# Microsoft employee protests company’s alleged role in Israeli military operations during keynote



A Microsoft employee’s unexpected protest during the company’s annual developer conference has brought attention to the contentious issue of corporate complicity in international conflicts. Joe Lopez, a firmware engineer, disrupted CEO Satya Nadella’s keynote speech with an impassioned outburst, accusing the tech giant of facilitating Israeli military operations through its cloud-computing platform, Azure. Lopez’s bold act of dissent comes amidst increasing scrutiny of Microsoft’s partnerships with the Israeli military, particularly in relation to the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

Lopez was swiftly escorted from the event after he yelled, "Satya, how about you show how Microsoft is killing Palestinians?" He later followed up with an all-staff email outlining his rationale for the protest. He emphasised the responsibility of Microsoft, one of the world's largest tech companies, to advocate for an end to violence against Palestinians. In his message, he asserted that, "The world has already woken up to our complicity and is turning against us," warning that public discontent could lead to boycotts and reputational damage.

His actions took place alongside those of a worker-led group known as No Azure for Apartheid (Noaa), which has been protesting Microsoft's involvement with the Israeli military for over a year. The group claims that Microsoft's Azure cloud services have been instrumental in enabling Israeli surveillance operations and were reportedly used by the Israeli air force to manage target databases for airstrikes. Such revelations have significantly intensified scrutiny of the ethical implications surrounding commercial technology in warfare, particularly as leaked documents reveal a substantial increase in Microsoft’s contracts with the Israeli Defence Forces in the wake of military escalations.

This type of internal dissent is not unprecedented at Microsoft. Just weeks prior to Lopez's demonstration, employees Ibtihal Aboussad and Vaniya Agrawal were similarly dismissed after protesting at an event featuring the company’s AI chief, Mustafa Suleyman. The recent uproar within Microsoft echoes broader patterns seen in other tech firms, where employees have voiced objections to the ethical ramifications of their companies' contracts with military organisations. For instance, last year, Google faced significant backlash and internal protests over its own ties to Israel.

In response to the uproar, Microsoft has maintained that a third-party investigation found no evidence suggesting its technology facilitates harm. However, many activists and critics, including Lopez, dispute this claim, asserting that visual evidence and accounts of military actions conducted using Microsoft’s technology speak volumes. Lopez underscored this sentiment in his all-staff email, reiterating that the reality of the situation is evident daily through news reports and social media.

The backdrop of Lopez's protest is the recent commemoration of the Nakba, a term signifying the mass displacement of Palestinians in 1948. This timing has added a profound layer of urgency and emotional weight to the protest, highlighting the enduring impact of historical injustices on contemporary geopolitical dynamics.

As the landscape of technology and warfare continues to evolve, with firms like Microsoft providing advanced AI and cloud solutions to military entities, the ethical considerations surrounding these relationships are likely to provoke ongoing debate and dissent from within. Lopez’s protest sends a clear message that a segment of the workforce is willing to voice opposition against practices they perceive as contributing to humanitarian crises, underscoring a growing demand for corporate accountability in matters of global importance.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/may/19/microsoft-ceo-speech-palestinian-protest), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/may/19/microsoft-ceo-speech-palestinian-protest)
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5. Paragraph 5: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/may/19/microsoft-ceo-speech-palestinian-protest), [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/20b2adb438b39ee9cb6eb2f52c1ae44a), [[4]](https://www.pcgamer.com/software/ai/microsoft-employee-escorted-out-of-50th-anniversary-event-after-protesting-sales-to-israel-you-have-blood-on-your-hands-all-of-microsoft-has-blood-on-its-hands/)
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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/may/19/microsoft-ceo-speech-palestinian-protest> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/may/19/microsoft-ceo-speech-palestinian-protest> - An article detailing a Microsoft employee's pro-Palestinian protest during CEO Satya Nadella's keynote at the company's annual developer conference. The employee, Joe Lopez, confronted Nadella over Microsoft's alleged role in supporting Israeli military operations through its Azure cloud platform. Lopez was escorted out, and later sent an all-staff email urging the company to cease technological support for Israel. The piece also mentions the 'No Azure for Apartheid' group, which has been protesting Microsoft's contracts with the Israeli military for over a year.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/20b2adb438b39ee9cb6eb2f52c1ae44a> - An Associated Press report confirming that Microsoft provided advanced AI and cloud services, including its Azure platform, to the Israeli military during the Gaza conflict. The company asserted that there is no evidence its technologies were used to harm civilians in Gaza. This admission follows an AP investigation revealing a sharp increase in military use of commercial AI tools post-Hamas' October 2023 attack. The report also highlights internal and external concerns about the transparency and ethical implications of such collaborations.
4. <https://www.pcgamer.com/software/ai/microsoft-employee-escorted-out-of-50th-anniversary-event-after-protesting-sales-to-israel-you-have-blood-on-your-hands-all-of-microsoft-has-blood-on-its-hands/> - A PC Gamer article covering the incident where Microsoft employee Ibtihal Aboussad disrupted a speech by AI CEO Mustafa Suleyman at Microsoft's 50th anniversary event. Aboussad protested against Microsoft's sales of AI technology to the Israeli military, accusing the company of aiding genocide and human rights abuses. She stated her moral obligation to speak out after learning about the use of Microsoft’s AI for military purposes, particularly by Israel’s Ministry of Defense, the company's second-largest military client.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/737bc17af7b03e98c29cec4e15d0f108> - An Associated Press investigation revealing that Israel's military has been leveraging AI technology from U.S. companies, including Microsoft and OpenAI, to increase efficiency in identifying and striking targets in Gaza and Lebanon. This rapid advancement has significantly enhanced Israel’s ability to act swiftly against alleged militants. However, the use of commercial AI models in war raises serious concerns about the ethical implications and the increase in civilian casualties. The report also highlights the role of other tech companies like Google and Amazon in supporting these military operations.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/23/israeli-military-gaza-war-microsoft> - A Guardian investigation revealing that the Israeli military's reliance on Microsoft's cloud technology and AI systems surged during the most intensive phase of its bombardment of Gaza. Leaked documents show that Microsoft deepened its relationship with Israel’s defense establishment after October 7, 2023, supplying the military with greater computing and storage services and striking at least $10 million in deals to provide thousands of hours of technical support. The article sheds light on how the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) turned to major U.S. tech companies to meet the technological demands of war.
7. <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/microsoft-israel-military-idf-artificial-intelligence-cloud-azure-google-chatgpt-defence-contracts-gaza-war-2669380-2025-01-24> - An India Today article discussing how leaked documents indicate that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) increased their reliance on Microsoft's cloud storage and AI services during the Gaza war. Between June 2023 and April 2024, Microsoft's cloud storage usage within the military surged by over 155%, peaking before the Rafah offensive in May 2024. Microsoft's Azure platform and OpenAI's language model tools accounted for nearly 75% of the IDF’s usage, supporting combat and intelligence activities, including projects with Unit 8200, the IDF’s elite surveillance division.