

## **We Call Upon Our Institutional Leaders To Meet The Moment**

On July 9, 2025, City University of New York Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, Robert M. Groves, Interim President of Georgetown University, and Rich Lyons, Chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley will testify before the House Committee on Education and Workforce at a hearing on “Antisemitism in Higher Education: Examining the Role of Faculty, Funding, and Ideology.”

This will be the ninth hearing on antisemitism held by this committee. If the pattern from previous hearings holds, these university administrators will be shown examples of what the committee deems campus antisemitism and asked how they plan to combat it. They will be expected to explain why they have failed to sufficiently discipline, expel, suspend, or fire students, faculty, and staff—many of whom identify as Jewish—in the name of Jewish safety. And like prior instances, the House Committee will demand that these leaders ignore, bend, or break all university policies, contractual agreements, state and federal laws, and constitutional guarantees to due process, freedom of speech and expression, and academic freedom in order to eliminate what the committee considers to be antisemitism from their institutions.

The hypocrisy of the Republican members leading this committee is evident in their refusal to condemn [rampant antisemitism](#) within their own party, including by the very members of this committee. Instead, these show trials have been focused on cynically deploying false claims of antisemitism, specifically to silence and punish advocacy for Palestinian human rights and freedom. As David Cole, a professor of law and public policy at Georgetown University and former legal director at the ACLU, [wrote](#) of his experience at the last hearing on May 8: “I soon realized that neither the law nor the facts matter to the Committee on Education’s Republican inquisitors.” Instead, he noted, Republicans like Joe Wilson insisted that “‘Free Palestine from the river to the sea’ is a code for death to Israel, death to America. We know that anti-Zionism is antisemitism.”

Yet this fallacious equation of Palestinian liberation with antisemitism is contested by many Jewish students and faculty. Our [Jewish colleagues at Haverford College](#), [another institution](#) recently summoned to a hearing, characterized it as “an unacceptable way of policing, censoring, distorting and inhibiting our Jewish life and our Jewish identity, and the holy connection of our faith to humanity and justice.” A group of more than 100 Jewish faculty and staff at Northwestern University [issued a similar statement](#), declaring: “The fact that U.S. government leaders are making unwarranted threats to our university and stripping rights from students, faculty, and researchers nationwide in the name of Jews is deeply offensive to us. We believe it should stop.” And almost 3500 Jewish faculty from across the country came together across differences to [say](#):

We hold various views about Israel and Palestine, politics in the Middle East, and student activism on our campuses. But we are united in denouncing, without equivocation, anyone who invokes our name—and cynical claims of antisemitism—to harass, expel, arrest, or deport members of our campus communities. We specifically reject rhetoric that caricatures our students and colleagues as “antisemitic terrorists” because they advocate for Palestinian human rights and freedom.

Their concern is echoed in a [statement](#) by scholars of genocide and the Holocaust who decry “the cynical use of false claims of rampant antisemitism to strip members of our communities of their constitutional rights.”

Despite their stated purpose, then, these Congressional hearings are not about actually addressing antisemitism in higher education. Rather, their agenda is to bring the higher education sector to heel. The hearings are part of longstanding and ongoing efforts to attack academic freedom, faculty governance, and higher education as a public good. The scapegoating of Palestine advocacy is [directly linked](#) to the dismantling of racial and gender equity initiatives and of whole areas of critical scholarly inquiry, all in the service of an ideological makeover of the university system.

The hearings began with a targeted attack on some of the wealthiest private universities: Harvard, Columbia, and the University of Pennsylvania. For these institutions, with large endowments and federal grants, the leverage was clear and the retribution, despite [capitulation by Columbia and others](#), swift. More recently, the focus has shifted to public institutions like Rutgers, UCLA, Berkeley, and CUNY. If the pattern holds, the leaders of these and other universities will prove unable or unwilling to stand up effectively to the patently false, hypocritical, and deeply anti-intellectual haranguing by members of the committee.

It is time to break this pattern.

We demand that the leaders of our universities do better than those who have previously gone before this committee, who through their acquiescence have advanced the federal government’s agenda of undermining institutional autonomy and exposing faculty and students to the violence of the security apparatus. At the very least, the leaders of our universities must defend our institutions from baseless attacks and affirm principles of academic freedom and free speech. They must oppose the weaponizing of antisemitism through the equation of Jewish safety with the silencing and exclusion of those who speak up for Palestinian freedom and an end to genocide. And leaders of public universities in particular must stand by the mandate of fostering accessible, inclusive, and equitable educational spaces in which critical debate is foundational to intellectual development.

We understand the immense political pressure university administrators are facing, but this is the time for all of us to stand up to that pressure. We join with [the American Association of University Professors \(AAUP\) in warning against anticipatory obedience](#), and recognizing that, in the face of attacks on the very mission of universities, “it becomes the obligation of the university as an institution to oppose such measures and to actively defend its interests and its values.”

President Groves, Chancellor Lyons, and Chancellor Matos Rodríguez, we ask you to do more than defend our institutions from false accusations and unfounded attacks. We ask you to use that national platform to outline what you will do to protect the best of what our institutions already do. That includes securing full funding for our universities, especially our public institutions; insisting upon the need for reliance on the expertise of faculty, staff, and students, not outside political forces, in creating a culture of inclusion at our universities; and

affirmatively nurturing freedom of speech, freedom of political expression, and academic freedom.

We are at an inflection point. Either we defend the rights of our students, faculty, and staff to learn, teach, and protest, or we surrender and permit the university to become an instrument of money power and government propaganda. We call upon our institutional leaders to meet the moment by demonstrating the power and value of higher education as a cornerstone of democracy and a counterweight to authoritarianism.

*Signed by:*

CUNY Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine  
Georgetown Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine  
Berkeley Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine  
Georgetown AAUP  
Jewish Voice for Peace Academic Council

*Endorsed by:*

National Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine