

[The following statement was adopted at the ALAA-UAW 2325 Joint Council of May 7, 2024 by a vote of 164-1-1]



**Statement on NYPD Violence and Arrests at Encampments (ALAA-UAW 2325)**  
May 7, 2024

On the evening of April 30, 2024, over 300 students across campuses throughout the city were violently arrested by the NYPD. Images of hundreds of militarized police marching onto several campuses, including at Columbia and CUNY, have been widely circulated, the behavior of the NYPD covered by national and international media outlets alike. NYPD officers pushed students down steps at Columbia<sup>1</sup>, tackled students to the ground, and fired a gun inside of a building students were occupying<sup>2</sup>, to name just a few of the documented uses of excessive and unjustifiable force.<sup>3</sup> To date, mass arrests of student activists continue throughout the city, including at Fordham, NYU and The New School.

For protesting the ongoing U.S.-backed Israeli genocide in Palestine and for standing against racist western imperialist violence, these students were subjected to the violence of the NYPD. **We, UAW Local 2325, unequivocally condemn the NYPD and the mass violent arrests of these student protestors.**

**Further, we reiterate what student activists have repeatedly highlighted: all eyes should remain on Gaza.** This is not a free speech issue, but a moral one: we, like these brave student activists, “refuse to accept a world where the death toll of over 30,000 Palestinians is normal, acceptable or profitable. We are in complete solidarity with the Palestinian people who resiliently resist decades of occupation, apartheid, and genocide.”<sup>4</sup> To be sure, as the NYPD brutalized

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C6aMGoit1kK/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/03/nyregion/nypd-columbia-shooting-hamilton.html> ;  
<https://www.nydailynews.com/2024/05/02/nypd-officer-fired-gun-in-columbias-hamilton-hall-da-investigating/>

<sup>3</sup> Students also reported that the NYPD removed students' hijab and used teargas while arresting students on Columbia's campus on Tuesday night. The same was reported during the live broadcast by Columbia's student run radio station, which remained live reporting this story of Columbia calling the police on their own student body, despite facing threats of arrest by the NYPD for doing so.  
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2024/05/02/columbia-encampment-arrests-broadcast-by-student-radio-station/73539782007/>

<sup>4</sup> Columbia SJP Instagram post on April 17, the first day of the Gaza Solidarity Encampment on Columbia's campus,  
[https://www.instagram.com/p/C53FygbOs7y/?hl=en&img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/C53FygbOs7y/?hl=en&img_index=1)

and arrested students across this city this week, Israel continued its genocidal campaign against Palestinians. On Monday, April 29th, alone, Israel launched airstrikes on tents in Rafah, killing 22 refugees.<sup>5</sup> A week prior, a mass grave of over 300 brutalized bodies was uncovered in the courtyard of Nasser Hospital in Gaza. By Tuesday April 30th, the number of estimated bodies in this mass grave brutalized by the Israeli Occupation Forces had doubled. As the NYPD continues to violently arrest students, Israel continues to use starvation as a weapon against Palestinians in Gaza, where “70 percent of the population is estimated to be experiencing catastrophic hunger [and] famine could occur anytime between mid-March and May.”<sup>6</sup>

We, too, refuse to shift focus away from Palestine, from Gaza, and from the state violence necessitating these protests. These student protestors have remained steadfast in centering Gaza, despite being subject to mass arrests. Arrests that we, as public defenders, union members, and people of moral conscience, condemn.

Our non-profit organizations - public defense offices across this city - should vocally condemn this police violence and mass arrests, as well. We are disappointed that there have been no public statements about the mass arrests and violence by the NYPD from our offices.<sup>7</sup> Although our organizations have been quick to comment on the mass arrest of protestors in recent times, they remain silent now.<sup>8</sup> Why? The answer is clear. In the past 213 days, we have been repeatedly denounced by our employers, the New York Post, the New York Times, and congressional witch-hunters who falsely conflate anti-Zionism with antisemitism, and who assert this anti-Palestinian genocide should not concern us as public defenders. We have written to dispel as much prior to this moment.<sup>9</sup> Again, we reiterate: the fight for Palestine is the fight against western imperial governmental violence and oppression. To be in active solidarity with Palestine means naming and condemning the very powers that displace, disenfranchise, surveil, criminalize, incarcerate, and deport the people and communities we defend and come from. To fulfill our duty as public defenders and union members means to defend Palestinians who are facing the same forms of state violence and worse, including deliberate starvation, deprivation of medical care, and genocide.

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<sup>5</sup> Since drafting this initial statement, the Israeli Occupation Forces have begun a siege on Rafah, bombing Rafah and the civilians seeking refuge there relentlessly and ordering their displacement, once again.

<sup>6</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Gaza: Israel's Imposed Starvation Deadly for Children*, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/09/gaza-israels-imposed-starvation-deadly-children>

<sup>7</sup> Although the Legal Aid Society published a statement related to Tuesday night's arrests, this statement did not address the violence of the NYPD nor what the students have been intentionally centering: the people of Gaza.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, [the joint statement](#) released by all of the NYC public defense offices on June 4, 2020 in response to the unlawful crackdown on Black Lives Matter protestors.

<sup>9</sup> See our [previously released resolution](#) calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and support for workers' political speech, December 19, 2023.

As if this rationale to speak was not enough, now, 300 potential new clients face criminal charges for their activism related to Palestine solidarity.<sup>10</sup> **Our offices, and all people in this city, can no longer pretend that this issue lies solely on foreign soil.**<sup>11</sup>

We are in solidarity with these courageous students and people of moral clarity. We are against police and state violence, in our city and across the globe. We uphold the urgent calls from our siblings of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions-Gaza, who have repeatedly appealed for our support. We demand that all NYC public defense agencies issue public statements in opposition to Israeli genocide and the violent repression of those who protest it. We demand that the charges against these protestors be dropped. **To the brave students of our city's schools: we will defend you in the courts and we will be with you in the streets.**

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<sup>10</sup> We condemn the disproportionate nature by which students from CCNY, a school comprised predominantly of Black and brown working class New Yorkers, are being criminally charged compared to Columbia University students. "According to the Manhattan district attorney's office, 46 people were arrested inside Columbia's Hamilton Hall and have been arraigned on charges of criminal trespassing, a Class B misdemeanor. Another two people were arrested at Columbia and given desk appearance tickets. At City College, 22 people were arrested by CUNY Public Safety for allegedly occupying a building. They were later arraigned on charges of 3rd-degree burglary, which is a Class D felony, and obstructing governmental administration. Five others were arrested off campus by the NYPD and arraigned on charges of 2nd-degree assault, a Class D felony, and one person was arraigned on charges of 4th-degree criminal possession of a weapon, a Class A misdemeanor." Sahalie Donaldson, "*More than two-thirds of protesters arrested at Columbia and City College released with summonses*" City & State (May 2, 2024), <https://www.cityandstateny.com/policy/2024/05/how-will-student-protesters-be-charged-manhattan/396285/>.

<sup>11</sup> As such, we also demand the release of all political prisoners - both here in New York and in Palestine.