifteen members required prompt emergency services, most of whom were taken to local emergency rooms in private vehicles. At least five people were sent directly to the emergency room upon their release from police custody. [Medics](#) estimated that deaths would have resulted without their intervention, and emphasized the deliberate use of brutality and obstruction of care by University of California Police Department (UCPD), Los Angeles Police Department, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, and California Highway Patrol. Encampment members have had

to seek psychological treatment in the aftermath of the events. In their statements, Chancellor Gene Block and President Michael Drake [intentionally sought to minimize](#) the violence that police, UCLA administration, and pro-Israel agitators have inflicted upon students. Physicians who [spoke out about the violence](#) of the attack and the later encampment sweep, called the violence “dystopian.” As one physician commented, “UCLA could not manage to marshal law enforcement to protect their students. But they could mobilize law enforcement to shoot rubber bullets at their students....Those are not actions of people interested in student safety.”

A few days after these nights of terror, on May 5, Chancellor [Block announced](#) a new Office of Campus Safety. Rick Braziel, the former Sacramento Chief of Police was appointed to run the new office. Chancellor Block’s announcement suggests FBI involvement and unsubstantiated "violence against counterprotestors." One professor posed a [letter](#) on the political science department’s website calling for students to face disciplinary charges. At present, Chancellor Block has not made any announcement claiming responsibility for his involvement in the violent attacks on the liberated zone, and instead his limited messaging presents protecting student free speech as the basis for a super-structure of policing.

On Monday, May 6, at 6:00 am [police detained](#) approximately forty people, including journalists, walking in a UCLA parking structure. UCPD claimed they were checking individuals for violating a typically unenforced curfew of midnight to 6:00 am that only applies to non-affiliates of the university. However, the vast majority of them were students and detained after 6:00 am. When LASD arrived about an hour later, [42 of the detained individuals were arrested for conspiracy to commit an unspecified crime and two journalists were arrested for obstruction of a peace officer](#). The individuals were detained, and after several hours and taken to a local jail for processing. UCLA’s student newspaper noted professors and supporters were not allowed near the scene and denied any information about [charges](#).

While the police spent hours with the students, journalists, and community members in the parking structure, around 100 students entered Moore Hall around 7:00 am to [stage a sit-in](#) while other students entered Dodd Hall to protest UCLA's support for the genocide in Gaza. After a few hours, California Highway Patrol officers began [staging outside all the entrances to Dodd Hall](#), bearing zip ties and "less lethal" weapons, blocking exits with their bikes along with campus security. Students still were able to exit the building and joined a rally and march towards Bruin Plaza.

Students and community members subsequently mobilized support for jailed students. Nearly all arrestees from the parking structure were released without their phones despite the police having no warrant to hold or search the phones.

Later that same day, the [UC announced](#) an investigation into the events of April 30th led by a police consulting firm headed by the infamous [former DC](#) and Philadelphia Chief of Police Charles Ramsey.

UCLA's president will appear before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce this Thursday, May 23. In advance of this hearing, it is important to note that the UCLA Taskforce on Anti-Palestinian, Anti-Arab and Anti-Muslim Discrimination [published its report](#) on May 13, 2024. We close this case study with the forceful conclusion of that [report](#):

We submit that UCLA has failed to acknowledge much less confront the growing violence against Palestinian, Muslim, and Arab students and faculty, and anyone supporting Palestinian rights, including many Jewish students, as a letter from Jewish faculty has shown. UCLA has exposed students to the violence of counter protesters and then to the violence of police and the law. Although we have called attention to racism and violence repeatedly, UCLA has chosen to ignore our efforts. Every instance we have documented remains without redress.

