# Pro-Palestinian Demonstrations Spark Tensions at US Universities



On May 15, 2024, a significant escalation occurred at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) as a pro-Palestinian demonstration led to the occupation of the Physical Sciences Lecture Hall. The protest began around 2:30 p.m. with a group of several hundred demonstrators setting up barricades and a wooden fence. The university issued alerts advising students to shelter in place.

The demonstration followed the suspension of student protesters part of a negotiating team, which led to heightened tensions. Students, citing urgency, occupied the building and broadcasted the event live on Instagram. Law enforcement from multiple agencies, including the California Highway Patrol and local police departments, were deployed, with around 200 officers on the scene. By 5:30 p.m., several protesters were detained, and the makeshift encampments were dismantled.

This protest is part of a series of demonstrations across California universities calling for divestment from companies connected to Israel and arms manufacturers. Previous protests at UC Riverside and UC Berkeley resulted in agreements to explore divestment proposals. The actions at UCI reflect ongoing tension between university administrations and student activists advocating for changes to university investment practices.

Meanwhile, at Harvard University, the United Auto Workers (UAW) filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board, alleging retaliation against graduate student employees involved in pro-Palestinian protests. The union accused Harvard of surveillance, policy changes, and denying union representation during disciplinary meetings. The complaint follows a suspension of student-protesters and the dispute over encampments near the university president’s office. Although a tentative agreement was reached to end the encampment, concerns about disciplinary actions remain.

These incidents illustrate the broader national movement among university students advocating for political and ethical considerations in institutional investments, with similar actions observed at other colleges, including Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania.