

# How did Columbia become the Epicenter of Global Pro-Palestinian Campus Protests?

By Jerry Gordon



Columbia University Gaza Protest Palestinian Flag Hamilton Hall renamed "Hind" Hall April 30, 2024

**A Discussion with John Adams, Brig. Gen US Army (ret.) and Columbia University Graduate Business School Alumnus Senior Editor Jerry Gordon**

*Watch this YouTube video of the discussion and the following text [here.](#)*

[View](#) *Pictures of Break-in and Occupancy of Columbia University Hamilton Hall by Gaza Pro-Palestinian and NYPD ejection April 30<sup>th</sup> – May 1, 2024*

## **History of Student Activist Protests at Columbia and Rise of Students for Justice in Palestine**

- 1968 Vietnam War SDS protests and seizure of Hamilton Hall and Administrator Hostage taking resulting in NYPD arrests spark over 800 US campus protests and tragic 1970 Kent State University in Ohio National Guard intervention and killing of four students.
- 1980s South African Apartheid and Divestment Campus Protests
- Two-decade rise of National Students for Justice in Palestine NJSP and Jewish Voices for Peace (JVP) and launch of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic Protests on more than 150 US Campuses, including Columbia.
- Israel GAZA war triggered by October 7, 2023, barbarous pogrom by HAMAS killing more than 1,200 Israel civilians, displacing over 100,000 in northern and southern Israel, and estimated 34,000 civilian and terrorist death toll triggering NJSP and JVP civil disobedience protests in the US and western countries.
- More than 150 NJSP chapters are joined by 80 Campus groups from Emerson University in Boston, Amherst College, Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, Columbia University, New York University, Fordham University and City University of New York, University of Pennsylvania, Emory University in Atlanta, Tulane University in New Orleans, University of Texas in Austin, University of Michigan, Indiana University, University of Southern California, Portland State University in Oregon and UCLA culminating in pitched battles between pro-Palestinian and Pro-Israeli groups. Pro-Palestinian Encampment locations are disbanded by local police.

## Rise of Pro-Palestinian Columbia Faculty and Anti- Israel and Anti- Semitic programs



[Edward Said](#), a Palestinian Christian member of the Palestinian National Council and author of [Orientalism](#), a follower of [Frantz Fanon](#), who advocated revolutionary violence, was hired as Professor of Comparative Literature faculty. Following IDF's withdrawal from the Southern Lebanon security zone In 2000, he showed up on the Lebanon-Israel border in a rock-throwing incident. In a controversial 1989 *Commentary Magazine* [opinion](#), Edward Alexander called him a "Professor of Terror."



In 2003, Palestinian National Council member and University of Chicago professor [Rashid Khalidi](#) was hired as Columbia University Edward Said Professor of Modern Arab Studies, with a \$4 million endowment funded by private trusts and a Saudi oil company to establish the Palestinian Studies Center. He was the editor of the Journal of Palestine Studies and the author of *The Hundred Years War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance*.

- a \$4.3 million endowed Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies program was established in 1980.
- 2003 Columbia School of International Public Affairs Dean Lisa Anderson and Muslim members of the faculty held an anti-Israel Apartheid Conference with Israeli Leftist activists and South African University faculty.



Columbia hired [Lee C. Bollinger](#), a noted US Constitution First Amendment and Free Speech scholar and former President of the University of Michigan and Dean of the University of Michigan Law School, as president.

2004-5 [Columbia Unbecoming](#) controversial documentary by Americans for Peace and Tolerance team of Charles Jacobs and Avi Goldwasser reveals anti-Israel and anti-Semitic treatment of Jewish Students by members of the Middle East Language Arts and Culture (MELAC) program, notably Jordanian Christian [Joseph Massad](#), Professor of Modern Arab Politics and Intellectual History who despite evidence of anti-Semitic statements by Jewish students in documentary wins tenure. At her US House Testimony on April 24, 2024, Columbia President Minouche Shafik said, "If it were up to her, Professor Massad would never have been given tenure."



In 2007, a [cabal](#) of three pro-Islamic Republic of Iran faculty members of Columbia's SIPA invited Iranian President Ahmadinejad to give a lecture while attending UN General Assembly Meetings in New York. Columbia President Bollinger defended the invitation, which led to a controversy over Ahmadinejad's [speech](#), during which he called for "erasing" the Jewish state from the Middle East.

