

New York City Council  
Committee on Higher Education  
250 Broadway  
New York, NY 10007

*SENT VIA EMAIL*

June 28, 2022

**RE: Over 100 Organizations Urge Council Members to Address CUNY Faculty Antisemitism**

Dear NYC Council Committee on Higher Education Chair Eric Dinowitz and Members Gale A. Brewer, Oswald Feliz, Charles Barron and Inna Vernikov:

We are 106 civil rights, religious and education organizations representing hundreds of thousands of individuals who are deeply concerned about the alarming rise of antisemitism on campuses across the country, and at CUNY in particular, and heartily commend you for holding this very timely and important oversight hearing to examine the problem.

Our letter concerns one significant aspect of the problem that was highlighted by the recent vote of the CUNY School of Law Faculty to endorse a [resolution](#) of the CUNY Law Student Government Association (LSGA) that “unapologetically endorses the Palestinian-led call for Boycott Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel” and demands that CUNY sever its financial and academic ties to Israel. We believe the CUNY Law Faculty’s unprecedented endorsement of the students’ resolution, particularly its call for an academic boycott of Israel, is likely to have disastrous consequences not only for Jewish and pro-Israel students at the CUNY Law School, but for students on every CUNY campus.

It’s crucial to understand that although an academic boycott of Israel claims to target Israeli universities and scholars, its implementation on U.S. campuses, such as CUNY, will directly harm students on U.S. campuses, especially those who are Jewish and pro-Israel.

First, the implementation of an academic boycott can’t help but violate the academic and civil rights of students. For example, the official academic boycott [guidelines](#) call for boycotters to work towards closing their own institution’s academic exchange programs in Israel; refuse to write letters of recommendation for their students who want to study in Israel; and disrupt or shut down educational activities about Israel or featuring Israeli scholars or leaders at their own schools. All of these actions directly subvert the educational opportunities and academic freedom of undergraduate students who want to study about or in Israel.

Second, an academic boycott of Israel directly fuels antisemitism on campus. The academic boycott guidelines call on faculty to fight against “the normalization of Israel in the global academy.” Courses taught by faculty adhering to this anti-normalization principle not only pervert a school’s academic mission by substituting anti-Israel indoctrination for education, but also foment hatred towards Israel and its supporters, a hatred that easily translates into acts of aggression towards Jewish

and pro-Israel students on campus. Indeed, recent studies [corroborate](#) the fact that faculty who support an academic boycott of Israel are far more likely to include anti-Israel content in their courses, and they show a strong [correlation](#) between anti-Zionist instruction and acts targeting Jewish and pro-Israel students for harm, including assault, intimidation, destruction of property and suppression of speech.

Yet the CUNY Law Faculty, callously indifferent to how Academic BDS will subvert the educational opportunities and threaten the safety of CUNY students, has endorsed a resolution wholly consistent with the boycott's guidelines. The LSGA resolution calls for ending popular Israel exchange programs enjoyed by many CUNY students, including the Brooklyn College Program Study in Israel and the City College of New York's student exchange program at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, as well as shutting down collaborative research projects with Israeli academic institutions that benefit students and faculty on [ten](#) CUNY campuses. The CUNY Law Faculty-backed resolution also singles out for denigration and censure eight specific Jewish and pro-Israel organizations that serve CUNY's more than 15,000 Jewish students. Accusing the groups of being "directly complicit in the ongoing apartheid, genocide, and war crimes perpetrated by the state of Israel... in order to generate support for [Z]ionism amongst Jewish students in the US," the resolution draws upon blatantly antisemitic tropes to defame both Israel and the CUNY students associated with these Jewish and pro-Israel organizations.

Even before the CUNY Law Faculty voted to endorse the LSGA resolution, the anti-Israel rhetoric and BDS promotion of anti-Zionist students and student groups had created a toxic environment for many Jewish and pro-Israel students at CUNY, with some reporting they had been harassed and even assaulted on campus because of their presumed support for Israel. Now that the CUNY Law Faculty has given its full-throated support to a boycott of Israel that not only violates students' educational rights but incites hatred towards the Jewish state and its on-campus supporters, antisemitism is likely to skyrocket on CUNY campuses.

While we acknowledge that academic freedom protects the right of individual faculty members to express extramural support for Academic BDS – and nearly 300 CUNY faculty members have done just that – the unprecedented decision of an entire faculty body at a publicly funded law school to privilege anti-Zionist advocacy and activism above concern for the educational welfare and physical and emotional safety of CUNY students crosses a line that should be absolutely unacceptable to university administrators and lawmakers.

