# Pro-Palestinian Encampments Spark Controversy at Universities Worldwide



On the morning of May 23, 2024, Philadelphia and Drexel University police arrived at a pro-Palestinian encampment at Drexel University, asking protesters to vacate the premises. The protesters left peacefully, taking their belongings. The encampment, which began on May 18, had grown to approximately 35 tents and 75 people. Protesters briefly regrouped nearby, raising a Palestinian flag and chanting slogans. No arrests were made.

Drexel President John A. Fry stated that while the right to peaceful assembly is respected, the encampment was deemed illegal due to the involvement of non-affiliates and the disruptive nature of the demonstration. The protest sought to have Drexel label Israel’s actions in Gaza as genocide and offer amnesty to student activists. Similar protests calling for university divestment from corporations involved in war have occurred across the U.S.

Concurrently, Harvard University is dealing with its own turmoil ahead of commencement exercises. The Harvard Corporation barred 13 seniors from graduating due to their participation in pro-Palestinian protests. This decision follows a year of significant controversy at Harvard, which included criticism for the university's response to an open letter attributing the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks to Israeli actions, and the subsequent resignation of Harvard's president, Claudine Gay.

The University of Melbourne marked a significant development in pro-Palestinian protests in Australia by agreeing to disclose its research funding arrangements, following an eight-day encampment by protesters in one of its buildings. The university stated this commitment would improve transparency, though governed by confidentiality and national security laws. This move could signal the end of the Melbourne encampment, although protests continue at various other Australian universities, with students calling for full divestment from weapons manufacturers linked to Israel.