



Anti-Israel Extremism and Corrupt Scholarship at Brown University:

**How Middle East and Palestinian
Studies Fuel Antisemitism**

CAMERA

**Committee for Accuracy in
Middle East Reporting and Analysis**

Anti-Israel Extremism and Corrupt Scholarship at Brown University

How Middle East and Palestinian Studies Fuel Antisemitism

I.	Introduction	2
II.	Background	3
III.	Bigotry and Extremism: From Birzeit University to Brown University	6
a.	Doumani at Birzeit	7
i.	<i>Student Elections Boost Hamas, Honor Terrorism</i>	7
ii.	<i>Rallies and Parades for Terror on Campus</i>	9
iii.	<i>The University Itself Glorified Terrorism</i>	12
iv.	<i>The Consequence: Students Incited to Terrorism</i>	12
v.	<i>The Other Consequence: The Absence of Academic Freedom</i>	14
b.	Antisemitism at Brown	15
i.	<i>Denying Jewish Identity & Peoplehood</i>	16
ii.	<i>Jews as “Settler-Colonizers”</i>	17
iii.	<i>Combating “Anti-Antisemitism” Instead of Antisemitism</i>	19
iv.	<i>Teaching Hatred</i>	21
c.	Extremism at Brown	23
i.	<i>Legitimizing the Violent Denial of Jewish Heritage</i>	23
ii.	<i>Glorifying Terrorists and their Organizations</i>	25
IV.	Contextualizing the Extremism: Postmodernism and Critical Theory	27
a.	Middle East Studies	27
b.	An Explicit Activist Mission	28
c.	The Enthusiastic Embracing of Subjectivity, Postmodernism, and Critical Theory	30
d.	Reinventing Academic Freedom	33
V.	Conclusion	36

I. Introduction

On October 7, 2023, the American public awoke to two horrific realities. First, there were the unspeakable mass atrocities committed by Palestinian terrorists in Israel. Then, there was the open glorification and justification for those atrocities on American campuses. University students and faculty members celebrated the torture and slaughter of innocent Jews.

This report is a case study on how we got to this point.

Concerns expressed to us by Brown University students and alumni prompted CAMERA to begin investigating antisemitism and extremism at Brown University earlier this year. What we found emanating from Brown University's Center for Middle East Studies (CMES) was profoundly disturbing. But more importantly, what we found helps explain why 47 student organizations at Brown University have openly declared that the 10/7 atrocities – including the murder, torture, rape, mutilation, burning alive of 1200 Israelis and other innocents and the kidnapping of hundreds were a “just” action by Palestinian terrorists. The extremist and morally reprehensible rhetoric flows directly from the teachings we uncovered at Brown University, which espouse antisemitic narratives and conspiracy theories while justifying terrorist violence against the Jewish state.

This report is based on a review of dozens of course syllabi and dozens of recordings from CMES events from just the last few years. In particular, it focuses on the Palestinian studies initiatives and courses within CMES. What we found is that rather than studying the Palestinian people, professors and guests spend an inordinate amount of time weaving antisemitic conspiracy theories, denying Jewish peoplehood, and engaging in overt antisemitism, including blood libels. Instead of engaging in the objective, disinterested, and rigorous study of the role indoctrination and terrorism have played in Palestinian society, terrorists and their organizations are glorified and legitimized.

The original aim of this report was to highlight the disturbing way in which Palestinian Studies, nestled underneath the university's Middle East Studies department, has worked to indoctrinate students in bigoted and extremist worldviews, rather than educate critical thinkers well versed in the facts, issues and events facing Palestinians, Israelis, and the broader Middle East. There is no greater evidence of this failure than the morally obscene reaction of far too many Brown University faculty members and students to the 10/7 Massacre.

The hope is that this report will serve as a call to action not just for Brown University leadership, in light of their Title VI obligations to protect Jewish and Israeli students. But the lessons of this report extend beyond Providence, Rhode Island. Those behind the radicalization at Brown University openly declare their intention to spread this particularly radical concept of Palestinian studies to other academic institutions. University leaders throughout the United States must be on

guard against the spread of these extremist, fundamentally anti-intellectual ideologies that by their very nature harm academic freedom.

The report is divided into several sections. It begins with a review of what happened at Birzeit University while Beshara Doumani, the founding director of Brown's Center for Middle East Studies and the Mahmoud Darwish Professor in Palestinian Studies, served as president for two years. The environment at Birzeit under his tenure serves to illustrate the extremism Doumani not only tolerated but helped foster. Indeed, we have already seen the same brand of extremism found at Birzeit University begin to manifest at Brown University.

The report then provides an overview of the antisemitism and extremism that have characterized Middle East and Palestinian Studies programming and curricula at Brown University. The examples provided are by no means exhaustive. Moreover, while the available course material provides important information about the direction of the courses, the rhetoric used in the classes themselves, behind closed doors, is unavailable for the public. Based on the materials reviewed, there is little doubt that the associated commentary by instructors/professors, who have elsewhere expressed extremist anti-Israel views, are amplifying the themes outlined.

Finally, the report will contextualize all of this information in the broader academic picture. As have far too many academic programs, Brown University's Middle East and Palestinian Studies programs have embraced postmodernist and critical theory approaches, largely to the exclusion of any other theories or paradigms and with disregard for basic facts. The key difference is that at Brown, it has been taken to an extreme. Anti-Israel, anti-Zionist, and antisemitic explanations are treated as truths, while counterarguments and considerations are automatically dismissed as a conspiracy by hidden "colonial" powers (i.e., Zionists). A particular concern here, too, is the approach to the concept of academic freedom.

The American public and its policymakers need genuine scholarship on the subjects raised in this report. Unfortunately, at Brown University, rigorous, open, and serious study of the Middle East and Palestinian issues is not happening. Instead, students are being indoctrinated in a rigid, antisemitic ideology sure to fuel the truly disturbing surge in antisemitic attacks and attitudes in the United States. Brown University's leadership must decide: Is hate-indoctrination the legacy they want to bequeath?

II. Background

Before delving into the antisemitism and extremism occurring within Middle East and Palestinian Studies at Brown University, it's necessary to introduce the programs and the players.

Brown University's Center for Middle East Studies (CMES) was established in 2012, underneath the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, with Professor Beshara Doumani

serving as director. In 2018, Professor Shahzad Bashir would succeed Doumani as the CMES director, before himself being replaced by Professor Nadje Al-Ali three years later.¹

Almost simultaneous with the creation of the CMES was the establishment of the “New Directions in Palestinian Studies” (NDPS) by Doumani. An initiative under CMES, NDPS has held annual conferences on the topic of Palestinian Studies, as well as “programming, an endowed postdoctoral fellowship and a book series with the University of California Press.” Over the years, numerous events have been held and initiatives created on the topic of Israel and the Palestinians. The NDPS book series includes seven publications, with titles such as “The Endurance of Palestinian Political Factions,” “Nakba and Survival,” and “Rethinking Statehood in Palestine.”²

In 2020, the Palestinian Studies at Brown received a significant boost. Doumani succeeded in convincing a number of donors to endow a professorship on Palestinian studies, called the “Mahmoud Darwish Professorship in Palestinian Studies,” a position which was then immediately granted to Doumani himself. It’s not clear who all the donors are, but at least one of them is the Munib and Angela Masri Foundation. Munib Masri is an influential and well-connected Palestinian industrialist, a “self-made energy billionaire” who made his money in the oil and gas industry.³ Masri was a close confidant of Yasser Arafat, and even served as a minister in Arafat’s “cabinet” in the 1990s.⁴

In 2021, Doumani was appointed as president of Birzeit University – a Palestinian university in Ramallah – for a period of two years. Doumani took a sabbatical in 2022-23 from Brown, and during this period, Professor Abdel Razzaq Takriti assumed the role in a visiting capacity.⁵

Under NDPS, “Visiting Fellows in Palestinian Studies” have also been brought to Brown University, including Noura Erakat, Rema Hammami, and Ruba Salih. Erakat, the most notable of the three, is a professor at Rutgers University and is well-known for her inflammatory and often outlandish claims, with a tendency to redefine Zionism as being akin to Nazism.⁶ Erakat has expressed her opposition to allowing Jews to remain in Judea and Samaria even if Israel is replaced with a Palestinian state between the river and the sea: “Saying that the settlers will

¹ *New Middle East Studies Director Shahzad Bashir*, Brown University Center for Middle East Studies, 24 August 2018, <https://watson.brown.edu/cmesc/announcement/shahzad-bashir/director>.

