Written Testimony of

Noah Rubin

University of Pennsylvania Class of 2025

Pennsylvania State Senate

Education Committee

"Public Hearing On Combating Antisemitism On Pennsylvania College Campuses"

7/25/2024

The University of Pennsylvania was once my dream school, but now it is unrecognizable. Leading up to October 7th, 2023, I could feel things start to change, for the worse.

In the spring of 2023, our university hosted Mohammed El Kurd and Noura Erekat to speak at an event, two well known antisemites who have spread false information, including blood libel, about Jews and glorified terrorists.

In September, the Palestine Writes Literature Festival, a congregation of individuals with recognized antisemetic records supported by UPenn dollars, UPenn faculty, and UPenn branding, came to campus. Letters and petitions from thousands of students and alumni, national Jewish organizations, and politicians from both sides of the aisle went to the university urging them to distance themselves from the antisemitic conference. Despite a *cease and desist* letter from Governor Shapiro and a public acknowledgement that many speakers had histories of antisemitism, the university allowed the conference to proceed as originally planned with UPenn funding and its logos prominently displayed.

In the days leading up to the conference, I met with the Vice President for Public Safety - to plead that UPenn do more to protect Jewish students. I was extremely concerned that we were not safe on campus - especially given this conference was being held on the weekend of the High Holidays. I was told that Hillel, a Jewish cultural center, was one of the safest buildings on campus, and that I had no reason to worry.

Two days after this meeting, our Hillel was broken into and vandalized by a perpetrator who was yelling "Fuck the Jews!"

I, along with most Jews at UPenn, see the Hillel as one of the few spaces on campus where we can be ourselves. I'm in Hillel almost every day - whether it be for the Kosher dining hall, prayer, my Jewish Acapella group's rehearsal, or just to study.

After this break-in, I was more frustrated and scared than surprised. I had raised my fears to the administration, and had written an article warning of a rise in antisemitism titled "What Are We Waiting For?" in The Daily Pennsylvanian (our student newspaper) which was published the same morning of the break-in (attached). Since then, I find myself in a raised state of fear, literally looking over my shoulder, even when I'm in Hillel. My continued fear was unfortunately proven to not have been unfounded when a bomb threat was made against the building two months later.

Following the attacks on October 7th, antisemites around the world have become emboldened and our campus has been no exception. Countless antisemitic incidents

happened in the immediate months following October 7th, culminating in a riot on December 3rd, 2023.

A mob of students, faculty, and additional extremists marched through our campus recording and live-streaming themselves - vandalizing school buildings, lighting smoke bombs, and screaming vicious chants in English and Arabic.

- **"There is only one solution, Intifada revolution! Intifada! Intifada! Long live the Intifada!"** Promoting the coordinated surge in terrorist attacks on Israeli and Jewish civilians from 1987 1993 and 2000 2005 and using Nazi messaging
- "The gate of Al-Aqsa is made of iron, and only the martyr can open it! By our soul and our blood, we will redeem you, O Al-Aqsa!" (Translated)
 - نالدم نفديك يا اقصى Bab alaqsaa min hadidin, ma biaftahiha 'iilaa alshahid, bialruwh bialdam nafdik ya aqsaa" (Original)
- "From water [river] to water [sea], Arab Palestine!" (Translated)
 - original) "min alma' 'iilaa alma' filastin alearabia" (Original) من الماء إلى الماء فلسطين العربية
- Our on-campus bank was graffitied with the words "Blood Money"
- The Linguistics building was defaced with the word "Intifada"
- And "Avenge Gaza" was sprayed next to our gym

Watching out of our windows and on social media, my Jewish friends and I locked ourselves in our dorm rooms. I had to cancel plans to work on my final project in the engineering lab because I was truly terrified.

I couldn't believe that I was experiencing a nightmare at the school I had once dreamed about attending. I stayed up past 4 AM in disbelief, documenting what had happened in order to share with the administration. Unfortunately, there has been nothing done to prevent the night of December 3rd from repeating.

This riot was the scariest of all events in 2023 led by the 'Philly Palestine Coalition,' a well-coordinated collective of over a dozen antisemitic organizations from the broader Philadelphia region. 'Penn Against the Occupation' (PAO), a student club at UPenn, is a part of this collective. PAO helped organize the December 3rd riot along with many other events through the Philly Palestine Coalition. This is evidenced by their co-posting of flyers online and resharing videos from each other's events.

At the core of the Philly Palestine Coalition are a few antisemitic agitators who have come to our campus to spread extremism multiple times. They are connected to students and faculty at UPenn. Included in this group are:

- Susan Abulhawa: The executive director of the Palestine Writes Literature Festival who wrote that, "Palestinian fighters finally broke free on 7 October 2023 in a spectacular moment that shocked the world." She has a long history of glorifying terrorism and calling for an "Intifada." In October of 2022 she tweeted, "Yalla [Let's go] intifada! Yalla thawra [revolution]! ..."
- Noura Erakat: A Rutgers professor who justified Hamas taking civilian hostages on October 7th, and has a history of glorifying terrorists. She spoke at UPenn on March 23, 2023 with Mohammed El-Kurd who tweeted, "…You can't hijack planes. You can't block traffic. You can't throw Molotovs... You can't dissent. You can't just be." Both have promoted and justified violence against Jews and spoke on campus again during Palestine Writes.
- Jordan Vaughan: A self-described: "facilitating organizer for the Philly Palestine Coalition." Jordan posted to Instagram on October 7th "Victory to our Resistance. Long Live the Intifada. Al- Aqsa Flood has quenched our thirst," and has tweeted "Glad Hamas killed this bitch cause what's that?" to a picture of Shani Louk who was kidnapped and murdered at the Nova Music festival on October 7th. Jordan has also tweeted "Live, Love, Hamas." and has led countless protests and riots on campus and within Philadelphia. Jordan also posted on Instagram telling Columbia students to stop dancing and "pick up weapon[s]."

This violence of December 3rd returned to UPenn throughout the start of 2024, and set up a permanent home for weeks when Penn Against the Occupation and the Philly Palestine Coalition set up their illegal encampment at the center of campus.

Over 100 reports of antisemitic harassment were submitted to an online form after the first few days of this encampment being erected. The encampment became more and more emboldened every day.

The chants became even more extreme in English: **"Al Qasam make us proud!"** - Al Qasam being the military wing of Hamas that carried out the October 7th attacks. And Arabic chants of a Jihadist adaptation of the Islamic declaration of faith: **"There is no God but Allah and the Martyr is his beloved"** (rather than "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah").

The harassment became more common, forcing many Jewish students to not walk through the center of campus to get to class or study at the main library. In some cases, the university actually advised this of Jewish students rather than addressing the encampment.

Jewish students were called "Nazis," "f*ggots," "k*kes," "Hitler's children," and "p*ussies." Jewish students were pointed at while rioters screamed "Hamas should do it again!" and "You're next!"

Jewish students and a Rabbi were physically assaulted and barred from entering the part of the lawn taken by the encampment. American flags put up were swiftly taken down and desecrated - replaced by the Palestinian and PFLP flags (a US - designated terror group).

Nightly riots and intimidating protests ensued during finals week at the site of the encampment with students being harassed, intimidated, and assaulted in some cases. **Multiple female students reported being followed home after simply walking past the encampment.**

When the police finally dismantled the encampment, weeks later, they found homemade weapons and plans to "escalate" even further.

It's now become common to see professors who abuse their power to make Jewish students feel uncomfortable. Some of the worst offenders include:

- Ahmad Almallah skipped teaching his classes to harass and intimidate Jewish students during unauthorized protests. He has led chants calling for an Intifada and was regularly at the encampment.
- Huda Fakhreddine posted on October 7th in Arabic that "While we were asleep, Palestine invented a new way of life." She later clapped at a protest after the speaker told Jewish students to "...go back to Moscow and Brooklyn and Gstaad, and fucking Berlin where you came from..." and is now teaching a new course titled "Arabic Readings in Belles-Lettres: Resistance from Pre-Islamic Arabia to Palestine." Fakhreddine was also an organizer of the encampment.
- Robert Vitalis posted a Hamas military brigade patch on his Facebook with the caption "A quick and easy way to reduce my friends list (and it will look cool on your jacket too)". This was not covered by The Daily Pennsylvanian because, as one editor told me, "we are not a tabloid."
- Many of Penn's faculty immediately took to social media on October 7th and have continued posting their personal support of Hamas for months.