Case Study F: Emory University

This account details violations relevant to the following mandates: the right to freedom of opinion and expression, right to freedom of assembly and association, right to religious freedom and belief, right to liberty and security of person, right to due process, and prohibition of excessive force and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

On the morning of April 25, 2024, Emory University community members and others engaged in peaceful assembly [against the ongoing genocide](#) in Palestine and [the plans to build a militarized police facility “Cop City” south of Atlanta](#). They were met with excessive police violence by the Emory Police Department, Atlanta Police Department (APD) and Georgia State Patrol (GSP). The APD and GSP arrived on campus at the [request](#) of Emory University President Gregory L. Fenves, as stated [by APD](#) and [by President Fenves](#) in a webinar with faculty. Students, faculty, alumni, and community members were tased, shot at with pepperballs, exposed to chemical irritants, choked, tackled, dragged, and [arrested](#), with some faculty describing the atmosphere as resembling a [“war zone”](#).

Around 7:30 a.m., demonstrators began setting up tents on the Emory Quadrangle, a common area of the university routinely used for peaceful dissent and protest. By 8:30 a.m, APD officers and vehicles had arrived on the scene as demonstrators organized breakfast and socialized in a peaceful atmosphere. Emory faculty who were there [corroborate](#) the peaceful and calm nature of the gathering in which Emory students were participating.

At 9:24 a.m, Emory University issued a warning about police activity on the Atlanta campus Quadrangle, advising people to avoid the area. Not all faculty and staff received this message. At 9:25 a.m., EPD delivered warnings to the protestors but did [not](#) warn them that APD and GSP would arrest them through violent force. Shortly after, GSP and APD began to [surround](#)

demonstrators, shoot pepperballs, and [violently](#) detain those [attempting to disperse](#) as well those observing, including throwing a student to the ground and tying their hands behind their back.

Professor of English and Indigenous studies, [Emil' Keme](#), was [forcefully pulled away, thrown to the ground, and zip-tied](#). Upon asking why students were being arrested, Economics Professor, [Caroline Fohlin](#), was [thrown to the ground and tackled](#) by police. Professor Fohlin's head hit the concrete as another officer joined to restrain her on the ground. Philosophy Department Chair and Professor, [Noëlle McAfee](#), was also [arrested](#) when she asked why a student was being forcibly arrested.

In total, twenty-eight [arrests](#) were made on the morning of April 25th, and twenty of the arrestees were identified as Emory community members.

Although the APD and GSP were the primary state actors involved in the incidents of April 25th, EPD and the university administration, including President Fenves, played a crucial role by collaborating with and inviting state actors to infringe on the rights of demonstrators. Emory University further allowed law enforcement to maintain a [continued presence](#) on campus after the original demonstration had dispersed.

The suppression of peaceful assembly on April 25th violates the rights to freedom of expression and assembly as protected under Articles 19 and 21 of the ICCPR. The arbitrary and violent nature in which arrests were made further illustrate violations of the rights to liberty and security of persons as protected under Articles 9 and 15 of the ICCPR.

Emory University's failure to uphold its own policies on expression, such as the [Respect for Open Expression Policy \(ROE\) 8.14](#), reflects a disregard for these fundamental rights.

Section 8.14.7.2 of the ROE requires the University to work with demonstrators to identify ways to continue expression with modifications before termination. As confirmed by President Fenves during various [community listening sessions](#) requested by the University Senate, the university made no such attempts to work with the demonstrators prior to terminating the protest. In these sessions, President Fenves added that he was in his office in Convocation Hall, which overlooks the Quadrangle, at the time of the protest, and that he did not go down to speak with the protestors or to ascertain whether Emory students were present. He further stated that Emory would not ask that the police charges against Emory faculty and students be dropped.

Sections 8.14.7.1 and 8.14.7.3 of the ROE further state that termination or arrests must be the option of last resort, and that EPD only has authority to do so in the case of emergencies defined as “imminent serious bodily harm; serious threat; imminent life threatening behavior; reckless

disregard for human life; or threat to life, limb, or property”. Faculty [accounts](#) contradict that any such emergencies were present.