² *Book Series*, Palestinian Studies, <https://palestinianstudies.org/book-series> (last visited 29 September 2023).

³ It is somewhat ironic that Brown University accepts donations from those whose riches came from the fossil fuel industry while at the same time publicly celebrating itself for disinvesting in fossil fuels. See *Letter from President Paxson: Brown’s actions on climate change*, Brown University, 4 March 2020, <https://www.brown.edu/news/2020-03-04/climate>.

⁴ Raphael Ahren, *World’s richest Palestinian, long a strident peace advocate, slams Israel for ‘giving us crumbs’*, Times of Israel, 10 June 2012 <https://www.timesofisrael.com/despite-reputation-as-peacenik-the-worlds-richest-palestinian-has-some-tough-love-for-israel/>.

⁵ *Annual Report 2022-2023*, Brown University Center for Middle East Studies, https://watson.brown.edu/cmesc/files/cmesc/imce/media/print/AnnualReports/report2023_web.pdf (hereinafter, “Annual Report 2022-2023”).

⁶ See, e.g., Andrew E. Harrod, *Noura Erakat Unleashed: ‘Zionism Is a Bedfellow of Nazism’*, The Algemeiner, 21 April 2022, <https://www.algemeiner.com/2022/04/21/noura-erakat-unleashed-zionism-is-a-bedfellow-of-nazism/>.

never leave, that they will stay forever, no one will accept that because it is no more moral than accepting the two-state solution.”⁷ Erakat opposes the existence of the State of Israel in any guise.

Brown also provides for positions as “Postdoctoral Research Associate in Palestinian Studies.” Loubna Qutami, notable for being a co-founder of the extremist organization Palestinian Youth Movement,⁸ is filling that position for the 2023-24 academic year.⁹ Her organization has emerged as one of the most extreme anti-Israel student organizations. It is known, in particular, for its constant glorification of terrorism and efforts to platform convicted terrorists responsible for the murder of civilians.¹⁰

Several other Brown University professors feature prominently in relevant MES courses, such as Adi Ophir and Ariella Azoulay. Both are well known for their extreme and often overtly antisemitic statements. Ophir, for example, has referred to Israel as “the garbage heap of Europe.”¹¹ Azoulay infamously blackened images of Jewish people in pre-state Israel because, in her words, she “can’t bear to look at them.”¹²

Importantly, the extreme bias found in the Center for Middle East Studies is not isolated. According to research by the AMCHA Initiative,¹³ Brown University has one of the highest numbers of faculty (103) supporting the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement against Israel. While New York University has a handful more (129), it also has six times as many faculty members. An AMCHA Initiative also found that “the presence and number of faculty who expressed support for an academic boycott of Israel prior to the onset of the [2021] Israel-Hamas war were strongly and reliably associated with every measure of faculty and student-

⁷ Frank Barat, *The Two-State Solution Has Failed—We Need to Grapple With Palestine's One-State Reality*, AlterNet, 26 November 2013, http://web.archive.org/web/20131202172241/http://www.alternet.org/world/palestines-one-state-reality-interview-noura-erakat-and-leila-farsakh?paging=off¤t_page=1#bookmark (archived version dated 2 December 2013).

⁸ Kate Harvard, *Congress should be wary of Palestinian youth group*, The Hill, 22 April 2017, <https://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/international/329822-congress-should-be-wary-of-palestinian-youth-group/>; see also Loubna Qutami | *Renewal and Revolt in Palestinian Youth Movements*, Brown University Center for Middle East Studies, <https://watson.brown.edu/cmes/events/2023/loubna-qutami-renewal-revolt-palestinian-youth-movements> (last visited September 29, 2023).

⁹ [Annual Report 2022-2023](#).

¹⁰ See, e.g., Aviva Rosenschein, *DC Public Library Denies Request by Infamous Hate Group to Spread Propaganda*, CAMERA on Campus, 9 March 2022, <https://cameraoncampus.org/blog/dc-public-library-denies-request-by-infamous-hate-group-to-spread-propaganda/>; Zac Schilderout, *Hatred Comes to Ann Arbor*, Jewish News Syndicate, 23 January 2020, <https://www.jns.org/hatred-comes-to-ann-arbor/>; Adam Gordon, *Students for Justice in Palestine lies in order to memorialize terrorists*, Jewish News Syndicate, 25 December 2022, <https://www.jns.org/students-for-justice-in-palestine-lies-in-order-to-memorialize-terrorists/>.

¹¹ Yoram Hazony, *The Culture Makers Renounce the Idea of the Jewish State: The Israeli Urge to Suicide*, in THE JEWISH STATE: THE STRUGGLE FOR ISRAEL’S SOUL (A New Republic Book/Basic Books, 2000), available at <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/first/h/hazony-jewish.html>.

¹² *STATEMENT Regarding Recent Antisemitic Lecture Sponsored by Cornell’s College of Architecture, Art, and Planning*, CAMERA on Campus, 26 October 2020, <https://cameraoncampus.org/blog/statement-regarding-recent-antisemitic-lecture-sponsored-by-cornells-college-of-architecture-art-and-planning/>.

¹³ *Faculty Academic Boycotters*, AMCHA Initiative, <https://amchainitiative.org/faculty-academic-bds/#faculty-academic-boycotters/display-by-name/> (last visited December 13, 2023).

perpetrated antisemitic activity...”¹⁴ Nearly one in three faculty members in the Center for Middle East Studies has expressed support for BDS.

III. Bigotry and Extremism: From Birzeit University to Brown University

As explained by the scholar Martin Kramer, Middle East studies matters “not because of what the academics say or write but because of what they teach.”¹⁵ At Brown’s CMES, it is exactly what the academics are teaching students that raises serious concern.

It’s not just that students taking MES courses at Brown are being given such deeply skewed and factually deficient lessons as to leave them completely incapable of seriously comprehending events in the Middle East. It’s also that students are being indoctrinated in a worldview that is steeped in antisemitic conspiracies and which legitimizes extremism and terroristic violence. Jewish people are constantly caricatured and vilified, while their history and identity are twisted and contorted to fit preconceived and ideological frameworks. Fringe Jewish figures are treated as the real Jews. Mainstream Jewry is characterized as either foolish or as harboring sinister motives in furtherance of the great evil of “colonialism.” Meanwhile, rather than simply study the phenomenon and role of terrorism in the region, terrorists are regularly justified and even glorified in CMES curriculum and events.

Much of this has occurred at a time when levels of antisemitic attacks and beliefs have risen dramatically.¹⁶ Recent studies have also shown convincing links between anti-Israel rhetoric, couched in “social justice” terminology, and antisemitic violence in the United States.¹⁷ Given the examples of rhetoric and teachings provided below, the danger is evident.

An important feature of the rhetoric and teachings is that they are provided to the students largely without any additional context or alternative viewpoints.¹⁸ While understanding the faculty’s preferred postmodern and critical theory viewpoints of the Middle East may have some value, the fact that students are largely deprived of any serious consideration of other perspectives or

¹⁴ *Faculty Academic Boycotters: Ground Zero for Campus Antisemitism*, AMCHA Initiative, March 2022, <https://amchainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Faculty-Academic-Boycotters-Antisemitism-Report.pdf>, p.4.

