

Addendum 4/23: *This letter was drafted before the horrifying events of 4/22, when NYU senior leadership called the NYPD onto campus to break up the Gaza Solidarity Encampment on Gould Plaza just as Jewish and Muslim student demonstrators were finishing their Passover Seder and beginning the Maghrib evening prayer. NYPD's violent arrest of 120 faculty and students engaged in peaceful protest is an intensification and extension of the NYU/NYPD collaboration that has established itself over the last few months under the guise of "safety" for Jewish students, at the expense of the safety for all our students. It is the literal embodiment of the weaponization of the discourse of antisemitism we challenge in the letter below.*

April 22, 2024

To: President Linda Mills and Provost Georgina Dopico

Cc: Prof. Russell Caflisch, Director, Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences
Prof. Lisa Coleman, Senior Vice President for Global Inclusion and Strategic Innovation
Dr. Karen Jackson-Weaver, Senior Associate Vice President, Global Faculty Engagement
Shakera Turi, Executive Director, Office of Equal Opportunity
Prof. Susan Antón, Vice Dean for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Faculty Development
Dean Antonio Merlo, Faculty of Arts and Sciences Dean
Prof. Una Chaudhuri, Dean for the Humanities
Prof. Ann Morning, Dean for Social Studies
Prof. Gregory Gabadadze, Dean for Sciences
Prof. Eyal Lubetzky, Chair, Dept. of Mathematics, Courant Institute
Prof. Avinoam Patt, Director, NYU Center for the Study of Antisemitism
Prof. David K. Irving, Chair, TT Faculty Senators Council
Prof. Noelle Molé Liston, Chair, Full-Time Continuing Contract Faculty Senators Council

Dear President Mills and Provost Dopico,

We write this public letter as Jewish faculty at NYU requesting that the university administration discontinue its practice of relying on specious charges of antisemitism when adjudicating matters of student conduct and faculty discipline concerning pro-Palestinian speech and protest. This matter has particular urgency as just this morning a coalition of NYU students has established an encampment in solidarity with Gaza, and already NYU has taken steps to limit and constrain their speech and mobility.

We reject outright the administration's insistence that criticism of Israeli state policy is inherently antisemitic and so constitutes discrimination. There is nothing Jewish about supporting Israel's destruction of Gaza or about the US bombs that have killed more than 10,000 children there, nor is it antisemitic to denounce Israeli state violence or to protest American imperialism. Moreover, by adopting a cheapened idea of "antisemitic" hate speech defined by the very same right wing political figures who have given energy and legitimacy to neo-fascist groups across

the US and to the McCarthyite anti-intellectual assault on higher education unfolding today, the university degrades the discourse of antisemitism itself. With this in mind, we request that the university reverse all punitive Office of Equal Opportunity decisions in disciplinary proceedings that have depended upon the erroneous equation of anti-Israel speech with antisemitism.

We are most immediately distressed that the OEO relied on this instrumentalization of antisemitism to justify the firing of one of our postdoctoral colleagues, Dr. Darren King, for taking down pro-Israel hostage posters. People in the NYU community may disagree about the meaning and efficacy of King's act of protest, but we reject the OEO's characterization of his actions as discriminatory or antisemitic. We request the immediate reversal of the overly harsh punishment applied in King's case. We also note with alarm that, among the dozens of OEO cases investigating students and faculty for the alleged antisemitism of their pro-Palestine speech, the harshest punishments have consistently been reserved for faculty and students of color (King is Black; an undergraduate student of color was suspended earlier this year for taking down posters). As Jewish faculty, including Jews of color, we detest the notion that the very anti-discrimination laws developed to protect people from prejudice and bigotry are now being misapplied in a discriminatory fashion against vulnerable members of our community.

We also request that the university cease to follow the Trump administration's guidance in adhering to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's tendentious definition of antisemitism. Many voices, including both Jewish and Palestinian scholars, have demonstrated the dangerous incoherence of IHRA's conflation of anti-Israel political speech with racial or ethnic prejudice. NYU's own Faculty for Justice in Palestine forcefully articulated such a critique in a [position paper](#) on antisemitism and anti-Zionism they sent to the administration in December 2023, which offered advice for jettisoning the IHRA definition. However, rather than distance itself from the disingenuous political exploitation of antisemitism, NYU's leadership has doubled down on it, despite the definition's [own author](#) cautioning in 2019 that "it was never intended to be a campus hate speech code" and that its adoption on campuses "will harm not only pro-Palestinian advocates, but also Jewish students and faculty, and the academy itself."

