

Letter to New York University President Hamilton

63 Organizations Call for Steps to Address Exclusionary Behavior at NYU

May 15, 2018

Dear President Hamilton,

We are 63 education and civil rights organizations who are deeply concerned about the [statement](#) endorsed by 53 NYU organizations, which includes a call for “Boycotting NYU’s pro-Israel clubs, Realize Israel and TorchPAC, by not co-sponsoring events with them.”

While acknowledging these students’ right to express their opinion, we must point out that the demand to exclude these two clubs simply because the student organizations do not agree with their opinions is hateful and discriminatory. Furthermore, the implications of this statement for the safety and well-being of Jewish and pro-Israel students on your campus are highly troubling. More than 2,000 Jewish students and community members signed a [petition](#) expressing that, “The boycotting of peer organizations creates a polarizing atmosphere of hatred and animosity that violates our community standards and is dangerous for both our students and the University overall.”

The anti-Zionist sentiment that lies at the heart of these student groups’ statement grows out of an ideology whose primary goal on campus is the suppression of any and all pro-Israel expression. On many college campuses, anti-Zionist sentiment translates into actions that target Jewish and pro-Israel students for harm, including the shutting down or disrupting of pro-Israel events; the vilification and harassment of Jewish and pro-Israel students in order to delegitimize their Zionist perspective or cause them to be too afraid or uncomfortable to express it; and the malevolent manipulation of student government procedure in order to eliminate pro-Israel voices. Studies [demonstrate](#) that on campuses where anti-Zionist activity is found, Jewish and pro-Israel students are about three times more likely to be targeted for harm. At schools with active anti-Zionist student groups, these acts of aggression are seven to eight times more likely to occur.

And this is exactly what we are seeing at New York University with the deliberate taking away of the civil rights and full participation of campus life of students who identify as Zionist by religious belief, ethnic identity, national origin, or political persuasion. Following the student groups’ statement, the leader of an anti-Zionist campus group justified the planned disruption of a Realize Israel and TorchPAC event, which involved theft and destruction of the pro-Israel groups’ property and the burning of that property, as well as taking away the pro-Israel groups’ microphone, by [explaining](#), “Our point is to make being Zionist uncomfortable on the NYU campus.” As is evidenced by the stated intent of the organizers, this behavior is not going to minimize by itself. On the contrary, without intervention by the university, we fear the situation may continue to escalate as it has in the past at other schools.

We therefore urge you to take the following steps to ensure that ALL students at New York University-- including students who identify as Zionists -- are free to express their opinions, beliefs and identities and to fully participate in campus life, now and in the future:

1. Review, update and diligently enforce campus policies and procedures to guarantee that all members of the campus community, irrespective of their opinions, beliefs or identity, are equitably and adequately protected from intolerant behavior that infringes on their freedom of expression and denies them equal rights.
2. Ensure that prompt and appropriate disciplinary measures are taken when any individual or group engages in behavior that suppresses the freedom of expression or civil rights of others.
3. Develop protocols for vetting the establishment and yearly renewal of university-approved student groups, to determine whether a specific campus group has engaged in the unlawful suppression of others' freedom of speech or civil rights. Any whose members have repeatedly engaged in such behavior should be appropriately disciplined as per school procedures should the group fail to modify conduct that intentionally harms others on campus.
4. Develop educational and training programs that can:
 - Help members of the campus community to recognize and avoid intolerant behavior that suppresses others' freedom of expression or denies them equal rights, and to be aware of all campus policies and procedures regarding such behavior; and
 - Teach and encourage the expression of a wide range of views in a productive and respectful manner.
5. While the above recommendations describe long-term and on-going efforts, one important step that can be implemented immediately is to issue a campus-wide statement assuring all students that they will be equally protected from peer-on-peer harassment that violates their rights to freedom of expression and full participation in campus life. To be effective, the statement should include a description of all University policies and state and federal laws that prohibit harassment and discrimination, along with a firm commitment to their equitable enforcement for all students, regardless of identity, opinion or legally protected status.

In your recent commendable statement regarding the exclusionary behavior directed at pro-Israel students on your campus, you conclude that it's important "for those of us at NYU to come together to find a way forward that rests on mutual respect, even in the face of tough disagreements." We believe the recommendations outlined above do just that.

Thank you for your leadership and defense of the rights of all New York University students.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned 63 Organizations:

Academic Council for Israel
Accuracy in Academia
Aggies for Israel
Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity (AEPi)
Alums for Campus Fairness - National
Alums for Campus Fairness - Columbia University
Alums for Campus Fairness - New York University
Alums for Campus Fairness - Swarthmore
Alums for Campus Fairness - Syracuse University
Alums for Campus Fairness - UC Davis
Alums for Campus Fairness - UC Riverside

Alums for Campus Fairness - UCLA
AMCHA Initiative
American Institute for Jewish Research
American Jewish International Relations Institute
American Truth Project
Americans for Peace and Tolerance
BEAR: Bias Education, Advocacy & Resources
Campus Anti-Semitism Task Force of the North Shore
Christians and Jews United for Israel
Christians United for Israel Action Fund
Club Z
Coalition for Jewish Values
Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA)
Communities for Israel
Davis Faculty for Israel
Eagles Wings
Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET)
Hasbara Fellowships
Institute for Black Solidarity with Israel
Iranian American Jewish Federation
Iranian Jewish Women's Organization
Israel in NYC
Israel Matters
Israel Peace Initiative (IPI)
Israel-American Coalition for Action
JAM - UCSB
Jerusalem U
Jewish Israel Cafe
Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa (JIMENA)
Middle East Forum
Middle East Political and Information Network (MEPIN)
National Conference on Jewish Affairs
National Council of Young Israel
NCSY
NH4Israel
Proclaiming Justice to the Nations
Rhode Island Coalition for Israel
Russian Jewish Community Foundation
Scholars for Peace in the Middle East
Simon Wiesenthal Center
StandWithUs
Stop BDS on Campus
Students and Parents Against Campus Anti-Semitism
Students Supporting Israel National
Students Supporting Israel at Columbia
Students Supporting Israel at UC Irvine
Students Supporting Israel at UC Santa Barbara
Students Supporting Israel at UCLA
The Israel Christian Nexus
Training and Education About the Middle East (T.E.A.M.)

Zionist Organization of America
ZOA's Fuel for Truth

Cc: Provost Katherine E. Fleming
Senior Vice Provost for Global Programs and University Life Linda Mills
Senior Vice President for Student Affairs Marc Wais
Associate Vice Provost for Diversity Programs Patricia Carey
Director Student Conduct and Community Standards Craig Jolley
Chairman of the Board of Trustees William R. Berkley