The events I have detailed in this testimony are unfortunately only a fraction of the experiences that my classmates and I have endured over the past year as students at the University of Pennsylvania. We have repeatedly been faced with extreme anti-American and antisemitic ideologies on our campus, and many students dread returning to campus in the fall because of it.

At over 15 meetings I've had with administration about these issues, I've been patronized and told that I "should take care of myself and get some rest".

Frankly, I'm not interested in sitting through more meetings just to hear more rhetoric. I want to go back to being a student, studying and taking full advantage of what my university has to offer.

I want to stop worrying about my safety, mental health, and belonging on campus as a Jew. Inaction is simply unacceptable.

Freedom of speech does not mean freedom to incite violence; academic freedom does not mean freedom to indoctrinate.

Attached are photos from the riot on December 3rd and the encampment, posts from the pro-Hamas student group, comics created by lecturer Dwayne Booth, and screenshots from UPenn faculty social media.

I have also attached an article I wrote in the Daily Pennsylvanian on September 21st, 2023 warning Jewish students of a rise in antisemitism on our campus and articles written by Ben Messafi (Penn '27) and Eyal Yakoby (Penn '24) about the encampment.

On Campus Photos from the December 3rd Riot



Photo Credit Joe Piette



On campus TD Bank (Across street from Huntsman Hall)



Next to the Pottruck Gym



Linguistics Building

On Campus Photos from the Encampment



"ZIOSGETFUCKT" graffiti on the Ben Franklin statue.



Pointing at Jewish students and making the upside down triangle to represent Hamas.



Protestor with backpack depicting Jews as rats.



The encampment (photos from The Daily Pennsylvanian).



PFLP, US designated terrorist group, flag flown.



"Revolution until victory"

Penn Against the Occupation (Student Group) Posts





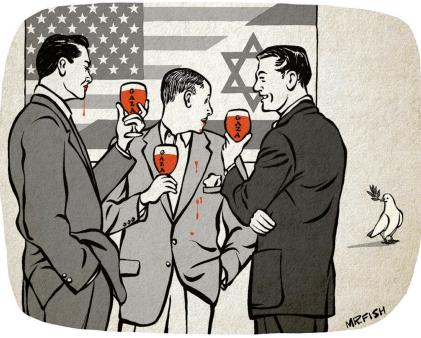


10/7/2023 (Rioting for Hamas on October 8th) 12/6/2023 (Calling for a global Intifada) 01/2/2024 (Eulogizing a Hamas leader)



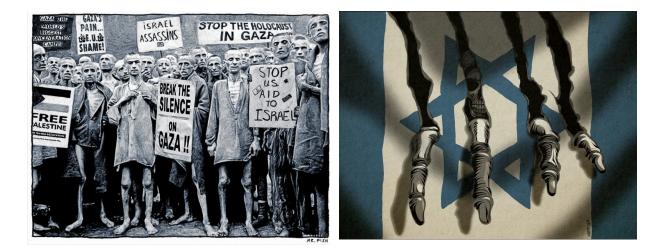
7/21/2024 (Praising Lions Den, the terror org)

Examples of UPenn Lecturer Dwayne Booth's Cartoons



"Who invited that lousy anti-Semite?"

THE ANTI-SEMITE



Professors' Social Media Posts:



Translates to: "While we were asleep, Palestine invented a new way of life"



Noura Erakat @4noura · 07 Oct
Any condemnation of violence is vapid if it does not begin & end with a condemnation of Israeli apartheid, settler colonialism, and occupation.
#Palestine #Gaza #Decolonize
⊗ 80 tl1,006 ♡ 3,163 il.il 164K
Eve Troutt Powell @Ev... · 08 Oct if You are absolutely right. There's been a lot of vapidity.
© tl ♡ 2 il.il 579

UPenn Professor Powell



UPenn Professor Zuberi

0\ 7

UPenn Professor Vitalis



Dorothy Roberts Follow

"Are Jews White?" Race is a political invention, so who qualifies as "white" depends on power, not biology. #racism theatlantic.com/ politics/archi...

10:00 AM · 07 Dec 16

18 Reposts 1 Quote 31 Likes

UPenn Professor Roberts



UPenn Professor Fakhreddine

Translates to: "Gaza is not an 'open air prison.' Prisoners receive visitors and aid is allowed to be passed to them. Gaza is a Nazi-style concentration camp, a concentration camp under bombardment."