We urge your committee to take action to ensure that CUNY adequately protects the educational and civil rights and ensures the safety and well-being of Jewish and pro-Israel students – and all students – by creating new legislative regulations and insisting CUNY institute measures that directly prohibit faculty from using their university positions and public funds for the purpose of political advocacy and activism, including the implementation of an academic boycott of Israel.

We thank you for your consideration of our concerns and for your leadership.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Organizations:

Academic Council for Israel  
Alliance for Israel

Alliance of Blacks and Jews  
Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity (AEPi)  
Alums for Campus Fairness - Tufts  
Alums for Campus Fairness - UC Davis  
Alums for Campus Fairness - UC Riverside  
Alums for Campus Fairness - UCLA  
Amariah  
AMCHA Initiative  
America Israel Cooperative Enterprise  
American Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists  
American Council of Trustees and Alumni  
American Friends of Tel Aviv University  
American Jewish Congress  
American Society of the University of Haifa  
American Truth Project  
American Values  
Americans Fighting Antisemitism  
Americans for Ben-Gurion University  
Americans for Peace and Tolerance  
Atlanta Israel Coalition  
B'nai B'rith International  
BEAR: Bias Education, Advocacy & Resources  
Binghamton University Zionist Organization (BUZO)  
Boston Israel Action Committee  
Bulldogs for Israel (Brooklyn College)  
CAFI - CUNY Alliance for Inclusion  
California Association of Scholars  
CAMERA Education Institute  
CAMERA on Campus  
Campus Anti-Semitism Task Force of the North Shore  
Chabad at Brooklyn College  
Christians and Jews United for Israel  
Club Z  
Coalition for Jewish Values  
Combat Anti-Semitism Movement  
Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA)  
Creative Community for Peace  
Davis Faculty for Israel  
Eagles Wings  
Education Without Indoctrination  
#EndJewHatred  
Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET)  
Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)  
Fight Back Now  
Five Synagogues of White Plains Israel Advocacy Committee  
Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors  
Herut North America, U.S. Division  
Hillel at Baruch, City, John Jay, Pace, SVA, Fordham, FIT & The New School

Institute for Black Solidarity with Israel  
Iranian American Jewish Federation  
Iranian Jewish Women's Organization  
Israel in NYC  
Israel Matters  
Israel Peace Initiative (IPI)  
Israeli-American Civic Action Network  
Israeli-American Civic Education Institute  
Ithaca Area United Jewish Community  
JAM  
Jerusalem Education Fund  
Jewish American Affairs Committee of Indiana  
Jewish Student Coalition of New York City (JSCNY)  
Jewish War Veterans of the USA  
Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa (JIMENA)  
Kehilat Rayim Ahuvim  
Michigan Jewish Action Council  
Middle East Forum  
Middle East Political and Information Network (MEPIN)  
National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel  
National Council of Young Israel  
National Jewish Advocacy Center  
NH4Israel  
North Carolina Coalition for Israel  
PeerK12  
Philos Project  
Proclaiming Justice to the Nations  
Rabbinical Alliance of America  
Rhode Island Coalition for Israel  
Russian Jewish Community Foundation  
Scholars for Peace in the Middle East  
Simon Wiesenthal Center  
Stop Anti-Semitism Now  
Stop BDS on Campus  
StopAntisemitism  
Students and Faculty for Equality at CUNY (S.A.F.E. CUNY)  
Students and Parents Against Campus Anti-Semitism  
Students Supporting Israel at City College of New York  
Students Supporting Israel at Columbia  
Students Supporting Israel National  
Swarthmore Alumni Against Antisemitism on Campus  
The Israel Christian Nexus  
The Jewish Center  
The Lawfare Project  
The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America  
The World Mizrahi Movement  
Women's League for Conservative Judaism  
World Jewish Congress North America

Young Israel of Avenue K  
Young Israel of Bedford  
Young Israel of Midwood  
Young Israel of New Rochelle  
Young Israel of Scarsdale  
Young Israel of Staten Island  
Zachor Legal Institute  
Zionist Organization of America

Cc: New York Council Jewish Caucus  
CUNY Chancellor Felix V. Matos Rodriguez  
CUNY Board of Trustees  
CUNY School of Law Dean Eduardo R.C. Capulong  
Incoming CUNY School of Law Dean Sudha Setty