- On October 21, 2009, pro-Israel anti-Jihadist activists working with Columbia Young Republicans [invited](#)



controversial Dutch Parliamentarian Geert Wilders, leader of Party for Freedom (PVV) and now Prime Minister-elect of the Netherlands, to speak at Columbia on “free speech” threats in Europe. Wilders [made](#) the point that, in Europe and increasingly America, “free speech is no longer a given,” and, noting his need for twenty-four-hour police protection, claimed he “would not consider [himself] as a free man in [the free speech] fight anymore.” He noted The Quran is, unfortunately, an evil book. [...] If you don’t believe in every part of the Quran, you are a renegade. [...] And finally:] There is no such thing as a moderate Islam.”

- 2016 Columbia Chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and Jewish Voices for Peace (SJP) formed the Columbia University Campus Coalition for Apartheid Divest.
- In 2018 and 2020, the Campus Coalition [won](#) student votes at Barnard College Student Governing Association and Columbia College Student Council for the University endowment to divest investment holdings of Israeli companies, both of which were declined by President Bollinger.



- In July 2023, President Bollinger retired to become Seth Law Professor at Columbia Law School. The Board of Trustees elected

Baroness [Minouche Shafik](#), a Distinguished Economist and Member of the House of Lords of Britain, as Columbia's 20<sup>th</sup> President.

- On October 23, 2023, the Columbia SJP and JVP chapters staged a "walkout" calling for the end of violence in GAZA, divestment of Israeli companies, and cancellation of the Tel Aviv Global Center opening. The event was unauthorized. In November 2023, the SJP and JVP chapters were suspended and dropped from funding for the fall term for violating the 10-day prior notification rule. That was objected to by the Executive Committee of Columbia chapter of the Association of American University Professors (AAUP).
- On March 23, 2024, the Columbia Chapters of SJP and JVP, backed by the New York Civil Liberties Union, filed suit in Federal Court against Columbia for violating First Amendment Free Speech Rights.
- **Prelude to Columbia Pro Palestinian Encampment Denouement**
- Professor Rashid Khalidi retires on March 20, 2024, as the Head of the History Department of the Palestinian Studies Center.



- On April 9, 2024, the Columbia SJP chapter started a petition that garnered over 8,000 signatures accusing Assistant Professor Shai Davidshai of the Department of Management at the Graduate School of Business of "bullying Palestinian Students of color with complete immunity despite being untenured. Under the guise of fighting antisemitism, Davidshai used his Twitter and Instagram accounts to incite harassment and violence against these students." *Columbia Spectator*

[wrote](#) on April 19th, “A video of his criticizing Columbia’s response to the October 7th pogrom by Hamas promoted the official State of Israel to repost Davidai’s comments.” Professor Davidshai of #endJewHatred was denied entry on April 25, 2023 to the Morningside Campus quadrangle



Columbia Students Supporting Israel meet US House Committee Chair Virginia Foxx (NC-R) and  
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- **Columbia Students Supporting Israel meet US House Committee Chair Virginia Foxx (NC-R) and NY US Rep. Elise Stefanik**
  - On April 17, 2024, Columbia University President Minouche Shafik, who refused to appear on December 5, 2023, hearing in Washington, DC, along with Presidents of Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, and MIT, presented testimony before the US House Committee on Education and Workforce investigating “Columbia in Crisis: Columbia University’s Response to Antisemitism.” She testified with the board of trustees co-chairs Claire Shipman, CC ’86, SIPA ’94, David Greenwald, Law ’83, and Task Force on Antisemitism co-chair David Schizer. Members of Columbia Students Supporting Israel (SSI) also appeared at a press

conference with US House Committee Chair Virginia Foxx (R) of North Carolina and New York US Representative Elise Stefanie (R). That evening, President Shafik gave an order for NYPD to clear campus Pro-Palestinian Encampment protests, arresting 108.