¹⁵ Martin Kramer, *Ivory Towers and Twin Towers, 20 Years Later*, Martin Kramer on the Middle East, 8 March 2022, <https://martinkramer.org/2022/03/08/ivory-towers-and-twin-towers-20-years-later/> (hereinafter, Kramer, March 2022).

¹⁶ Samuel J. Abrams, *New Survey Data Offer Hope for Jewish Students*, American Enterprise Institute, 26 July 2023, <https://www.aei.org/op-eds/new-survey-data-offer-hope-for-jewish-students/>; *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2022*, Anti-Defamation League, 23 March 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/audit-antisemitic-incidents-2022>.

¹⁷ Denver Riggleman, et. al., *Memes, Missiles, and Mobilizations: An Analysis of the 2021 Israel/Hamas Conflict*, Boundless Israel, 2023, https://boundlessisrael.org/Boundless-NCRI%20Report_Memes,%20Missiles,%20and%20Mobilizations.pdf.

¹⁸ For example, reports accusing Israel of “apartheid” are regularly found in course syllabi. However, in none of the syllabi reviewed by CAMERA were there any of the plethora of rebuttals to those reports, including those identifying the many factual errors contained in the accusations. See, e.g., Alex Safian, *Amnesty International’s Big Lie About Israel*, CAMERA, January 31, 2022, <https://www.camera.org/article/amnesty-internationals-big-lie-about-israel/>; Joshua Kern & Anne Herzberg, *Neo-Orientalism: Deconstructing Claims of Apartheid in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, NGO Monitor, March 2022, https://ngo-monitor.org/pdf/NGOMonitor_ApartheidReport_2022.pdf.

arguments indicates the education within Brown's CMES is less about edification and more about indoctrination. Brown's CMES is not training serious scholars or thinkers; they're training ideological activists.

a. Doumani at Birzeit

Relevant to the context and content of Doumani's influence at Brown's CMES is the environment at Birzeit University during his tenure there as president.

Doumani served as president of Birzeit University for a period of two years, beginning in August 2021 and ending in July 2023. During this period, student factions of U.S.-designated terrorist organizations won landslide victories in student elections, military-style parades were repeatedly held on campus, and the murder of Israeli civilians was openly celebrated. Birzeit students even carried out multiple terror attacks against Israelis. Though Birzeit University has long been known as a hotbed of extremism, in some ways, the situation worsened during Doumani's tenure, during which Hamas's capture of the student body and student government became stronger.

i. *Student Elections Boost Hamas, Honor Terrorism*

During Doumani's tenure, two student elections were held at the university. In both, Hamas's student faction, the Islamic Bloc, won stunning landslide victories.¹⁹ But it's not just the fact that a student faction of a U.S.-designated terrorist organization won the student council elections. The campaigns themselves, including those run by the student factions affiliated with groups like Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (also a U.S.-designated terrorist organization), focused on bragging about their respective organization's roles in the murder of Israeli civilians.

A debate during the 2022 student council elections is a perfect example. A member of the Islamic Bloc used the live-streamed debate to boast: "While Fatah's leadership was weeping at the United Nations [during the last Gaza war], the resistance's brigades were firing rockets at the occupied lands."²⁰ Pro-Fatah candidates were no less extreme during the debate. One such student boasted: "Subhi Sbeihat, who executed the Elad operation, is a member of Fatah's youth — he is Fatah!" The "Elad operation" being referenced saw the murder of three Israeli civilians.²¹ Still, the Fatah faction's extremism was not enough, as the Islamic Bloc took 28 of 51 seats on the student council.

¹⁹ Aaron Boxerman, *Hamas wins landslide victory in student elections at flagship Birzeit University*, Times of Israel, 18 May 2022, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-wins-landslide-victory-in-student-elections-at-flagship-birzeit-university/>. (hereinafter, Boxerman, *Hamas wins landslide victory*). Birzeit had long been considered a Fatah stronghold, though this was not the first time Fatah was defeated. Hamas's student faction had won the student elections as far back as November 1993. Cary Nelson, NOT IN KANSAS ANYMORE: ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN PALESTINIAN UNIVERSITIES (Academic Engagement Network, 2021), p.27 (hereinafter, Nelson).

²⁰ Boxerman, *Hamas wins landslide victory*.

²¹ *Id.*

The 2023 election was no different. As captured by Palestinian Media Watch, Fatah's student movement produced a campaign video that featured a parade of "masked men in military garb carrying posters of terrorists," and even a small child in military uniform carrying a toy gun.²² Hamas campaign events, meanwhile, featured similar military-style parades and event backdrops showing pictures of terrorists and rockets.²³ The Islamic Bloc would go on to win 25 of the 51 seats.



[Palestinian Media Watch](#)



[Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center](#)

²² *Terrorist murderers glorified by Fatah student movement in Birzeit University student union election campaign*, Palestinian Media Watch, 7 May 2023, <https://palwatch.org/page/34166>.

²³ *Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (May 24-30, 2023)*, The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 31 May 2023, <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/spotlight-on-terrorism-and-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict-may-24-30-2023/>.

It's important to note that the Islamic Blocs' victories are not merely symbolic. According to the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center:

Victory in the elections for the student union guarantees Hamas control over the agenda of the student council and the university in general, enabling it to wield considerable influence on the student body and to receive funds from the university. In addition, the Hamas student cell serves as a tool for mobilizing public support in the struggle against the [Palestinian Authority]. Hamas also sees the Islamic Bloc as an important lever for locating and recruiting students for its operational needs.²⁴

That is, these victories provide tangible benefits for a U.S.-designated terrorist organization. Such is the level of extremist activity at Birzeit that university officials have admitted that multiple entities, including the French government, have stopped funding the university.²⁵

Yet, it does not appear that Doumani made any serious effort to act against the extremism on display or the danger of a student faction of a U.S.-designated terrorist organization using his university for recruitment and propaganda. Instead, after Hamas's landslide victory at Birzeit in 2022, Doumani was quoted by Palestinian media as saying, "We are also proud of the participation of all spectra of Palestinian national action in these elections," and that the university "is not only a reflection of political currents outside the university, but it should be a compass for the Palestinian community."²⁶

ii. *Rallies and Parades for Terror on Campus*

The glorification of terrorism went far beyond just student council campaigns. Indeed, it was a regular feature of the campus. Despite a 2019 ban on students carrying out "activity of a military nature" at the university,²⁷ such activity was commonplace during Doumani's tenure as the student factions regularly held military-style parades celebrating violence against civilians.

In December 2021, the student faction of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine held a "large-scale military parade to mark the 54th anniversary of the movement's founding, at which dozens of masked and uniformed activists marched on campus wearing mock explosive belts and carrying PFLP flags and emblems, mock rockets, and signs bearing the portraits of terrorists and terror leaders."²⁸ The next day, Hamas's student faction held its own event, at which they

²⁴ *Landslide victory for the Hamas faction in the elections to the Student Union at Birzeit University, another step in establishing Hamas's position in Judea and Samaria*, The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 26 May 2022, https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/app/uploads/2022/06/E_082_22.pdf (hereinafter, ITIC, *Landslide victory for Hamas*).

²⁵ ITIC, *Landslide victory for Hamas*.

²⁶ Ismail Alashwal, *Hamas-Affiliated Bloc Wins Birzeit University Student Elections*, Al-Fanar Media, 19 May 2022, <https://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2022/05/hamas-affiliated-bloc-wins-birzeit-university-student-elections>.

²⁷ ITIC, *Landslide victory for Hamas*.

²⁸ *Defying Ban On Military Activity On Campus, Students At Palestinian Authority Birzeit University Hold Military Parades With Mock Rockets, Explosive Belts*, Middle East Media Research Institute, 16 December 2021, <https://www.memri.org/reports/defying-ban-military-activity-campus-students-palestinian-authority-birzeit-university-hold>.

