

Letter to Syracuse University Chancellor Syverud

62 Organizations Call for Steps to Address Exclusionary Behavior at Syracuse University

May 15, 2018

Dear Chancellor Syverud,

We are 62 education and civil rights organizations who are writing to express our serious concerns about recent campus activity that has created a hostile climate for Jewish and pro-Israel students at Syracuse University, and to offer recommendations that we believe will benefit all students on your campus.

As you are aware, last month more than 20 student protesters and outside agitators from anti-Zionist groups such as Code Pink carried out the [planned](#) disruption of a speaking [event](#) with Ambassador Dani Dayan, Consul General of Israel in New York, that was sponsored by several university departments and the local Hillel. The protestors shouted loudly for nearly 30 minutes just outside the event in order to drown out the speaker, and they held [signs](#) declaring Zionism to be “racism” and “White Supremacy” and promoting the boycott of Israel. Two activists who deceptively came into the event hall as audience members disrupted the talk twice with shouting and the unfurling of anti-Zionist banners. One faculty member who attended the event called the protest “an effort to shut down speech and commandeer the campus.”

The anti-Zionist sentiment that lies at the heart of this type of exclusionary behavior 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 Israel-related events; the vilification and harassment of Jewish 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 Syracuse University. Students who identify as Zionists by religious belief, ethnic identity, national origin or political persuasion report being shaken by recent events and afraid to express themselves and fully participate in campus life.

We therefore urge you to take the following steps to ensure that ALL students at Syracuse 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.

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

Sincerely,

The Undersigned 62 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 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 Michele Wheatly
Dean of Students Robert Hradsky
Dean of Hendricks Chapel The Rev. Brian E. Konkol
Bernie Jacobson, Office of Equal Opportunity, Inclusion & Resolution Services
Lisa Dolak, University Secretary, Office of the Board of Trustees