

# US intel: Iran Stokes Pro-Gaza Protests in the US, Offers Financial Support to Protesters

The Iranian regime is trying to stoke pro-Gaza protests in the United States and has even offered financial support to protesters, U.S. Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines stated on Tuesday, July 11.

In the first in a series of updates concerning “foreign malign activities and election security threats,” Haines said that the Iranian regime was “becoming increasingly aggressive in their foreign influence efforts.”

Iran is taking “advantage of ongoing protests regarding the war in Gaza... We have observed actors tied to Iran’s government posing as activists online, seeking to encourage protests, and even providing financial support to protesters,” she wrote.

The regime is “seeking to stoke discord and undermine confidence in our democratic institutions, as we have seen them do in the past, including in prior election cycles,” Haines said.

In addition, the regime is acting in cyberspace, “using social media platforms and issuing threats,” according to the report.

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“It is likely they will continue to rely on their intelligence services in these efforts, as well as Iran-based online influencers, to promote their narratives.”

Anti-Israel protests broke out across Western countries in the

immediate wake of Hamas' massacre on Oct. 7. A wave of partly violent protests and campus occupations swept through colleges and universities in recent months, beginning in the U.S. and then extended into Europe.

Haines stressed that there was no intelligence indicating Americans were not protesting "in good faith," adding that "the freedom to express diverse views, when done peacefully, is essential to our democracy, but it is also important to warn of foreign actors who seek to exploit our debate for their own purposes."

Consequently, she warned that American targets of the Iranian influence campaign may not be aware they are being exploited.

"We urge all Americans to remain vigilant as they engage online with accounts and actors they do not personally know," Haines added.

Two months ago, Haines had already warned the Iranian regime was becoming more aggressive in its campaign to sow discord and attack democratic institutions in the runup to the U.S. presidential elections.

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Commenting on the report, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre stressed that freedom of expression was vital to the American democracy.

"Americans across the political spectrum, acting in good faith, have sought to express their own independent views on the conflict in Gaza. The freedom to express diverse views when done peacefully is essential to our democracy," she said.

However, she added that the government must also guard its citizens' security against foreign influence campaigns and

attempts to undermine democracy.

The report was issued shortly after U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris praised young pro-Palestinian protesters for showing “what the human emotion should be, as a response to Gaza.”

“There are things some of the protesters are saying that I absolutely reject, so I don’t mean to wholesale endorse their points. But we have to navigate it. I understand the emotion behind it,” Harris said during an interview with The Nation.

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