“saluted the ‘body parts scattered’ in suicide bombings in Israeli cities.”²⁹ In November 2022, Hamas’s student faction held a reception at the university, titled “Ayyash’s Army” after the infamous Hamas bomb-maker Yahya Ayyash. The room was decorated with images of rockets and armed Hamas fighters, while a senior Hamas leader “praised young Palestinians for their ‘willingness to sacrifice and to join the national struggle,’ and called on the students not to give up ‘the freedom to resist and fight the occupation in all ways and by all means.’”³⁰



[Middle East Media Research Institute \(MEMRI\)](#)

In December 2022, the PFLP student faction held another march, “carrying mock explosives, bombs, suicide belts, and rockets” and chanting “Oh, PFLP member, mobilize. Blow up the settler's head!”³¹



[Middle East Media Research Institute \(MEMRI\)](#)

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Praise For Terrorist Yahya 'Ayyash, Initiator Of Hamas' Suicide Bombings, At Palestinian University And On Social Media*, Middle East Media Research Institute, 7 December 2022, <https://www.memri.org/reports/praise-terrorist-yahya-ayyash-initiator-hamas-suicide-bombings-palestinian-university-and>.

³¹ *In Honor Of PFLP's 55th Anniversary, Students At West Bank Birzeit University March In Fatigues, Carry Mock Explosives And Rockets, Chant: Oh, PFLP Member, Mobilize And Blow Up The Settler's Head!*, Middle East Media Research Institute, 12 December 2022, <https://www.memri.org/tv/rally-pflp-anniversary-birzeit-univeristy-west-bank-explosives-rockets-mobilize-blow-up-settlers-head>.

On March 30, 2022, there was a mass rally at Birzeit in support of “the series of quality operations” – a reference to three deadly terror attacks that had recently occurred in Be’er Sheva, Bnei Brak, and Hadera. Students referred to the attacks as “heroic,” and referred to video footage of the attacks as “heartwarming sights.”³² In August 2022, the PFLP’s student faction celebrated on university grounds the anniversary of the terror attack that killed 17-year-old Rina Schnerb, even carrying a mock version of the bomb that killed her.³³ At a November 30, 2022 student assembly rally organized by Fatah’s student faction, a speaker told the crowd: “On the day of war we shall teach the Jews manners, in the [battle] fields we shall speak with bullets, and with our shoe soles we shall stomp on the Jews.”³⁴



[Hadfnnews.ps](https://www.hadfnnews.ps)

³² Twitter Post, @PalPostN, 30 March 2022 (9:55am ET), <https://twitter.com/palpost/status/1509167397441265672>.

³³ بالصورة البندقية هي النهج.. القطب الطلابي بجامعة بيرزيت يُحيي ذكرى عملية عين بوبين البطولية, Hadf News, 23 August 2022, <https://hadfnnews.ps/post/104812/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%87%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%87%D8%AC-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%AA-%D9%8A%D8%AD%D9%8A%D9%8A-%D8%B0%D9%83%D8%B1%D9%89-%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%88>.

³⁴ Facebook Live Video, @Ramallah.post, 30 November 2022 (4:47am ET), <https://www.facebook.com/Ramallah.post/videos/700940304665451/>.

iii. *The University Itself Glorified Terrorism*

Perhaps most obscene is that the glorification of terrorism was not just coming from students. The university did so itself, setting a disturbing example for its student body.

In July 2022, the university's graduation ceremonies began with the administration granting a master's degree to two imprisoned terrorists.³⁵ First up was Zakariya Zubeidi, who was the head of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade in Jenin during the Second Intifada and who was imprisoned again in 2019 for carrying out shooting attacks against Israelis. A university official deemed Zubeidi's degree as "a success for Palestine, for the fighter's rifle." Another degree was then given to Assaf Zahran, who was involved in a suicide bombing operation that killed five Israelis, including two children.

In June 2023, Doumani participated in a book launching at Birzeit University for a biography of Fadi Washaha, written by his sister and Birzeit staff member, Rania Washaha. Fadi was killed during clashes in 2021 while hurling stones at Israeli soldiers. Previously, Fadi had carried out a shooting attack with his brother Muataz, before the pair fled back to Birzeit.³⁶ Doumani watched as Rania told attendees:

Like other Palestinian martyrs, he believed in living a dignified life. Fadi believed that fighting the occupation and rejecting its existence is the simplest right of the unarmed Palestinian who stands strong against the oppression of the Zionist machine.³⁷

Doumani himself spoke at the event, apparently unconcerned about ramifications of glorifying students who carry out terror attacks. As elaborated below, the danger of an environment that celebrates terrorism on young men and women is not hypothetical.

iv. *The Consequence: Students Incited to Terrorism*

While students proudly parade replicas of child-murdering bombs and celebrate the carnage wrought by suicide bombers, far too many Birzeit students have ended up opting to participate in terrorism themselves. Over the last two years, numerous students have carried out attacks on Israelis or been caught involved in terror plots.

Several Birzeit students were killed while carrying out terror attacks during Doumani's term. 20-year-old Amer Haliba was killed in November 2022 after stabbing an Israeli policeman in the

³⁵ Maurice Hirsch, *Palestinian terrorist murderer finishes MA in Israeli prison*, Palestinian Media Watch, 18 July 2022, <https://palwatch.org/page/31846>.

³⁶ פוענחו שני פיגועי ירי באיר"ש, Shin Bet, 23 March 2014, <http://web.archive.org/web/20200813033601/https://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/Pages/240314NewItem.aspx> (archived version dated 13 August 2020).

³⁷ *Department of Political Science launches book by Rania Washaha commemorating her brother*, Birzeit University, 10 June 2023, <https://www.birzeit.edu/en/news/departments-political-science-launches-book-rania-washaha-commemorating-her-brother>.

Old City.³⁸ A symbolic funeral was organized by the student council at Birzeit, during which the council chairman celebrated that, according to him, Judea and Samaria had become “hell for Israel and the settlers” following the surge in terror attacks. A few weeks later, 21-year-old Zapher Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Jawad al-Rimawi, a member of Fatah’s Shabiba, was killed while throwing Molotov cocktails at IDF soldiers.³⁹ Zapher’s brother, Jawad Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Jawad al-Rimawi, a recent Birzeit graduate, was also killed in that incident. In March 2023, a 23-year-old student, Yazen Omar Khasib, was killed attempting to carry out a stabbing attack near the Baytin Junction.⁴⁰ Khasib was given a military funeral.

Other students have been caught by authorities engaging in terrorist activity. In April 2023, an Islamic Bloc student, Omar Abadin, was arrested before he could carry out a planned shooting attack on a bus in Jerusalem.⁴¹ In October 2022, a network of Hamas student operatives at Birzeit was apprehended, and it was revealed they were in touch with senior Hamas leaders and involved in smuggling funds from Turkey for the purposes of terrorist activity.⁴² Numerous other students have been arrested in recent years for their involvement in internationally designated terrorist organizations, too.⁴³

It is also worth noting that the violence has not only been targeted at Israelis. Violence has also occurred between student factions at Birzeit, such as a December 2021 brawl.⁴⁴

Yet it’s not evident that Doumani took any serious steps to discourage students from resorting to terroristic violence and clamping down on the ability of terrorist organizations to use his university as recruitment grounds. Instead, for example, when five Hamas-affiliated Birzeit students were arrested, Doumani’s administration responded by suspending “all disciplinary

³⁸ *Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (November 1-8, 2022)*, The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 11 September 2022, <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/spotlight-on-terrorism-and-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict-november-1-8-2022/>.

³⁹ *Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (November 22-29, 2022)*, The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 30 November 2022, <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/spotlight-on-terrorism-and-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict-november-22-29-2022/>; Emanuel Fabian, *3 Palestinians, 2 of them brothers, shot dead in clashes with IDF*, Times of Israel, 29 November 2022, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/3-palestinians-2-of-them-brothers-said-shot-dead-in-clashes-with-idf/>.

⁴⁰ *Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (March 15-21, 2023)*, The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 22 March 2023, <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/spotlight-on-terrorism-and-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict-march-15-21-2023/>.