- April 25, 2024, 4,360 Columbia University Jewish alumni, staff, students, parents and
- Community members signed a letter calling for adherence to university and federal education civil rights policies under Article VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. As the unauthorized Gaza solidarity encampment on the University south lawn enters its second week, the undersigned requests “enhanced security measures protection of academic activities and offer support and partnership to secure safety, speech, and civility on Morningside Heights campus.” The letter provided examples of anti-Semitic and anti-Israel slogans of protestors, noting, “There are reports of death threats, calls for violence, physical assault of students and stealing of their property, explicit support of terrorist organizations, and calls for ethnic cleansing.”
- On May 1, 2024, Protesters broke in at Hamilton Hall, declaring Intifada University. President Shafik ordered the NYPD to enter Columbia, and 75 were arrested after negotiations broke down.
- Across the US, more than 40 University Campuses erupted in confrontation with pro-Palestinian encampments and local police, with more than 2,200 arrested with a significant number of non-student activists. Officials say that nearly half of NYC arrests involved people not affiliated with schools.



- May 2, 2024 New York City officials [said](#) many people arrested this week at campus demonstrations were not affiliated with the schools. The mayor said that nearly 30% of the people arrested at Columbia were unaffiliated with the university and 60% of the arrests at City College involved people who weren't affiliated with that school.

Dozens of people have been arraigned in New York. The district attorney said 46 people detained at Columbia have been charged with criminal trespass, and 22 people detained at City College were arraigned on one count of burglary and obstructing governmental administration.

At a news conference, Ben Chang, Columbia's vice president of communications, said 13 people arrested inside Hamilton Hall were not affiliated with the university, six were from affiliated institutions, 14 were Columbia undergrads, nine were Columbia grad students, and two were Columbia employees.

The Manhattan DA's office said 22 people were arraigned at CCNY on one count each of third-degree burglary and obstructing governmental administration.

They "unlawfully gained entry" to a CCNY building and "erected barricades to prevent police from entering the building," the DA's office said. They also blocked doors with furniture and threw items at police, it alleged.

New York City officials said that 29% of the 112 people arrested on May 2nd in protests at Columbia were not affiliated with the school.

That breaks down to the arrests of 32 nonstudents and 80 students, Mayor Eric Adams and NYPD Commissioner Edward A. Caban said in a joint statement.

The same day, 170 people were arrested at a protest at City College of New York. In that instance, the statement said 60% of those arrested, or 102 people, were not affiliated with CCNY.

According to the statement, the NYPD's process to identify whether those arrested were affiliated with either school has been slowed, as most did not cooperate with police and refused to provide the information.

The statement added that many arrested adhered to self-described rules for entering their encampments, "one of which included not talking to or divulging any information to members of the NYPD."

The statement said charges have ranged from burglary, obstructing governmental administration, and criminal mischief to resisting arrest, trespassing, and disorderly conduct.

- May 2, 2024, US House of Representatives [passes](#) Antisemitism Awareness Act by vote of 320 to 91, with 70 Democrats and 21 Republicans voting against the bill. The measure would codify the definition of antisemitism put forward by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, endeavoring to assist in investigations by the US Department of Education of antisemitism on college

campuses under the provisions of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. If passed by the US Senate, the result of investigations by the USD0E could result in a cutoff of Federal funding. Opponents criticize the Act for violating “protective speech “under the US Constitution’s First Amendment. To date 18 US States have adopted IHRA by executive action.

### **National Survey of Student Views on Pro-Palestinian Protests.**

- A *Los Angeles Times* [article](#) on student fears of campus protest threats cited a University of Chicago study by Robert Pape, Political Science professor and Director of the Chicago Project on Security Threats Program, which documented the fears and reasons for both Encampment supporters and Jewish students’ attitudes on college campuses 58% of Jewish students and 52 % of Muslims feared for safety since the October 7<sup>th</sup> pogrom by Hamas in Israel. 16% of students with neither background expressed similar fears- equivalent to 3 million students nationwide. 10% of Students would permit calls for genocide against Jews, and 13 % deserved it when attacked.

