# Pro-Palestinian Protests Erupt at Universities in Chicago and New York



On May 1, 2024, pro-Palestinian protesters and police confronted each other at the University of Chicago during a commencement ceremony. The protest was organized due to the university's decision to withhold the diplomas of four seniors pending a disciplinary review related to their involvement in a pro-Palestinian encampment on campus.

During the two-hour outdoor ceremony, disrupted briefly by shouts and boos, a significant number of students walked out, chanting and waving Palestinian flags. Some donned traditional keffiyehs to show solidarity. The four seniors at the center of the controversy, including Youssef Hasweh, received emails informing them of the withheld diplomas due to complaints related to encampment activities. Hasweh expressed that his diploma was less significant compared to the struggles faced by people in Gaza and Palestine.

University officials stated they are committed to upholding the rights of students to express their views and noted that the students could still receive their degrees if cleared following the disciplinary process. The university had cleared the encampment on May 7, citing safety concerns and disruptive conduct. Thousands of students and faculty members have signed a petition for the university to grant the degrees, and several Chicago City Council members have supported this call.

In a related event, on May 31, 2024, 34 people were arrested by New York City police during a demonstration at the Brooklyn Museum in support of Palestine. Protesters set up tents in the museum lobby and hung a "Free Palestine" banner, demanding the museum divest from investments linked to Israel's actions in Gaza. The protest resulted in some damage to artwork and harassment of museum security staff.