In fact, the use of excessive police force were the only actions that demonstrated reckless disregard for human life and endangered the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of students, as indicated in a [public statement from the arrestees](#). These actions constitute violations of Articles 6 and 7 of the ICCPR and Articles 1 and 16 of the CAT, which prohibit cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

The events of April 25th, follow a broader pattern of human rights violations at Emory University evidenced by a [recently-launched U.S. Department of Education investigation](#) into the hostile environment created for Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students. In a [letter](#) sent to President Fenves on January 24th, 2024, the Georgia chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-Georgia), Palestine Legal, and other community and civil rights organizations notified the university of incidents contributing to this hostile environment, including doxing, verbal harassment, and physical intimidation.

One such case involves an Emory alumnus who made public posts on LinkedIn, doxing members of the Emory Students for Justice in Palestine (ESJP) and calling for their expulsion. Despite the students' attempts to report this issue through the university's bias reporting process and meetings with administrative officials, no action was taken. During a meeting with ESJP members on October 12th, Senior Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education Andrea Hershatter [equated advocating for Palestinian rights with terrorism](#). Eleven days later, on October 23rd, Dean Hershatter brought the aforementioned alumnus onto campus to speak in her class despite the safety concerns expressed by students.

Other incidents detailed in this [letter](#) include hateful speech, harassment, and intimidation faced by Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students both online and on campus, highlighting the pervasive nature of this discrimination.

V. Additional violations arising from events at other universities and colleges

The previous sections make it clear that there have been widespread violations of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, right to freedom of assembly and association, as well as prohibitions against arbitrary detention, cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment, and torture. As various UN human rights experts' May 14, 2024 [statement](#) noted, “International Solidarity for peace activists should be allowed to uphold their right to freedom of expression without the threat of arrest, detention, and suspension. The deliberate mischaracterization of their calls on States to end human rights abuses...should not prevent young people from sharing their political demands and garnering public support for change. Moreover, mechanisms for students to engage

in exercises of mutual respect and dialogue should be encouraged.”

In addition to the above case studies, we believed it necessary to include more detailed instances of violations of certain specific mandates.

These mandates include:

- Right to adequate housing
- Human rights defenders
- Freedom of religion or religious beliefs
- Xenophobia/racism
- Violence against women

Right to adequate housing

The right to adequate housing, enshrined in Art.11 (1) of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights includes legal security of tenure: “all persons should possess a degree of security of tenure which guarantees legal protection against forced eviction, harassment and other threats.”

Universities have used threats to students’ access to housing to punish or pressure students involved in organizing for Palestine. [Four Columbia students](#) who attended an event called “Resistance 101” on March 24th received notices from Columbia University notifying them of an interim suspension and stating “You may remain in your Columbia residence for 24 hours after which time your access to your residence and dining services will also be suspended.” The students organized an eviction defense: a mass show of solidarity where individuals sat outside and inside the threatened apartments, in case school police officers came. [Harvard](#) similarly gave students 24-hour notices to leave their housing. [On April 18th](#), following the set up of an encampment on Columbia University’s laws, 108 students were arrested – upon their release, 53 Barnard students received notices that they were suspended and their ID cards were deactivated. With no notice, they had been evicted from their campus housing. These students, similarly, organized a spreadsheet to connect everyone with places to stay. However, multiple students reported that they were unable to access medications or other necessities that remained in their dorm rooms. As a result, many students accepted a deal with Barnard that allowed them to access their housing in exchange for agreeing to refrain from certain activity. [Vanderbilt](#) and [University of California-Irvine](#), similarly, imposed interim suspensions on students that, effective immediately, barred students from accessing their campus housing. Other types of landlords are prohibited from self-help eviction, or eviction on a mere 24-hours notice – in recognition of the cost that eviction imposes on any person. These events have revealed students’ particular vulnerability to retaliation because their housing is often contingent on their ongoing status as students at a given college or university. At a minimum, this particular form of retaliation must

be denounced and campuses must be made to adopt policies that prevent against arbitrary evictions and illegal lockouts.

