



### [Attacks by Pro-Israel Extremist Mobs and Police Against Anti-Genocide Demonstrators on College Campuses](#)

Earlier this week, a pro-Israel extremist mob violently attacked a Gaza solidarity encampment of anti-genocide college students at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) – throwing fireworks and assaulting demonstrators as city police and campus security stood by. Several student journalists who work for the UCLA Daily Bruin outlet were also attacked, having been encircled by the rioters, sprayed with mace, and physically beaten. Witnesses reported that instead of quelling and detaining the mob, “security and police both retreated as pro-Israel counter-protesters and other groups attacked protesters in the encampment.” Regrettably, this is not the first time that police have been criticized for either their response, or lack thereof, to the wave of recent overwhelmingly peaceful anti-genocide demonstrations on college campuses. More than 2,000 people have been arrested across dozens of college campuses. In many cases, police and universities have responded with gratuitous force, as an array of videos and pictures have been shared of both students and faculty members being brutally detained for mere peaceful rallies and demonstrations.

Civil liberty groups and rights activists have denounced the alarming militarization of campuses and police brutality that has been too commonplace since the onset of these anti-genocide protests. They have correctly pointed out that the exercising of freedom of speech through peaceful means is a cornerstone of our democracy that should be protected, and it is disheartening that in too many instances, this has been met with suppression and censorship. There is also a need for fairness in regards to both the response and much of the media coverage to the violent attacks against the college campus demonstrations. As one advocacy organization highlighted, if the student protesters who are simply advocating for Palestinian rights and against Israel’s destructive War on Gaza had engaged in a fraction of the violence that was carried out by the extremist mob at UCLA, there would have been a national outcry – especially had police failed to intervene and protect those who were attacked. Thus, it is important to be consistent in condemning this behavior across the board whenever it takes place. Additionally, while there are certainly some media outlets that are ethical in impartially reporting on incidents such as the one which occurred at UCLA, unfortunately there are others that tend to inaccurately label these as “clashes between protesters and counter-protesters” rather than what they really are: violent attacks by rioters and instigators against peaceful protesters.

President Biden’s recent remarks on the college campus demonstrations triggered criticism for his characterization of them, which failed to specifically condemn extremist pro-Israel mobs and law enforcement for attacks against students, and did not draw attention to the violence and suppression that they have faced. There was no mention of the fact that many of the university administrators have called upon heavily-armed police forces to the campuses to crack down on non-violent demonstrations and encampments. At college campuses in states like New York, Texas, and others, law enforcement agencies have far too often utilized brutal and unnecessary force on students, and even professors, who have taken part in peaceful protests against the War on Gaza. It is not right that these incidents fail to elicit quick denouncement, while on the other hand, inflammatory words from agitators who are frequently unaffiliated with the anti-genocide solidary movement as a whole receive much of the focus and attention. These are then unfairly used to try and justify the unwarranted nature of the police crackdowns themselves. The wrongful conflating of criticism towards Israel’s actions with antisemitism is a major problem as well, and is also employed as a means of silencing opposition and seeking to defend the suppression tactics. Those

who are actually actively involved in the anti-genocide solidarity demonstrations, an eclectic mix of people from various backgrounds, note that it is a peaceful movement aimed at standing up for Palestinian rights and protesting Israel's devastating War on Gaza. Above all, as some free speech activists have outlined, these individuals that are honoring the United States' long tradition of peaceful civil dissent deserve protection and admiration, not violence and smears against them.