UPenn Professor Norton

This article was published on The Daily Pennsylvanian website on 09/21/2023, the same morning that the Hillel building was broken into. The print form is below:

An open letter to Jewish students at Penn

GUEST COLUMN | What are we waiting for?

Are we waiting for a Swastika spray painted on our Chabad House? Are we waiting for our Hillel's mezuzah to be torn down? Are we waiting to be harassed for wearing a kippah or magen david? Are we waiting for something worse? God forbid. What will it take for our community to wake up and act? Penn is one of the last college campuses in America where Jewish students feel safe. Jew hatred, as we know, has been rising every year.

Do we really think it will stay this way? Only if we express our Jewish selves and support of Israel in the places where we 'live' — sports teams, preprofessional clubs, performing arts groups, volunteer initiatives, networking circles, and social gatherings.

We are currently being manipulated into believing that there will be no antisemitism at the upcoming Palestine Writes Literature Festival. But many of the speakers have no connection to Palestinian literature. They have dressed up as Nazis, praised terrorists for targeting civilians, celebrated BDS, called for violence against Jews, called for 'death to Israel', been fired for antisemitism, have called most Jews evil, raised money for terrorists, and even directly supported terrorists. Worse yet, Penn departments, professors, spaces, and resources are contributing to this. The bottom line is, unapologetic antisemites are coming to gather here on our campus. Is that enough for us to stand up? What are we waiting for?

At best, this conference will continue to normalize this kind of rhetoric and behavior on college campuses, and at worst can lead to serious safety issues for Jewish students. Either way, it is not hard to see where we are sadly heading.

More importantly, how will we respond? We need everyone's skills, connections, and ideas to work on fighting for our community. It's not too late to think about who you are and your place at Penn. How can you make a stand for Jews of all backgrounds to practice and express our beliefs?

Do something about it! Jewish students and allies alike. Write and share news that highlight Jewish and Israeli achievements. Invite Israeli speakers to your pre-professional entrepreneurship, engineering, and health care clubs. Build partnership events with other cultural groups on campus. Collaborate with and cite researchers from Israeli universities working on cutting-edge science. Schedule your performing arts groups' shows to be Shabbat and holiday friendly. Speak out against antisemitism in casual gatherings and class. Create art and music that highlight our culture, history, and peoplehood. Use Israeli stories and Jewish heroes as case studies in course projects. Point out friends' biases and double standards against Israel. Engage with the Jewish communities on campus and encourage social groups to join you. Infuse supporting this cause with the activities you are already involved in and have influence in.

And while you're at it, love every Jew. We must be united in this fight. Don't let current political disagreements, differences in observance, or distractions come between our 3,000-year-old people. Work to uplift, not detract.

If we remain indifferent, this campus will turn into yet another place where antisemitism rages on, but no one should be surprised. What are we waiting for?

Signing a petition is important and super easy. In addition, take time to think about what you, and only you, can do.

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The Daily Pennsylvani

Ben Messafi | The encampment is selfdestructing

Guest Column | The first step to proper civil discourse and de-escalation on campus is to end the encampment

By Ben Messafi 05/07/24 3:05pm



The flag of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine was flown at the encampment on April 30. Credit: Derek Wong

More than one week into the encampment on College Green, with over 150 incidents of antisemitism and harassment reported to Penn Hillel, the public **endorsement** of two United States-designated terrorist organizations, and **two American flags** planted near the encampment being forcibly removed and damaged by protesters, students have had enough. It is time to end this antisemitic and anti-American encampment now.

On April 26, pro-Israeli and Jewish students sponsored a screening of the Oct. 7 massacre adjacent to the Button on campus, broadcasting the screen in the direction of the encampment. Standing just outside the encampment when the video was playing, I heard three protesters clapping and cheering as a video of an Israeli woman getting raped and paraded in the streets of Gaza was displayed. The night before, I spotted a protester wearing a sweater with a Star of David and two rats depicted on the back, which imitates Nazi-style propaganda from the 1930s.

The following night, protesters were recorded cheering "Al Qassem make us proud, take

another soldier down." Al Qassem is the military wing of Hamas, the group behind the Oct. 7 rape, mass murder, and abduction of Israeli civilians that has contributed to the deaths of thousands of Israelis and Palestinians since it took control of Gaza in 2007.