Human rights defenders

The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders recognizes the importance of individuals who work to promote and protect human rights. Human rights defenders are “individuals or groups who act to promote, protect or strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms through peaceful means.” As Article 12 of the Declaration explicitly recognizes: “Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.” It further provides that the state government “shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection” of individuals engaging in activities to protect and promote human rights “against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination.” The students, faculty, and community members within liberated zones and encampments across the country are human rights defenders, as evidenced by the popular universities they have created, where they provide educational workshops and free libraries. Doctors and other medical professionals also serve as human rights defenders by serving individuals in the encampments, and their rights to do so are protected under the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Further, from the City of Los Angeles and California’s abdication of duties to protect in the context of UCLA - a public university - to the discriminatory treatment of pro-Palestinian students, the state has failed to protect defenders against violence or retaliation. In fact, it has instigated and fueled violence and retaliation, not only through police brutality and extreme repercussions, but through meaningless [congressional hearings](#) and racist [bills](#).

Freedom of religion or religious belief

The right to freedom of religion, enshrined in Art.18 (1-2) of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) includes two faces: on the one hand, the “freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching”, and the right to be free from “coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.” This is reinforced by Art. 27 which says: “In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language”.

On the other hand, the second face of this right involves the right to equal treatment and non-discrimination due to religious belonging. This is contained in Art. 2 (1) of the ICCPR, when it says: “Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present

Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”, and Art. 26, which states: “All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”. Art. 20 (2) further reinforces the prohibition of discriminatory practices, by indicating that: “Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law”.

With respect to the first face, universities and police have been intolerant and prevented and criminalized religious manifestations by Muslim communities, in the context of demonstrations against the genocide. In some universities, a common pattern was identified, which is that violence and various intimidating measures escalated and arrests occurred at the time of Muslim prayers. In NYU, for example, on April 22 arrests happened during [maghrib prayer](#). In Tulane, on April 30, a high-volume noise machine had been erected to drown out the encampment, as students attempted to perform both [Jewish and Muslim prayers](#).

In addition, there were other manifestations of retaliation for students’ exercise of their rights to free expression of their religion. Numerous accounts of Muslim demonstrators had their hijabs forcibly removed during arrest, including incidents at Columbia University/Barnard College, Ohio State University, State University of New York - Buffalo and CUNY. In the case of the Ohio State University, on April 25, police forced women to remove [religious head coverings at the time of arrest and refused to provide space for those arrested to pray](#). Similarly, at CUNY [one protestor had her hijab ripped from her hair](#). At UCLA, officers removed detained students’ masks and did not allow hijabi detainees to fix their hijabs as Zionist agitators filmed them.

Regarding the second face, which is the right to equal treatment and non-discrimination, we can clearly understand from the different testimonies and sources that the repression targeted specific people and communities due to their religious belonging, and that the university environment has become more hostile and dense for Muslim people. On November 13, 2023, NYU [suspended](#) a Muslim student for pro-Palestine expression on campus. The student has received death threats, calls for their deportation, threats of assault, and more. NYU made no accommodations so the student could attend classes or find alternative housing. Instead, the university [disciplined them with a suspension](#).

At [Stanford](#), an Arab Muslim student was targeted in a hit-and-run after a Palestine solidarity protest. Also, outside the home of a Columbia trustee an extremist allegedly rammed protesters with his car, and in the first week of May at UCLA, 25 students were hospitalized after an attack by a Zionist mob with wooden planks, fireworks, and pepper spray.

Finally, universities and colleges across the board have fostered an unwelcoming atmosphere to Palestinian, Muslim and Arab students by repeatedly failing to address or respond to the [doxing](#) of students engaged in pro-Palestinian activities; racist harassment of pro-Palestinian or Muslim students wearing keffiyehs or hijabs; racist statements, posters or other speech by fellow students, university employees, [professors](#) or invitees.

