Microsoft hosts emergency press conference after protesters ‘storm a building’

Microsoft president Brad Smith hosted an impromptu press conference on Tuesday afternoon, just hours after protesters gained access to a building at the company’s headquarters and held a sit-in demonstration inside his office.

Seated on the edge of his desk, in the office that had been occupied by protesters earlier that day, Smith addressed a group of reporters and viewers on a live stream. “Obviously, this was an unusual day,” he said, the camera shaking as he spoke.

The protesters were part of the No Azure for Apartheid group, which on several occasions this year interrupted Microsoft’s public presentations to demand that the company terminate all contracts with the Israeli government and military.

Smith said that Microsoft is “committed to ensuring its human rights principles and contractual terms of service are upheld in the Middle East.” He said the company launched an investigation earlier this month after the *Guardian* reported that Microsoft’s Azure cloud platform was being used for surveillance of Palestinians. Smith said that Microsoft disagreed with some of the report’s findings, but that others warranted investigation.

“We are working every day to get to the bottom of what’s going on, and we will,” Smith said.

An organizer for No Azure for Apartheid, Abdo Mohamed, earlier

today told *The Verge* that Microsoft employees Riki Fameli and Anna Hattle were part of the protest. They were joined by former Microsoft employees Vaniya Agrawal, Hossam Nasr, and Joe Lopez.

Smith said that seven people in total were involved with today's protests, with two of them being Microsoft employees. The people were removed by Redmond police, he said.

"When seven folks do as they did today, storm a building, occupy an office, lock other people out of the office, plant listening devices – even in crude form, in the form of telephones, cellphones hidden under couches and behind books – that's not ok," Smith said. "When they're asked to leave and they refused, that's not ok."

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