Unfortunately, this is just what has taken place at NYU. University leadership has enacted a series of increasingly punitive disciplinary measures in the name of combatting discrimination that have had no meaningful positive effect on the safety or well-being of members of our community, Jewish or otherwise, and in doing so have squelched public criticism of the horrific violence and destruction that Israel continues to unleash on Gaza with US weaponry and approval. Neither firing a Black faculty member for pulling down anti-Palestinian propaganda posters, nor suspending students for pro-Palestinian speech, have kept NYU's Jewish community safe. An unprecedented increase in NYPD presence on campus has not protected Jewish students, staff, and faculty, though it has surely put students of color at greater risk of arrest and criminalization. The closure of the Paulson Center's atrium to the public in the name of undefined "security issues" has certainly not created a less prejudiced campus. When Campus Security films our students protesting in public spaces, their surveillance does not prevent antisemitism. Rather, the heightened securitization of our campus and the administration's disproportionately punitive responses to protest have only served to censor and chill pro-Palestinian speech and to distract our community from our shared commitment to

higher learning. These actions have been anti-discriminatory in name only, whereas their effects have been repressive.

As Jewish faculty, we repudiate the administration's offensive insistence that pro-Palestinian protestors on our campus represent a threat to the safety of any members of our community. To the contrary, we see our students' recent actions against Israeli state violence as exemplifying the moral courage, intellectual passion, and political commitments that make NYU a remarkable institution. Again and again, they have called upon NYU's leadership to express compassion for the Palestinian victims of this horrible slaughter (some of whom are family to our community), and to use its material resources and influence (including investments in weapons manufacturers and a campus in Tel Aviv) to stem the tide of unconscionable violence. We urge you to heed their words.

To this end, in addition to supporting the demands of [the NYU Palestinian Solidarity Coalition](#), we call upon the administration to:

- Reverse all OEO decisions in disciplinary proceedings that have depended upon the erroneous equation of anti-Israel speech and action with antisemitism, including the firing of Darren King. Develop transparent and fair processes for addressing complaints going forward (especially those involving doxxing or targeted public campaigns against individuals).

- Stop the excessive surveillance, securitization, and cooperation with NYPD enacted as part of the "Ten Point Plan" under the guise of preventing antisemitism.

- Recognize the diversity of Jewish opinion on campus. Appoint an ideologically and racially diverse group of scholars of antisemitism and racism to the board of the new Center for the Study of Antisemitism.

Respectfully,

[ADD YOUR NAME HERE](#)

Robert Ausch SPS and Steinhardt
Abigail Krasner Balbale, FAS
Adam H. Becker, FAS
Gordon Beeferman, FAS
Howard Besser, Tisch
Michelle Castaneda, Tisch
Annie Conrady, CAS
Hasia Diner, Emerita, Hebrew and Judaic Studies/History
Richard Dorritie, Meyers - Nursing
Kathy Engel, Tisch
Valerie Forman, Gallatin School of individualized Study
Hannah Freed-Thall, CAS

Sharon Friedman, Gallatin
Ben Gassman, CAS
Charles Gelman, Gallatin
Meira Gold, Gallatin
Sophie L Gonick, FAS
Linda Gordon, Emerita, History
Hannah Gurman, Gallatin School of Individualized Study
Laura Harris, Tisch School of the Arts
Misho Ishikawa, CAS
Marion Kaplan, FAS emerita
Rebecca E Karl, FAS, History Dept
Marion Katz, FAS
John King SPS DAUS
Eugenia Kisin, Gallatin
Anna Levy, NYU Wagner
Julie Livingston, Arts and Sciences
Zachary Lockman, FAS HistoryMEIS
David Ludden, FAS History
Eve Meltzer, Gallatin School of Individualized Study
Danny Mendelson, Division of Libraries
Nadja Millner-Larsen, GSAS
Nicholas D Mirzoeff MCC-Steinhardt.
Pamela Morris-Perez, Steinhardt
Lorie Novak, Tisch
Lizzie Olesker, Tisch
Or Pansky, Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies
Sonya Posmentier, Faculty of Arts and Science
Dara Rossman Regaignon, FAS
Timothy J Reiss, FAS/GSAS (Emeritus Professor)
Jacob Remes, Gallatin School
Moss Roberts, FAS
Matthew Rockman, FAS
Sophia Roosth, Gallatin
Andrew Ross, FAS
Martha Rust, FAS
Edward Seidman Applied Psychology, Steinhardt
Ella Shohat, TSOA
George M Shulman, Gallatin
Federico Bokser Sor, GSAS
Judith Stacey, LSA
Diana Taylor, TSOA/FAS
Mark Tseng-Puterman, Asian/Pacific/American Institute at NYU (Visiting Scholar)
Andrew Weiner, School of Culture, Education, and Human Development
Sonia Werner, FAS

A. Jordan Wright, Steinhardt

(signatures as of 4/25)