Xenophobia/Racism

The prohibition of racial discrimination is enshrined in Arts 2(1) of the ICCPR that states: “Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”; Arts. 20 & 26, already mentioned in the previous section; and the entirety of the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which defines the term "racial discrimination" in Art 1(1) as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.”

The prohibition of racial discrimination is deeply intertwined with the freedom of religion in this case, as racism and xenophobia are a constituent part of the discrimination that Palestinian, Muslim and Arab students and organizers are facing. From an intersectional analysis, this adds another layer to the violations of the rights to religious freedom and expression, which must be taken into account (along with the question of gender) to understand how the different threats and discriminations suffered by a specific group have been configured, generating irreparable damage to their lives, their personal safety, their studies and their mental health.

With respect to racial profiling, university administrations have released statements that have had discriminatory impacts, such as the one issued by Columbia University’s , who said that “the group occupying Hamilton was not affiliated with the University,” creating a racially discriminatory chasm between predominantly white students and community members of color who are stereotyped as outsiders. NYU’s president also portrayed [pro-Palestine protestors as violent, aggressive, and unruly](#), pulling on racist stereotypes that paint Palestinians and their allies as barbaric and uncivilized. In addition, on April 24, 2024 at NYU, [a printed flyer containing an open call for violence against Palestinian and pro-Palestinian students on campus](#), was found in a bathroom of NYU Law’s Vanderbilt Hall, and the authorities did not take relevant measures to sanction those actions. In contrast, other symbols such as the Palestinian flag that had been affixed to the flagpole on the encampment quad was removed at the request of CUNY authorities.

In the same vein, [Harvard was denounced for its failure to protect](#) Palestinian, Muslim and Arab students from harassment, threats and intimidation. Students have been “threatened or called terrorists,” sometimes by fellow students, for wearing keffiyehs, a Palestinian scarf. Others were doxxed and intimidated.

Additionally, at the [University of Mississippi](#), a group of racist white male counterprotestors spewed racially-charged hate speech towards a pro-Palestinian Black woman. The group imitated the sounds and dance of a monkey toward the woman, a [clear display of vile anti-Blackness](#). Others in the crowd also chanted "Lock her up!".

These are but a few examples; the above-mentioned case studies make it clear that there was racial profiling in the way security forces violently policed protests at campuses across the country, university authorities failed to respond to pleas from students for protection from pro-Israeli counter-protestors, the blanket statements made about Palestinian, Muslim, Arab and other students of color involved in the protests that reinforce Islamophobic and racist stereotypes about these communities.

Violence against women

The prohibition of the violence and discrimination against women is enshrined in Art 2(1) of the ICCPR that states: “Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”; Art 3 of the ICCPR that aims to “ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights” – together with Art. 26 already mentioned in the previous sections, and the whole 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Beyond the racial and religious component, there are many testimonies of a special targeting of women, particularly hijabi women. Police officers pulled women by their hair to the ground in the repression at NYU, for example.

In Tulane University, a Black transgender woman organizer who was standing on the edge of a sidewalk was [erroneously arrested](#) on March 16, 2024, and there are stories of women victims who were physically and mentally injured by the police, with police officers [kneeling on heads of women](#) or a riot cop [pointing a sniper rifle at the female organizer’s head](#). Tulane has also suspended staff that had been supportive at the Office of Gender and Sexual Diversity and other departments. It is symptomatic that in times of crisis, gender studies are often the first scapegoats, since conservatives take the opportunity to reduce or eliminate the scope and impact of these studies.

In addition to all this, as we explained, there is the intersecting violence and mistreatment for religious, racial and gender reasons that many women wearing hijab have suffered in their contact with the police. After the [Ohio State University's repression](#), a woman spoke at the April 29 Columbus City Council meeting, telling the council she suffered a concussion during her arrest, and witnessed arrest photos of women taken without their hijabs. There were also testimonies about a woman dragged by police to a vehicle for transport with her head uncovered. We note these facts with particular regret, given that women have often been at the forefront of organizing and liberation struggles, and therefore the most vulnerable to intersectional violence.