⁴¹ *Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (March 29 – April 3, 2023)*, The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 4 April 2023, <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/spotlight-on-terrorism-and-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict-march-29-april-3-2023/>.

⁴² *Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (September 21 – October 3, 2022)*, The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 6 October 2022, <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/fspotlight-on-terrorism-and-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict-september-21-october-3-2022/>.

⁴³ E.g., *Israel halts visits to Jewish shrine in Nablus indefinitely amid security escalation*, Times of Israel, 30 September 2022, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-halts-visits-to-jewish-shrine-in-nablus-indefinitely-amid-security-escalation/>.

⁴⁴ Amr El-Tohamy, *Student Violence on Palestinian Campuses Leaves 1 Dead and Many Questions*, Al-Fanar Media, 13 December 2021, <https://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2021/12/student-violence-on-palestinian-campuses/>.

measures against student activists over activities during the previous weeks,” rather than effectively counsel against involvement in terrorist organizations.⁴⁵

The obvious concern emanating from Doumani’s time at Birzeit is that he has been the driving force for much of the last decade for Middle East and Palestinian studies at Brown. His actions, and inaction, in the face of these pro-terror incidents at Birzeit raise questions about the direction he has taken the programs at Brown. As shown below, since the establishment of the Center for Middle East Studies and his flagship New Directions in Palestinian Studies, antisemitic conspiracy theories and rhetoric have been commonplace. Worse, there have been numerous instances of justifying and even glorifying terrorism at Brown itself.

It should also be noted there is no evidence that Brown’s senior leadership voiced concern about Doumani’s activities during this time. Whether they were oblivious to the reality that he was leading a pro-terrorist student hub and that he was even voicing encouragement for aspects of the activity, or whether Brown leaders knew and shrugged off the activity, isn’t clear.

v. The Other Consequence: The Absence of Academic Freedom

Another consequence, which has been written about extensively by the scholar Cary Nelson, is the elimination of any real sense of academic freedom at Birzeit University. In his books, *Not in Kansas Anymore* and *Israel Denial*, Nelson provides numerous real examples of how more moderate Palestinian academics have been attacked and driven off Palestinian campuses, including at Birzeit. Among the examples at Birzeit that Nelson raises are a professor threatened with violence and forced to leave by the administration after posting a parody cartoon of “Islamic Superman” refusing to take a fifth wife⁴⁶ and the violent attack on a professor for having met with Israelis to discuss peace proposal ideas.⁴⁷

Palestinians are not the only ones who are affected. In 2014, a notable anti-Zionist Israeli activist from Haaretz, Amira Hass, was forced to leave a conference at Birzeit because “for the past two decades, there had been a regulation at Birzeit stipulating that Jewish Israelis are not to be allowed on the university grounds.”⁴⁸ Even the infamous anti-Zionist Ilan Pappé had reportedly been forced off campus after being invited to deliver a lecture at Birzeit.⁴⁹ After the news emerged, the university issued a public-facing statement that only demonstrated further its opposition to any sense of academic freedom, claiming it welcomed “supporters of the Palestinian struggle and opponents of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, regardless of

⁴⁵ Ksenia Svetlova, *Students Accuse Birzeit University Administration of Collaboration Following IDF Campus Arrests*, The Media Line, 1 November 2022, <https://themedialine.org/by-region/students-accuse-birzeit-university-administration-of-collaboration-following-idf-campus-arrests/>.

⁴⁶ Nelson, p.61.

⁴⁷ Nelson, p.14-17.

⁴⁸ Nelson, p.52.

⁴⁹ Nelson, p.53.

nationality, religion, ethnicity, or creed.”⁵⁰ Even in this statement, as pointed out by Nelson, the ability to speak on campus is made contingent on a political litmus test.⁵¹

As will be discussed in further detail below,⁵² Doumani has staked out a position on academic freedom that essentially amounts to a rejection of the concept, certainly as it applies to Israeli and Zionist academics, because he believes Palestinians do not have total academic freedom. Doumani argues that Palestinian academic freedom is infringed because: (1) “conditions of social inequality” exist; and (2) Israel and foreign donors work to prevent Palestinian universities from directly supporting terrorist activity. Of course, social inequality has existed everywhere throughout history, and every university in the democratic world is prohibited by one law or another from directly supporting terrorism.

But despite the well-documented effect that extremism on Palestinian universities is having on the academic freedom of academics, there is little evidence Doumani used his position of authority at Birzeit University to make a difference where he could. He is willing to speak out on the concept of academic freedom where it can be blamed on Israel. But where it is being negatively affected by the actions of Palestinians, and where he can exercise real influence over it, Doumani has averted his eyes or even contributed to the problem.

Such a position on the question of academic freedom raises concerns about the direction of Middle East and Palestinian Studies at Brown University. At Birzeit University, Israeli and more moderate Palestinian voices have been silenced and intimidated. The extremism that has taken hold at the university, in the absence of such alternative perspectives, has resulted in levels of incitement that have driven students to not only celebrate the murder of civilians, but to carry out terror attacks themselves. As Palestinian Studies at Brown University increasingly adopts such extremist and bigoted rhetoric, and as alternative viewpoints are largely being crowded out in favor of a very limited range of postmodernist, postcolonial narratives, the risk is real that students may be driven in the same direction as those at Birzeit University.

b. Antisemitism at Brown

Refocusing on Brown University, one of the most disturbing features of its Middle East and Palestinian Studies programs is just how much time and space is spent talking about Jews. Of course, Jews are indigenous to the Middle East, and so this could seem appropriate. However, in the materials reviewed by CAMERA, the indigeneity of Jews to the Middle East is hardly the topic. On the contrary, the millennia-long Jewish historical ties to the land of Israel are consistently denied or ignored. The discussion of Jews centers on antisemitic conspiracy theories and gross misinformation about Jewish history and identity.

⁵⁰ Nelson, p.53.

⁵¹ Nelson, p.54.

⁵² *Infra*, section IV.d.

i. Denying Jewish Identity & Peoplehood

Given the obsession with postmodernism and critical theory in Middle East and Palestinian studies at Brown, it is perhaps unsurprising that extensive focus is directed toward talking about identity. However, when it comes to the Jewish people, their identity is not treated as real and legitimate.

In some cases, the denial of Jewish heritage is explicit and crude. For example, in May 2021, the Middle East and Palestinian Studies programs brought in Birzeit University professor Rana Barakat to speak at a “teach-in,” where she told students:

As an aside, to be clear, this is not about so-called ancient history. This is not about mythology of belonging to a place, but rather the actual and ongoing belonging of the Palestinian people to Palestine. Our belonging to this land does not require ancient mythology.⁵³

Lecturers dismiss mainstream Jewish identity and heritage as a “colonial version of Jewish identity.”⁵⁴ Brown professor Ariella Azoulay tells students that mainstream Jewish identity isn’t legitimate, but really the “mystification of Jewish identity.”⁵⁵ It’s an argument, in effect, that her fringe view of Jewish identity is the real one, while most of the rest of the world’s Jewry are either dupes or liars.

In this way, Jewish identity is effectively erased, and Jewish peoplehood is denied. Jews are frequently depicted as “Europeans” or “whites,” notwithstanding that Mizrahi Jews, largely from North Africa and with no actual connection to Europe, outnumber Ashkenazi Jews in Israel. As articulated by one speaker, Raef Zreik, at an October 2022 Brown University event, “the Jewish question is a European question.”⁵⁶ When even mentioned, Mizrahi Jews are Arabized or Islamized by the likes of Azoulay as “Arab Jews” and even “Muslim Jews,” whose Muslim identity has been repressed by the evils of colonialism.⁵⁷

In the Fall of 2020, Azoulay taught an entire class on “Whites, White Jews and Us: Radical Black, Arab & Jewish Thinkers.” Students were instructed to “inquire about practices and modes of whitening the Jews and disrupting the world they shared with Muslims (orientalism, colonial

⁵³ See, *Teach-In: A Third Intifada? Palestinians and the Struggle for Jerusalem*, Palestinian Studies, 20 May 2021, <https://palestinianstudies.org/events/2021/teach-third-intifada-palestinians-and-struggle-jerusalem> (hereinafter, Teach-In, May 2021).