### **Who is Funding Pro-Palestinian Campus Protests?**



Investigations reveal that the major funders of NJSP groups involved with campus protests were the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Soros Open Society Fund, Tides Foundation of the political Pritzker family, and WESPAC Foundation (Westchester Peace Action Committee—the financial arm of WOL—Within our Lifetime). A former SJP leader founded WOL. Funds are routed through WESPAC-a, a small non-profit headed by former Orthodox Jew and leftist activist Howard Horowitz. Horowitz, who lived in Israel for a time, is cited in a *Times of Israel* [article](#) saying: “Israel has displaced, dispossessed and dehumanized -and is now annihilating- those who would be embraced as equals according to Jewish values I believe in and value.”

- **Examples of Effective University Leadership during Protests**

- Several examples of University Presidents who acted promptly to put down student protests are [President Jay Hartzell](#) of the University of Texas in Austin, [Chancellor Daniel Diermeier](#) of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, and former US Senator Ben Sasse, President of the University of Florida. Sasse adopted codes of appropriate student

conduct. Sasse, in a May 3, 2024, *Wall Street Journal* [article](#), wrote:

“Actions have consequences. At the University of Florida, we have repeatedly, patiently explained two things to protesters: We will always defend your rights to free speech and free assembly—but if you cross the line on clearly prohibited activities, you will be thrown off campus and suspended. In Gainesville, this means a three-year prohibition from campus. That’s serious. We said it. We meant it. We enforced it.”

**Delusion of Students that Divesting Israeli and American Companies supplying Military assistance works.**

- University endowments are structured to develop significant returns for portfolio growth utilizing hedge and index funds. That makes divestment nearly impossible, according to education financial analysts. They were narrowly defined when Northwestern and Brown University negotiated agreements with campus protesters. Most major universities followed President Shafik’s example of denying pro-Palestinian protesters’ petition to divest Israel’s investment holdings. Northwestern Law Professor Max Schazenbach, in a *Wall Street Journal* [article](#) on May 6, 2024, cited another roadblock: “Israel Divestment Is a legal Risk for College Trustees If they give in to protesters’ demands, they’re likely violating fiduciary duty and exposing themselves to personal liability.”

**Finale at Columbia University- Cancellation of Commencement at Protest Site.**



- After clearing the Morningside Campus of the Gaza Encampment Protest site on May 3, 2024, in anticipation of the University Commencement scheduled for May 15, the Administration, on May 6th, issued an announcement that it was canceling it. Instead, a series of smaller graduations would be held at Columbia colleges and schools, thereby disappointing the projected audience of more than 50,000 graduates and admiring parents. This act by President Shafik, the university Administration, and Trustees reflected security concerns that still plague Columbia and more than 150 colleges and universities nationwide where the Gaza Encampments erupted led by NJSP JWV chapters assisted by trained outside provocateurs.

One observer [noted](#) that elite universities have used the history of campus protests as a “marketing” tool for applicants praising student activism. Add to that faculty control of appointments and illiberal curricula sidelining Western Civilizational values, and what we have is continual chaos and crisis in Academia, dangerously raising the cultural divide in America

## **Conclusion**

These unauthorized Campus protests fostered global raw anti-Semitism and hatred of Israel defending itself after the October 7<sup>th</sup> HAMAS barbarous pogrom in Gaza. The attack was the largest mass murder of Jews since the Holocaust, killing men, raping women, defiling remains, and burning 1,200 Israeli citizens. Over 230 Israeli and foreign hostages aged 14 months to 85 years, including US Citizens,

were taken to Gaza by the “elite” Hamas Nuhkba Force. While 105 Hostages have been released in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, HAMAS is believed to hold less than 80 of the remaining hostages. The HAMAS October 7<sup>th</sup> attack displaced more than 200,000 internally, literally shrinking the size of the sovereign Jewish nation.

And still, these US campuses erupt as long as HAMAS refuses to release Israeli hostages, both alive and dead, while Israel pursues justice with the launch of the long-awaited Rafah phase of IDF Operation Swords of Iron. Meanwhile, the toll in Gaza has risen past 35,000, of which an estimated 14,000 may be HAMAS terrorists and more than 21,000 civilians, adults, and children. The Palestinians in Rafah are the equivalent of human shields to the indifferent HAMAS leaders encamped in underground tunnels of the Gaza Metro surrounded by Israeli hostages as bargaining chips for the release of hundreds if not thousands of Palestinian terrorist prisoners held by Israel.