VI. Conclusion

The fundamental idea of educational institutions as places of free thinking, principled debate, learning from different viewpoints, democratic expression, and organizing –especially in dialogue with events taking place in the world– has completely crumbled. Students have lost trust in their institutions based on the ways in which colleges and universities have responded to student activism in the context of Palestinian rights.

We write now to request immediate action to ensure reparations for and non-repetition of the violations described above. We acknowledge the May 10, 2024 [statement](#) issued by the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education and the May 14, 2024 [statement](#) by multiple UN experts, and invite you to continue to engage actively with the student movement that has arisen in the spirit of international solidarity with Palestinian people suffering genocide and prolonged occupation. Specifically we make the following requests:

- A virtual meeting with the undersigned student groups in the coming weeks to follow up on the violations detailed in this letter.
- In addition to validating and uplifting students' underlying demands (transparency of institutional investments and divestment from militarization and support of institutions advancing genocide, apartheid and war crimes) we ask that mandate holders use all tools available (allegation letters, visits, etc.) to urge that local officials drop all criminal charges, campus administrations drop all disciplinary charges and roll back school policies aimed at stifling student protests. Administrations must furthermore address past differential treatment of pro-Palestinian groups and their supporters, and hold accountable counterprotestors and other actors that have actively engaged in violence against pro-Palestinian student organizers.
- In light of the upcoming U.S. Congressional hearings with the university presidents of Rutgers University, University of California-Los Angeles and Northwestern University, mandate holders should urge that any investigations into activities or speech on campus

be conducted fairly and without anti-Palestinian bias or discriminatory purpose.

- To the extent that the U.S. government creates any additional body to investigate the events discussed in this letter and elsewhere, such a body should be directed to conduct its investigation with a human rights framework and include the undersigned as human rights defenders and directly impacted individuals. This approach would be consistent with the right to meaningful participation under the human rights framework.
- Importantly, the administrations of colleges and universities that have engaged in silencing, surveilling, excluding and repressing students - with the support of police forces - must be urged to work in conjunction with the U.S. Government and states to develop affirmative measures to enable their campuses to become the safe spaces of learning and dialogue we aspire them to be.

Ultimately, if these violations continue to be perpetrated unabated by educational officials, with the support of local and federal law enforcement officials, students and others in the U.S. will be chilled and silenced (if not killed, given the level of brutality and violence that has been shown to date) from protesting and resisting the catastrophic genocide in Gaza and brutality of the Israeli occupation. Further, if school and governmental officials continue to pursue both criminal and disciplinary charges against pro-Palestinian students for exercising their rights guaranteed by the U.S. constitution and international human rights instruments, thousands of students will be precluded from continuing their education and seeking employment, thereby causing their disenfranchisement. If these gross human rights violations go unaddressed, it will embolden educational, governmental officials as well as white supremacists to continue to engage in violence against pro-Palestinian protestors. Therefore, swift and coordinated action by the human rights community is urgently needed to condemn, redress and ensure non-repetition of these violations.

Respectfully,

Athens Against Apartheid
Center for Constitutional Rights
Columbia Law Students for Palestine
CUNY 4 Palestine
CUNY Law Students Against Genocide
Emory Divest Coalition
Georgia Students for Divestment
Movement Law Lab
Muslim Advocates
National Students for Justice in Palestine

NYU Law Students for Justice in Palestine
Occidental College Students for Justice in Palestine
Palestine Legal
Palestinian Assembly for Liberation
Project South
Students for Justice and Peace (USASK)
Students for Justice in Palestine at UChicago
Students for Justice in Palestine Georgetown
Tulane Chapter of Students for a Democratic Society
UCLA Faculty for Justice in Palestine
UCLA Graduate Students for Justice in Palestine
UCLA Students for Justice in Palestine
University of California Davis SJP
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights
Yalies4Palestine