Last Tuesday, I walked near the encampment and saw a large PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) flag flying, which is a U.S.-designated terror organization. PFLP has been behind numerous terror attacks against Israeli civilians, including the hijacking in 1976 that diverted a flight leaving Israel to Entebbe, Uganda, and the raid of a Jerusalem synagogue, killing four in 2014. PFLP also opposes all negotiations with Israel and only envisions a Middle East without a Jewish state.

Even worse, Penn's anonymous social media app, Sidechat, has been filled with an increasing number of pro-Palestinian supporters at Penn speaking out against the encampment, citing the diversion of the encampment from the values of the protest. Instead of protesting for the establishment of a Palestinian state and the end of the war, the encampment has turned this movement into an antisemitic cesspool, where students cannot walk on campus with Judaica items without being harassed by protesters. Even worse, not all members are students. When I attempted to look inside the encampment several days ago, I was approached by two protesters acting as "guards." They did not name themselves, but they both acknowledged that they were not students, just Philadelphia residents with no association to Penn. Why should people outside of the Penn community have the ability to use Penn property to sleep and harass Jewish students? Why are non-Penn affiliates determining who is and who is not allowed on parts of our campus?

On April 29, pro-Palestinian protesters stormed Hamilton Hall at Columbia University, shattering the front windows and taking one security guard hostage. NYPD then forcefully removed the protesters, facing instant backlash. With Columbia's administration being hesitant to clear up the protest, students were able to easily obtain access to the building and vandalize it. As the protests at Penn are continuing to radicalize, the administration must follow through on their promise to clear the encampment before it is too late. Penn could be next.

Supporting the encampment and the groups they endorse is preventing any meaningful action and dialogue from occurring at Penn. Instead of speaking to diverse groups of students about their experiences with the conflict, the encampment is choosing to invite individuals outside of the Penn community to come to Penn and harass Jewish students. Instead of inviting leaders of the Jewish community to speak with students on the other side to discuss issues and common ground, the Chabad rabbi is being denied entry into the encampment because he is visibly Jewish. Instead of making Jewish students willing to talk to pro-Palestinian protesters about points of common ground, Jewish students are being harassed with Nazi-era rhetoric and praising of terrorist organizations that want to annihilate Jews from this planet.

If we want real action and dialogue to occur on this campus, continuing to support an

encampment that has turned into an antisemitic hatefest continuing to harass Jewish students is not the answer. There is room for dialogue, there is room for peaceful protest, and there is room for change. There is a difference between a peaceful protest to endorse a cause, and cheering for terrorist groups that actively call for the elimination of Jewish students. Harassing Jewish students is not the best method to get community members to support your cause. Enough is enough.

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Eyal Yakoby | The mischaracterization of the encampment is dangerous to the Penn community

Guest Column | Addressing the gaslighting by faculty and AAUP-Penn

By Eyal Yakoby 05/17/24 4:04pm



College senior Eyal Yakoby during a congressional press conference in Washington on Dec. 5, 2023. Credit: Jada Eible Hargro

University leadership correctly recognized that the recent encampment protest placed many members of the Penn community "under threat." Reading now how the story is trying to be twisted through mental gymnastics is dangerous, not only to the community members who have been under threat but also to the students who are being led to believe that breaking the law is acceptable. Reading statements from the Penn chapter of the American Association of University Professors throughout the year – as well as their press conference that paid so much attention to the police who cleared the encampment, and no attention to how we got there – is a remarkable interpretation of the facts of the case, and especially breathtaking from scholars who claim to have expertise in critical thinking. Professors, to me, are individuals whom students should look up to as those who search for the truth. But, reading statement after statement throughout the year, disappointingly, it seems that the truth for AAUP-Penn is full of misstatements and highly biased interpretations.

AAUP-Penn released a statement on May 10, describing the university's actions in shutting down the encampment as a "Violation of the University's Guidelines on Open Expression and a cowardly, shameful attempt to silence and punish speech that administrators simply do not want to hear." On the grounds of open expression, the university is well within its guidelines to remove the encampment, and the argument that it is not is simply unfounded.

The concerning actions of the protesters have nothing to do with free speech. It was the conduct of the encampment that was the central issue. "Homemade weapons" were found at the encampment. A student was surrounded by four masked individuals flashing strobe lights in his eyes and making threats. Documents were found circulating within the encampment on "instructions for escalating-including through building occupations and violence." The Benjamin Franklin statue on College Green was vandalized numerous times, and one of those times, the incident is being investigated as a "hate crime." The Penn Police crime logs even include "terroristic threats" at the encampment site. The non-Penn-affiliated members of the encampment were committing illegal trespass. None of these actions have anything to do with free speech.

