

Search

Who we are Donate Get Involved



By Region Labor Movement Gender & Sexuality Ideas & Debates Black Struggle Notas en Español Magazine Podcast Multimedia

LABOR MOVEMENT

# Faculty at University of Texas Austin Strike in Solidarity with Student Protesters

Pro-Palestine movements on college campuses are facing harsh repression, and faculty across the nation are taking action in solidarity. At UT Austin, faculty are the first to call a strike in solidarity with their repressed students. More faculty across the country must follow suit.

Olivia Wood | April 25, 2024





Image: Suzanne Cordeiro/AFP

Faculty from universities across the country have begun to mobilize in solidarity with the student movement for Palestine. From NYU, where **faculty linked arms** to protect students from police; to Columbia University, where faculty engaged in a **solidarity walkout** with the Gaza Solidarity Encampment; to Barnard College, where staff **planned a sick-out** in defense of their students — faculty are rising up in defense of their students. At the University of Texas Austin, **faculty have announced** a 24-hour work stoppage as part of the fight against student repression.

The action is the first so far in which faculty are using their power as workers to halt university operations in solidarity with student protestors. They are leveraging the fact that they make the university run in order to grind it to a halt. As we **noted recently**, while the past few years have seen many graduate worker and contingent faculty strikes, it's very unusual in recent decades for faculty to mobilize to this extent outside of the context of collective bargaining.

Notably, public sector workers in Texas have **serious restrictions** on collective bargaining, meaning they do not have the ability to organize unions and negotiate from those unions. In other words, these workers are acting as a united group without having a union. Additionally, Texas has a full ban on public sector workers engaging in work stoppages — this means faculty at UT Austin are acting together, without a union, to break the law and stop work in order to protect the student movement. This action shows that, **even if workers have no current legal pathway** for unionization, they can still *act* as a union — in fact, public sector collective bargaining rights were won through strikes like these.

UT Austin faculty released the following **statement** on their action:



**STATEMENT FROM CONCERNED UT AUSTIN FACULTY:  
IN RESPONSE TO UT AUSTIN'S MILITARIZED RESPONSE TO STUDENT EVENT**

We, faculty of UT Austin, condemn President Jay Hartzell and our administrative leaders' decision to invite city police as well as state troopers from across the state--on horses, motorcycles and bicycles, in riot gear and armed with batons, pepper spray, tear gas and guns to our campus today in response to a planned peaceful event by our students.

The Palestine Solidarity Committee had planned a day-long "Public University for Gaza" educational event today on UT Austin's main lawn. The event was to have included teach-ins, study sessions, pizza, and an art workshop. There was no threat of violence, no plan to disrupt classes, no intimidation of the campus community.

Instead of allowing our students to go ahead with their peaceful planned action, our leaders turned our campus into a militarized zone. Police and state troopers with no clear plan of action initially blocked off, divided, cordoned and intimidated students to prevent them from gathering on the lawn. Eventually, police and troopers took over the Speedway.

Students then occupied the empty lawn where police and troopers pushed the bulk of the crowd against the wall of UT Austin's hallowed fountain. At last count, several hours ago, fifteen students had been arrested. Arrests are ongoing. We are deeply concerned for our students' well-being and safety. We have witnessed police punching a female student, knocking over a legal observer, dragging a student over a chain link fence, and violently arresting students simply for standing at the front of the crowd. After 5pm the university police issued a mass evacuation order.

There can be no business as usual when our campus is occupied by city police and state troopers who are preventing our students from engaging in a peaceful demonstration of their first amendment rights. By bringing militarized and armed forces onto our campus, and refusing to call them off even with ample evidence of police abuse and endangerment of students, you have made our entire campus community unsafe. You have put our entire student body at risk.

No business as usual tomorrow. No classes. No grading. No work. No assignments. Gather at the main mall in front of UT Tower at 12:15pm as planned with TSEU.

**This is #NotOurTexas.**

This action from UT Austin is incredibly important, and one that must not stop at

this university. Faculty across the nation are moved to act in defense of the student movement — let us use our power as workers to do so most effectively. We are the reason the university runs, and we must grind it to a halt in the face of repression.

 **Higher Education** | **Palestine** |



## Olivia Wood

Olivia is a writer and editor at Left Voice and lecturer in English at the City University of New York (CUNY).

## LABOR MOVEMENT



### CUNY Joins Universities Around the Country, Sets Up Gaza Solidarity Encampment

Today, New York's largest public university set up an encampment for Gaza, calling for divestment, cops off campus, an end to McCarthyist repression, and for a People's CUNY.

Tatiana Cozzarelli | April 25, 2024



### Faculty, Staff, and Students Must Unite Against Repression of the Palestine Movement

As Gaza solidarity encampments spread across the United States, faculty and staff are mobilizing in solidarity with their students against repression. We must build on that example and build a strong campaign for our right to protest.



### Dispatches from Labor Notes: Labor Activists are Uniting for Palestine. Democrats Want to Divide Them

On the first day of the Labor Notes conference, conference attendees held a pro-Palestine rally that was repressed by the local police. As attendees were arrested outside, Chicago Mayor — and Top Chicago Cop — Brandon Johnson spoke



### Dispatches from Labor Notes 2024: Solidarity with Columbia Students Against Repression

The Labor Notes Conference this year takes place right after over 100 students were arrested at Columbia for protesting for Palestine. We must use this conference to build a strong campaign against the repression which will impact us all if it is



Olivia Wood | April 23, 2024

inside. Left Voice | April 20, 2024

allowed to stand. Olivia Wood | April 20, 2024

## MOST RECENT



### Open Letter: Stop the Criminalization of Palestine Solidarity in France!

Anasse Kazib, a union activist and former presidential candidate, was interrogated by French anti-terrorist police. In this open letter, more than 800 intellectuals and activists call to stand united against the criminalization of Palestine solidarity.

Révolution Permanente | April 26, 2024



### Unite the Encampments Against Repression and for a Free Palestine

Student encampments in solidarity with Gaza are cropping up across the country and are facing intense repression by police acting on behalf of university officials. Defending the occupations requires uniting outrage with these attacks on the right to protest with broad support for Palestine across the student movement and the labor movement.

Left Voice | April 25, 2024



### Call for Submissions: Students, Staff, and Faculty Against the Genocide and Against the Repression of Pro-Palestine Movement

Are you a member of the student movement against the genocide in Gaza or a staff member/faculty supporter? We want to publish your thoughts and experiences.

Left Voice | April 25, 2024



### To Defend Palestine and the Right to Protest, We Need the Broadest-Possible Unity

The past week has seen a marked escalation in the repression of the pro-Palestine movement, particularly on university campuses. In the face of these attacks, we need broad support across all sectors.

Charlotte White | April 25, 2024



- Argentina
- Brazil
- Mexico
- Chile
- Italy
- Spanish State
- United States
- France
- Germany
- Uruguay
- Peru
- Venezuela
- Bolivia
- Costa Rica
- Catalonia

## CATEGORIES

- United States
- Latin America
- Europe
- Asia-Pacific
- Middle East-Africa
- Labor Movement
- Guest Posts
- Ideas & Debates
- Gender & Sexuality
- Arts



### SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER

Left Voice 2021 | All rights reserved