⁵⁴ See, *Lecture | Lena Salaymeh | Performing Legality in Service of Colonialism: ‘Anti-Antisemitism’ as Censorship*, Palestinian Studies, 23 February 2023, <https://palestinianstudies.org/events/2023/lecture-lena-salaymeh-performing-legality-service-colonialism> (hereinafter, Lena Salaymeh Lecture, February 2023).

⁵⁵ See [Lena Salaymeh Lecture](#), February 2023.

⁵⁶ See, *Webinar | Panel | The New Antisemitism and the Contemporary Middle East*, Palestinian Studies, 6 October 2022, <https://palestinianstudies.org/events/2022/webinar-panel-new-antisemitism-and-contemporary-middle-east> (hereinafter, The New Antisemitism Panel, October 2022).

⁵⁷ See, *Lecture | Elad Lapidot | Jews Out of the Question: How Critical Theory Fights Anti-Semitism by Denying Judaism*, Palestinian Studies, 12 April 2023, <https://palestinianstudies.org/events/2023/lecture-elad-lapidot-jews-out-question-how-critical-theory-fights-anti-semitism-denying> (hereinafter, Elad Lapidot Lecture, April 2023).

modernity, Zionism etc)...”⁵⁸ What “whitens” Jews? We’re given some clue when the syllabus later tells students they will “encounter Jews who refused to be whitened and insisted on their Arab-Jewish identity, or question the premises and consequences of the exceptionalisation of the holocaust [sic].” The lower case “h” in “holocaust” is notable in that it is a grammatical technique frequently used by those who seek to engage in Holocaust minimalization and revisionism.

The common thread among these views is that Jews aren’t Jews. They can be Europeans, Arabs, or even Muslims, but they can’t actually just be Jews. Their own self-description is attacked, belittled, and erased. In the particularly bizarre words of Azoulay, the thinking goes that mainstream Jewish identity is the result of the “exclusion of the Arab and the Muslim within the Jews.”⁵⁹ In the context of “European” Jews, then, the logic would seemingly be that Ashkenazi Jews can only be Jews by excluding the European and Christian within them.

Of course, the denial of Jewish peoplehood conveniently serves an ideological end. If Jewish peoplehood is not actually real, then the implication is that Jewish nationhood cannot actually be real, as a non-people do not have a right to self-determination. Jews can be Arab or European peoples, which each have their rights to self-determination, but they cannot be their own people with their own rights.

ii. *Jews as “Settler-Colonizers”*

While most, if not all, Middle East studies courses and events are obsessively focused on critical theory, one particular theory that is constantly emphasized in the context of Israel is what they call the “settler-colonial paradigm.” Under this theory, Israel’s creation is considered to be “yet another tragic example of a global phenomenon of European capitalist expansion and imperial conquest that has devastated indigenous populations...”⁶⁰ The theory serves as another method of distorting and denying Jewish history and peoplehood to delegitimize Israel.

Importantly, every Jewish person in Israel is depicted as a settler-colonizer. Professors teach that when it comes to the conflict, there are just “Zionist settlers on one side and the Palestinian indigenous population” on the other.⁶¹ Students are told that *all* of Israel – not just the West Bank – is “under settler-colonist control” since 1948.⁶² “[T]he process of settler colonialism in Palestine is an ongoing one,” Doumani teaches his students, “and...international institutions have been central to that process from the beginning.”⁶³ Thus, he continues, “the Palestinians cannot be free until the whole world is free.” Notice the two disturbing implications of the claim.

⁵⁸ Syllabus for COLT 1610W, Whites, White Jews and Us: Radical Black, Arab & Jewish Thinkers, Fall 2020 (Ariella Azoulay). Copy on file.

⁵⁹ See, [Elad Lapidot Lecture](#), April 2023.

⁶⁰ Syllabus for HIST 1969D, Palestine versus the Palestinians, Spring 2020 (Beshara Doumani). Copy on file.

⁶¹ Syllabus for MES 1222, Modern Palestinian History, Fall 2022 (Abdel Razzaq Takriti). Copy on file.

⁶² Syllabus for MES1501, The Palestinian Revolution, 1948-1993, Spring 2023 (Abdel Razzaq Takriti). Copy on file.

⁶³ Syllabus for HIST 1457, History of the Palestinians, Fall 2021 (Beshara Doumani). Copy on file.

The first implication is that all of Israel must thus be dismantled as a “settler-colonial” state, and the second implication is that until the Jewish state is dismantled, the world will not be free. It’s a worldview that not only denies Jewish people their self-determination but engages in the age-old antisemitic tactic of placing Jews at the center of the world’s problems.

Students are also taught that not only is the entirety of the Jewish state a “settler-colonial” state, but that the “settler-colonial logic” of Zionism, rather than being a movement for self-determination, is a “business of theft.”⁶⁴ Such words, from the Director of Brown’s Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice Tony Bogues at a CMES event, promotes a similar theme to that of Doumani. He also doesn’t just deny Jews their indigeneity. He declares that Zionism isn’t an earnest belief, but rather a sinister cover used by the world’s Jews to take what isn’t theirs. The conspiratorial logic is also virtually indistinguishable from history’s most infamous antisemites, including Adolf Hitler, who wrote in *Mein Kampf*:

For while the Zionists try to make the rest of the world believe that the national consciousness of the Jew finds its satisfaction in the creation of a Palestinian state, the Jews again slyly dupe the dumb Goyim. It doesn’t even enter their heads to build up a Jewish state in Palestine for the purpose of living there; all they want is a central organization for their international world swindle, endowed with its own sovereign rights and removed from the intervention of other states: a haven for convicted scoundrels and a university for budding crooks.⁶⁵

In this worldview, diaspora Jews returning to the Land of Israel in the 19th and 20th centuries – many of whom were fleeing from oppression by European powers – were actually engaged in a sinister “structural process of territorial dispossession, demographic displacement, and political erasure” on behalf of European powers.⁶⁶ The conspiracy theory implies that the Jewish diaspora from Middle Eastern, North African, and Central Asian lands that returned to the Land of Israel – many of them having been driven out by antisemitic Arab regimes – were also colonizers acting on behalf of some distant, foreign European power with which they had no connection.

Doumani has even sought to incorporate the “settler-colonial” claim into general history courses. In the Spring of 2020, he taught “Making of the Modern World,” in which, according to the syllabi, an entire week was devoted to “settler colonialism” in Algeria, South Africa, and “Palestine.”⁶⁷ This depiction of Jews as akin to the Boers in South Africa or French in Algeria inherently involves denying the indigeneity of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, a denial

⁶⁴ [Teach-In](#), May 2021.

⁶⁵ *Extracts from Mein Kampf by Adolf Hitler*, Yad Vashem, <https://www.yadvashem.org/docs/extracts-from-mein-kampf.html> (last visited September 29, 2023).

⁶⁶ Syllabus for HIST 1969D, Palestine versus the Palestinians, Spring 2020 (Beshara Doumani). Copy on file.

⁶⁷ Syllabus for HIST 0150I, Making of the Modern World, Spring 2020 (Beshara Doumani). Copy on file.

which requires ignoring the overwhelming historical, archaeological, linguistic, and other scientific evidence otherwise.⁶⁸

iii. *Combating “Anti-Antisemitism” Instead of Antisemitism*

Antisemitism is rarely, if ever, discussed in its own right, but rather to engage in what the scholar David Hirsh has coined as the “Livingstone Formulation,” which he describes as “the insistence that Jews raise the issue of antisemitism dishonestly in order to silence criticism of Israel; that they don’t even believe it themselves.”⁶⁹ A repeated theme in Middle East and Palestinian Studies courses and events is that the real problem isn’t antisemitism itself, but what they call “anti-antisemitism.”