In addition, it is important that the right to free speech itself is not without limits, and few constitutional legal experts have claimed otherwise. I would contend that the waving of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine flag, a United States Department of State-designated terrorist organization, while simultaneously chanting "Al Qassam, make us proud," (referring to another recognized terrorist group that has committed countless atrocities) are actions that have no place on college campuses. These are examples of hate speech that incites violence. It is troubling that professors are encouraging this to continue and trying to misrepresent that reality.

Political science professor Anne Norton tweeted "Our students remained peaceful at every point. Even the administration does not dispute that." Yet, the administration could not have been clearer when they said, "Every day the encampment exists, the campus is less safe. Some have aimed to characterize this as a peaceful protest. It is not."

Philosophy professor Sukaina Hirji stated during the AAUP-Penn press conference that to her, "Seeing hundreds of cops in riot gear arrest students and faculty sends to me, and to my students and to all of us, a very clear message about what conversations are and are not allowed on Penn's campus going forward." But when you look at the police records, only nine out of 33 of those arrested were students. So, the argument that students were driving the protest is simply false. To me, every time I walked past the encampment, it was fairly clear that a super minority of the encampment seemed even the age of a college student. And again, claiming this is about "conversations" avoids the issues of conduct entirely.

Another professor, Sarah Jackson, stated that the University's messaging was "veering

dangerously towards propaganda." She described the encampment as a space for, "education, debate, community, and politics." This simply is not true. The encampment consistently did not allow anyone whom they deemed as "Zionist" to enter the encampment. A CNN reporter even showed how few of the protesters engaged with him. From my understanding, debate is difficult when you do not even want people with opposing views to be near you. Chabad Rabbi Levi Haskelevich was even physically blocked from entering the encampment, but somehow there is no condemnation of this behavior by the AAUP-Penn's press conference. Her defense of the protesters was that the students were "genuinely trying to learn." What is mind-boggling to me is that the entire University is set up for students to learn. There is no need, especially at a university, to set up an encampment in the heart of campus when there is ample infrastructure to educate students.

Elliot and Roslyn Jaffe Endowed Professor in Film Studies Karen Redrobe made a similar point. She stated that Penn has an obligation to "protect academic freedom and the free exchange of ideas." She continued, according to The Daily Pennsylvanian, to compare what Penn did to fascist governments in the 1930s to eliminate free speech. To compare Penn breaking up an unlawful encampment, after countless warnings, to Nazi Germany's actions is appalling and disingenuous. In Nazi Germany, the fascist government passed the "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service" in 1933, firing and barring the vast majority of Jewish professors. They then proceeded to pass the "Law Against Overcrowding in Schools and Universities" to remove Jewish students to "Aryanize" the university. This bears little resemblance to the removal of an encampment on the grounds of a violation of Penn's policy, state law, and federal law.

Then there was Arabic literature professor Huda Fakhreddine who described Penn's response as "shameful behavior" and what she described as an ongoing "attack" on pro-Palestinian voices. Yet, Fakhreddeine herself posted on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, describing faculty members who went to Israel as "insolent, depraved, and morally bankrupt." It seems as though it is not the University that is attacking pro-Palestinian voices, but her who is attacking pro-Israel voices. Once more, she described the administration's actions as shameful behavior but failed to mention the illegal behavior of the encampment.

It is disappointing how faculty are encouraging the unlawful and unjust behavior of the protesters. It is their encouragement that led to protests surrounding the President's House, with some even entering the house's gates. That is what shameful behavior is: getting a mob of people to target someone's house. But these professors would never report on that because it is that very behavior that is encouraged by the statement they put out. What is most troubling is that it is the students who will ultimately have criminal records as a result of this encouragement. Moreover, if their ultimate goal is to help the Palestinian cause, they should look to productive means of peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians. This unlawful behavior distracts from what is important. Instead of defending and encouraging the behavior, they should distance themselves from it. I believe in debate and free speech; what I find problematic is the

mischaracterization of reality which further puts students in harm's way.

EYAL YAKOBY is a College senior studying political science and modern Middle East studies. His email is eyakoby@sas.upenn.edu.

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