

Weaponized Education and the Politics of Obedience

News:

Trump freezes \$2bn in Harvard funding after university rejects demands ([BBC](#))

Comment:

Today, we are witnessing yet another stark contradiction in the United States. As students across American universities voiced opposition to the unconditional support for the genocide and ethnic cleansing in Gaza, the Trump administration—backed by political and financial elites—responded not with dialogue, but with repression. Students were criminalized, threatened with expulsion, and even faced deportation if they were foreign nationals. These students were exercising rights supposedly protected by the U.S. Constitution—chief among them, the right to free speech. Yet, when that speech challenges the interests of those in power, it is swiftly crushed.

In a glaring example of this authoritarian turn, the Trump administration froze more than \$2.2 billion in federal funding to Harvard University after the institution rejected a sweeping list of government demands. These demands, cloaked in the language of combating antisemitism, called for ideological control over campus life—such as reporting students “hostile to American values,” mandating viewpoint diversity in academic departments, and installing government-approved auditors to oversee university programs. Harvard’s leadership publicly rejected the demands, calling them a direct assault on academic freedom and constitutional rights.

The government’s retaliation was immediate. The Department of Education announced the funding freeze just hours after Harvard’s refusal, accusing the university of a “troubling entitlement mindset” and of failing to protect Jewish students amid recent protests. But the targeting of elite academic institutions like Harvard and Columbia is not about student safety—it’s about enforcing ideological obedience. Columbia University, unlike Harvard, conceded to the White House’s terms after losing hundreds of millions in support, revealing the coercive nature of the state’s involvement in education.

The events unfolding on university campuses reveal the hollow core of Western liberalism. Freedom, we are told, is a foundational value—but in practice, it is selectively granted. In a capitalist system, freedom of speech becomes a tool wielded by the ruling class, not a right protected for all. The crackdown on campus dissent, the silencing of pro-Palestinian voices, and the threats to institutional autonomy show that when free expression no longer serves elite interests, it is discarded without hesitation. This is democracy when put to the test—it becomes a weapon for the powerful. This is the true face of a system built to serve the elites, not the truth.

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Haitham Ibn Thbait

Media Representative of Hizb ut Tahrir in America