

CUNY Law Student groups, Students, Alumni and Faculty stand with SJP and Palestinian students.

FEBRUARY 2020

In light of recent events on campus, and the current political culture of anti-Palestinian and Islamophobic policies and discourse, we reaffirm our support for Students for Justice in Palestine, and all Palestinian, Muslim, and adjacent students, faculty, and workers at the CUNY School of Law. Palestinian students are a central part of our community and we sign this letter to reaffirm our belief that an attack against them is an attack against us all.

In addition to the Islamophobia and racism that Palestinian students face more generally, Palestinian activism on campus has a history of being particularly marginalized and attacked by people who support Israel. A subset of Zionist activists choose to weaponize the genuine threats of anti-Semitism elsewhere in our society as a tactic to repress activism and harass and threaten Palestinian students and Muslim students more broadly. This takes many forms: calling the presence of Palestinian students anti-Jewish, falsely labeling Students for Justice in Palestine as anti-Jewish, and even assuming any critique of Israel is rooted in anti-Jewish sentiment rather than a critique of Israel as a nation-state. We have seen this happening on our campus this year and we reject this misguided invocation of anti-Semitism as a weapon against people fighting for their own survival and right to exist.

This tactic of conflating a critique of Judaism with critiques of Israel as a nation-state is on the rise around the country. Palestinian students have faced similar challenges on CUNY campuses before, and SJP groups have been investigated and cleared of all allegations after asserting their right to organize in 2016. President Trump's recent Executive Order on Anti-Semitism is so broad that it chills the free speech of people on campuses who are horrified by Israel's violence against Palestine, people whose scholarship is critical of Israel in any way, and activists working for Palestinian liberation. Anti-Semitism is real and on the rise. However, false claims of anti-Semitism used to suppress pro-Palestinian voices harm both Palestinians and Jews while providing cover for actual anti-Semites. We refuse to allow this close mindedness to come home to our campus, and we refuse to allow the Trump administration to silence Palestinian resistance here or anywhere else.

The Executive Order and events on campus coincide with the Trump administration's unveiling of a disastrous scheme intended to formalize the ethnic cleansing and ongoing colonization of Palestinian land, known as the "Deal of the Century." We stand alongside our Palestinian brothers and sisters in rejecting this "deal" and the consequent increased repression of

Palestinian organizing, on and off campus. We here at CUNY Law know that our liberation is interdependent and our struggles are lifted up together. The presence and growth of an active fight for Palestinian freedom is a blessing on this campus, not a threat. We refuse to allow it to be weaponized by the forces of oppression around us.

CUNY Law is a public interest law school and one of the most diverse law schools in the country. The diversity of our campus is reflected in our students' race, genders, religious beliefs, and, most of all, a broad range of strongly held political opinions. We are not monolithic and we frequently disagree, however, we fundamentally recognize and respect one another's right to be a part of this community and avail ourselves of a legal education. A line is crossed when students antagonize and harass other students and imperil their sense of safety on campus. This is not what this community is about, and it cannot be tolerated in a law school dedicated to giving a new generation of public interest attorneys the legal tools to fight systemic oppression. The ethos of this institution is "Law in the Service of Human Needs." Anything less than the full defense and solidarity to Palestinians on campus would leave that ethos as an empty rhetorical slogan rather than a meaningful statement of CUNY's values.

Undersigned,
Students for Justice in Palestine
Jewish Law Students Association
Muslim Law Students Association
Black Law Students Association
Asian Pacific Law Students Association
Latinx American Law Students Association
Outlaws
National Lawyers Guild
South Asian Law Students Association
Housing Rights Project
Formerly Incarcerated Law Students Advocacy Association
Environmental Justice Coalition
Womxn of Color Collective
Labor Coalition
Phi Alpha Delta
Ball in the Service of Human Needs
Brothers of Color
Racial and Social Justice Orientation
Italian American Legal Association
HALT
Ping Pong Club

Non-CUNY organizations:
City College of New York Students For Justice in Palestine
John Jay Students for Justice in Palestine

Samidoun Palestinian Political Prisoner Network
Within Our Lifetime | United for Palestine
International Action Center
Jews for Palestinian Right of Return
Al-Awda NY the Palestine Right to Return Coalition

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