It’s important to put the types of arguments made in this regard into context, because the messages being delivered on the subject fit together. It begins with arguments that deny that antisemitism is really that much of a problem. It then moves on to suggest that efforts to combat antisemitism are actually the real problem. Then, it concludes, that because antisemitism isn’t a real issue and because efforts to combat antisemitism are the real evil, mechanisms to protect Jews from discrimination should be rejected.

A good example of this comes from a February 2023 lecture by Lena Salaymeh for the Brown Center for Middle East Studies.⁷⁰ Early on in her lecture, the academic casts doubt on the existence of an antisemitism problem by arguing that there is an “insufficient and biased” statistical evidence of “an increase in antisemitism.”

Salaymeh then quickly slid into the next argument that the efforts to combat antisemitism are the real problem. “[R]ather than presenting an *empirical* claim,”⁷¹ she told students, the “insufficient and biased” statistical evidence is just a “neocolonial theology generat[ing] a perception of urgency.” That is, those raising concerns about antisemitism are just acting on behalf of a “neocolonial theology,” which of course is considered the ultimate evil in Middle East and Palestinian Studies circles at Brown.

Salaymeh spent much of her time attacking the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA) on these grounds. For context, the JDA definition is widely rejected in the Jewish community because it excludes forms of antisemitism that use the Jewish collective of Israel as a proxy for the hatred of Jews. However, Salaymeh explained, even this JDA definition is too much for the reason that it cites human rights documents like the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and a UN

⁶⁸ See, e.g., Harry Ostrer & Karl Skorecki, *The population genetics of the Jewish people*, Human Genetics, 2013, vol.132(2), p.119-127; Shai Carmi et. al., *Sequencing an Ashkenazi reference panel supports population-targeted personal genomics and illuminates Jewish and European origins*, Nature Communications, 2014, vol.5, available at <https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms5835>;

⁶⁹ David Hirsh, *The Livingstone Formulation fails to rescue Livingstone – David Hirsh*, Engage, 28 April 2016, <https://engageonline.wordpress.com/2016/04/28/the-livingstone-formulation-david-hirsh/>.

⁷⁰ See, [Lena Salaymeh Lecture](#), February 2023.

⁷¹ Notably, Salaymeh later contradicted herself on this point. When later prompted by an audience member’s question, she admitted that “when Israel bombs Gaza, there’s a rise of antisemitic incidents in various parts of the world. That’s kind of *empirically obvious*...”

resolution on Holocaust remembrance. Why is this problematic according to Salaymeh? Because in doing so, the JDA “positions itself within liberal international law” which, she claims, “legitimizes the colonization of Palestine and delegitimizes anti-colonial resistance both in Palestine and other parts of the world.” In other words, definitions of antisemitism, liberal international law, and human rights documents are problematic because they interfere with Palestinian “resistance,” i.e., Palestinian violence targeting Jews.

Then came the third part: delegitimizing and advocating against measures to combat antisemitism. Much of Salaymeh’s lecture was devoted to depicting government efforts to combat antisemitism as dangerous. The “war against antisemitism,” she argued, is part of a “project[] of expanding state power in the name of security.” Continuing, Salaymeh declared that the “war on antisemitism causes far greater harm to a significantly larger number of people” than antisemitism itself. In her view, the “war against antisemitism” is actually just a “significant tool of neocolonialism and coloniality.” Put more simply, she believes that the fight against antisemitism interferes too much with Palestinian opposition to right of the Jewish people to self-determination in their indigenous homeland.

Moreover, as explained earlier, Salaymeh believes that even the weak JDA definition of antisemitism was a tool of colonialism. “From [her] perspective,” she explained at Brown, “we don’t need a definition” of antisemitism. When one attendee asked the obvious question as to how one fights antisemitism without being able to define it, Salaymeh responded with a nonsensical contradiction. Instead of legal measures, she argued, just two minutes after rejecting the need for a definition: “We need to actually start from a young age and explain to people what antisemitism is...” It raises the exact question she was supposedly answering: how does one “explain to people what antisemitism is” if one shouldn’t define antisemitism? The point is that she doesn’t want to combat antisemitism.

Recall, too, Salaymeh’s explanation for why the JDA definition was still not good enough: because it “positions itself within liberal international law” by citing human rights instruments, which “delegitimizes anti-colonial resistance.”⁷² This is the ultimate point of the arguments: “anti-antisemitism” must be discredited and attacked because such efforts interfere with “anti-colonial resistance,” which is of course inclusive of Palestinian terrorism against Jewish targets.⁷³ Even interfaith dialogue must be off the table because, in Salaymeh’s words, “Interfaith dialogue is increasingly becoming a tool for normalizing Zionist colonialism to legitimate neocolonial holy war, the colonization of Palestine.”⁷⁴

While Salaymeh’s lecture illustrates the general argument, she is far from alone in making it in Brown Middle East and Palestinian Studies courses and events. At the most recent Palestinian studies event, the featured speaker, Elad Lapidot, depicted “anti-antisemitism” as having been “instrumentalized politically...to defend Israeli politics, anti-Palestinian politics, and

⁷² See *supra*, sec. III.b.iii.

⁷³ See, *infra* sec. III.c.

⁷⁴ See, [Lena Salaymeh Lecture](#), February 2023.

delegitimize critics” and “another way...to justify hostility towards Muslims and Arabs...”⁷⁵ Sherene Seikaly, a professor from University of California Santa Barbara similarly claimed at an October 2022 Brown University event that “antisemitism has been instrumentalized by particular groups [and] also by the State of Israel.”⁷⁶

Importantly, these views are also coming directly from Brown University Middle East and Palestinian studies faculty members and leaders, including Nadjé Al-Ali and Beshara Doumani. Al-Ali began one event by explaining that she isn’t just “concerned about antisemitism,” but more “about the way that the discussion around antisemitism has often been instrumentalized” and how the “conversation about antisemitism excludes Palestinians.”⁷⁷ In the course “Palestine versus the Palestinians,” taught by Doumani in the Spring of 2020, students were told to “consider[] the impact of [President] Trump’s Dec. 11, 2019 Executive Order on Palestinian Studies and activism in U.S. universities.”⁷⁸ The order being referenced reaffirmed that Title VI’s anti-discrimination provisions protected Jewish students and instructed regulators to consider the IHRA Definition in its enforcement.

iv. *Teaching Hatred*

The conversation isn’t just limited to downplaying antisemitism and advocating against measures to combat it. It’s taken a step further: professors and speakers actively engage in antisemitism.

In a particularly disturbing example, the same professor, Adi Ophir, who taught an entire Spring 2023 course on “Anti-Semitism, Racism, Anti-Zionism: Debates, Contexts, Stakes”⁷⁹ is on video at a Brown Middle East Studies event talking to students about “Jewish mob[s],” which he also calls “*Kristallnacht* mob[s],” that are “thirsty for Palestinian blood.”⁸⁰ Like putting a fox in the henhouse, Brown put someone who spreads antisemitic blood libels⁸¹ and Holocaust inversions⁸² in charge of teaching about antisemitism.

Ophir’s blood libel isn’t a one-off, either. Students taking Professor Sherena Razek’s class on “Imperial Visions/Decolonial Practices: From Palestine to Turtle Island” in Spring 2022 were assigned reading from Jasbir Puar’s *The Right to Maim* book, which accuses Israel of organ

⁷⁵ See, [Elad Lapidot Lecture](#), April 2023.

⁷⁶ See [The New Antisemitism Panel](#), October 2022.

⁷⁷ See [The New Antisemitism Panel](#), October 2022.

⁷⁸ Syllabus for HIST 1969D, Palestine versus the Palestinians, Spring 2020 (Beshara Doumani). Copy on file.

