# Pro-Palestinian Protests Disrupt U.S. University Commencements, Sparking Controversy



On May 11, 2024, multiple U.S. universities experienced protests during commencement ceremonies, reflecting ongoing pro-Palestinian demonstrations on college campuses. The University of California, Berkeley, saw significant interruptions, with numerous graduates chanting and holding signs, while at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), approximately 60 students walked out in protest of Governor Glenn Youngkin’s speech and his policies.

These demonstrations were part of a broader backdrop of clashes and arrests related to pro-Palestinian encampments at various universities, including the University of Pennsylvania and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Notably, at the University of Arizona, police were called to disband an encampment, using "chemical munitions" just hours before the commencement.

Protests varied in form, with some students engaging silently and others more vocally challenging university administrations and guest speakers. Institutions had anticipated disruptions and heightened security measures were implemented. Despite some school officials' attempts to negotiate with protesters, tensions remained high.

Former President Donald Trump, speaking at a rally in New Jersey, inaccurately claimed that demonstrations at the University of Pennsylvania amounted to riots, further politicizing the unrest over U.S. campuses' handling of pro-Palestinian advocacy and criticisms of Israel.