

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 29, 2024

Columbia University in the City of New York
The Trustees of Columbia University
C/O Office of the Secretary
211 Low Library
535 West 116th Street
New York, NY 10027

To the Trustees of Columbia University:

We, the undersigned, write to express our disappointment that, despite promises to do so, Columbia University has not yet disbanded the unauthorized and impermissible encampment of anti-Israel, anti-Jewish activists on campus. As a result of this disruption on campus, supported by some faculty members, many students have been prevented from safely attending class, the main library, and from leaving their dorm rooms in an apparent violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

For the past week, this encampment has been the breeding ground for antisemitic attacks on Jewish students, including hate speech, harassment, intimidation, and even threats of violence. Last weekend, a student held up a sign pointing to pro-Israel students that said “Al-Qa[ss]am’s next targets,” referring to the military arm of Hamas, the foreign terrorist organization responsible for the atrocities of October 7, and for holding hostage innocent civilians – including Americans – in brutal captivity for nearly seven months.¹ One of the protest leaders has previously declared, “Zionists — they are Nazis. They’re Nazis. They’re fascists. They’re supporters of genocide. Why would we want people who are supporters of genocide to live?” and students routinely chanted “from the river to the sea,” which is a cry to eliminate Israel and all Jews within its borders.²

In response, the White House has rightly stated, “While every American has the right to peaceful protest, calls for violence and physical intimidation targeting Jewish students and the Jewish community are blatantly antisemitic, unconscionable, and dangerous – they have absolutely no place on any college campus, or anywhere in the United States of America.”³

¹ Luis Ferré-sadurní, Colbi Edmonds & Liset Cruz, JEWISH STUDENTS ARE TARGETED AS PROTESTS CONTINUE AT COLUMBIA THE NEW YORK TIMES (2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/21/nyregion/columbia-protests-antisemitism.html> (last visited Apr 28, 2024).

² TOI Staff and Agency, COLUMBIA PROTEST LEADER BANNED FROM CAMPUS FOR SAYING “ZIONISTS DON’T DESERVE TO LIVE” | THE TIMES OF ISRAEL TIMES OF ISRAEL (2024), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/columbia-protest-leader-banned-from-campus-for-saying-zionists-dont-deserve-to-live/> (last visited Apr 28, 2024).

³ Id.

Earlier this week, the Columbia administration tacitly acknowledged that the encampment had created an impermissibly hostile and unsafe environment for Jewish students by resorting to hybrid learning, appearing to violate Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. In other words, instead of solving the root cause of discrimination and harassment that students faced on campus, the administration decided to segregate some students from campus altogether, which naturally created an unsafe environment on campus for all students.

The First Amendment guarantees freedom of speech and assembly, but not freedom to harass and intimidate other students. Academic institutions must ensure the safety and security of all of their students under Title VI. It is clear to us that the University has allowed the encampment to create an environment that appears to violate its legal obligations to protect all students from discrimination and harassment. As a result, many students who are paying for an education -- supported by the federal government -- cannot safely attend class, enter the library, or leave their dorm rooms.

We appreciate the Columbia administration's efforts this week to negotiate in good faith to reach an agreement that allows those in the encampment to voluntarily disperse without police intervention. But, after nearly a week of negotiations, it is now abundantly clear that the students and activists entrenched on campus are unwilling to enter into a reasonable agreement to disband, which is necessary to bring the University into compliance with Title VI.

Those who violate the law cannot dictate the terms of the University's ability to comply with that law. It is past time for the University to act decisively, disband the encampment, and ensure the safety and security of all of its students.

The time for negotiation is over; the time for action is now. It is ultimately the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to act. If any Trustees are unwilling to do this, they should resign so that they can be replaced by individuals who will uphold the University's legal obligations under Title VI.

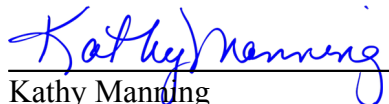
Sincerely,





Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress





Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Kathy Manning
Member of Congress



Jared Moskowitz
Member of Congress



Wiley Nickel
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

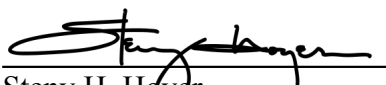

Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress


Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress

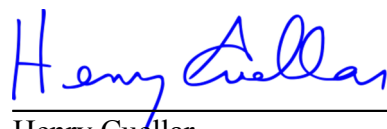

Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress


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