⁷⁹ Syllabus for MES 1199, Anti-Semitism, Racism, Anti-Zionism: Debates, Contexts, Stakes, Spring 2023 (Adi Ophir). Copy on file.

⁸⁰ See, [Teach-In](#), May 2021.

⁸¹ *Blood Libel: A False, Incendiary Claim Against Jews*, Anti-Defamation League, 1 September 2016, <https://www.adl.org/resources/background/blood-libel-false-incendiary-claim-against-jews>.

⁸² Lesley Klaff, *Holocaust Inversion and contemporary antisemitism*, Fathom Journal, Winter 2014, <https://fathomjournal.org/holocaust-inversion-and-contemporary-antisemitism/>.

harvesting.⁸³ Professors Razek,⁸⁴ Azoulay,⁸⁵ and Doumani⁸⁶ have assigned readings from other notorious antisemites like Steven Salaita and Angela Davis, too. For context, Salaita is notorious for comments such as: “Zionists: transforming ‘anti-Semitism’ from something horrible into something honorable since 1948” and “Zionist uplift in America: every little Jewish boy and girl can grow up to be the leader of a murderous colonial regime.”⁸⁷ Davis is well-known for her refusal to help advocate for Jewish refuseniks in the Soviet Union, explaining to Alan Dershowitz that “They are all Zionist fascists and opponents of socialism.”⁸⁸

Similarly, the Holocaust inversion is not unique to Ophir. A panelist at an October 2022 Middle East Studies event on “The New Antisemitism and the Contemporary Middle East” told the audience that, “Zionism didn’t reject...the logic of Europe, the logic of an ethnic, racial, pure state; actually, they adopted this logic....”⁸⁹

Noura Erakat – the Rutgers University professor and 2021-2022 “Darwish Visiting Fellow in Palestinian Studies” at Brown – delivered a lengthy lecture comparing Zionism with Nazism.⁹⁰ In her twisted worldview, “antisemitism, Zionism and Nazism were varying forms of racism and nationalism, nurtured in a similar geography and in the same intellectual climate.”⁹¹ According to her, Zionism – the movement for Jewish self-determination – is a “threat to world peace” in the same way as “Nazism was a threat to world peace.” In his “Making of the Modern World” course syllabus, Doumani also compared “systematic forced displacement through ethnic cleansing and genocide reached an industrial scale as states engaged in world wars” with “imposed partition plans.”⁹²

These are the messages being delivered to students at Brown. Jewish identity isn’t real, but a deception. Jews aren’t Jews, but rather colonizing Europeans or Muslims who have repressed their Muslim identity. Jewish concerns about antisemitism aren’t real, but actually diabolical

⁸³ Jonathan Marks, *Anti-Semitism*, Duke University Press-Approved, Commentary Magazine, 27 November 2017, <https://www.commentary.org/jonathan-marks/anti-semitism-duke-university-press-jasbir-puar/>.

⁸⁴ Syllabus for MES 1199, Anti-Semitism, Racism, Anti-Zionism: Debates, Contexts, Stakes, Spring 2023 (Adi Ophir). Copy on file.

⁸⁵ Syllabus for COLT 1610W, Whites, White Jews and Us: Radical Black, Arab & Jewish Thinkers, Fall 2020 (Ariella Azoulay). Copy on file.

⁸⁶ Syllabus for HIST 1457, History of the Palestinians, Fall 2021 (Beshara Doumani). Copy on file.

⁸⁷ Ricki Hollander, *Jewish Journalism: Focus on The Forward*, CAMERA, 15 November 2017, <https://www.camera.org/article/jewish-journalism-focus-on-the-forward/>.

⁸⁸ Jonathan S. Tobin, *Opposing Honors for Angela Davis Isn’t Racist*, National Review, 11 January 2019, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2019/01/opposing-honors-for-angela-davis-isnt-racist/>.

⁸⁹ See, [The New Antisemitism Panel](#), October 2022.

⁹⁰ Lecture | Noura Erakat | *Race, Apartheid, and Settler Colonialism*, Palestinian Studies, 21 April 2022, <https://palestinianstudies.org/events/2022/lecture-noura-erakat-race-apartheid-and-settler-colonialism>.

⁹¹ *Id.*

⁹² “During the Twentieth century, systematic forced displacement through ethnic cleansing and genocide reached an industrial scale as states engaged in world wars, imposed partition plans, ruthlessly engineered societies, and undertook large-scale infrastructural projects such as dams.” Syllabus for HIST0150I, Making of the Modern World, Spring 2020 (Beshara Doumani). Copy on file.

deceptions in service of colonialism. Jews are Nazi-like and thirsty for blood, and any attempt to engage in interfaith dialogue with them would just further their evil goals.

These messages, standing alone, are concerning enough. They purvey an antisemitic conspiratorial worldview not dissimilar to those found in neo-Nazi and white nationalist materials. Antisemitic beliefs may be prevalent in Palestinian society, where 93% answer “probably true” to a majority of antisemitic stereotypes and conspiracies asked about.⁹³ But that does not mean these antisemitic beliefs should be taught as fact at American universities, even if under the umbrella of Palestinian studies.

Unfortunately, the consequences are already evident. The Brown Undergraduate Journal of Middle East Studies (BUJMES) recently altered its “anti-oppression platform.” In 2021, the statement declared that the journal “reject[s] content that explicitly or implicitly perpetuates racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, ableism, classism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, discrimination on the grounds of religion, imperialism, colonialism, and/or other systems of oppression...”⁹⁴ A year later, the language was changed to remove the word “antisemitism,” and it now declares that it also “stand[s] against the perpetuation of...zionism.”⁹⁵ That is, a university activity now openly declares it stands against what is a core belief of the vast majority of American Jews, who have now been told they are not welcome to participate.

c. Extremism at Brown

A university program spreading such bigotry would be troubling enough in and of itself. But in Brown University’s Middle East and Palestinian Studies, professors and speakers are also spreading extremist messages and justifying violence and terrorism. That is, students are being fed antisemitic conspiracy theories *and* justifications for violence carried out by antisemitic terrorist organizations. The combination is disturbing for obvious reasons.

i. Legitimizing the Violent Denial of Jewish Heritage

Compounding the concern about antisemitism is that at the same time that professors and speakers at Brown are denying or distorting Jewish history and identity, they are also justifying and legitimizing violence committed on that exact basis.

Take, for example, the remarks by Birzeit University professor Rana Barakat at the May 20, 2021, Brown University Center for Middle East Studies event, “Teach-In: A Third Intifada? Palestinians and the Struggle for Jerusalem.” The event was held against the backdrop of *Operation Guardian of the Walls* which was preceded by extensive Palestinian violence in

⁹³ ADL Global 100 Survey: West Bank and Gaza, Anti-Defamation League, 2014, <https://global100.adl.org/country/west-bank-and-gaza/2014>.

⁹⁴ *On anti-oppression and inclusivity*, Brown Undergraduate Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol.2, no.1, available at <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:r3q4t4ds/>, p.7.

⁹⁵ *Anti-Oppression Platform*, Brown Undergraduate Journal of Middle East Studies Vol.2, no.2, available at <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:x4dnaff4/>, p.5.

Jerusalem and an Israeli police raid on the Temple Mount. Barakat compared the events to that of an earlier orgy of violence against Jews in 1929, telling the audience:

People who rose up against British rule and Zionist power in 1929, were these very same urban fellahin like in 2021. In 1929, settlers provocatively and violently marched onto and into Jerusalem's Old City, intending on marching to the Buraq Wall to force change in British policy regarding holy sites. 1929, like 2021, was not the first of these attempts. It was and remains a part of a larger strategy of ongoing dispossession, 1929 like 2021, centered on the Old City in Jerusalem, but also had to do with the surrounding areas.⁹⁶

The 1929 event Barakat is referring to was a Jewish protest march against British restrictions that prevented Jews from praying at the Western Wall, one of the remnants of the Second Temple that was destroyed in 70 CE, and the subsequent Arab violence on Tisha B'Av, a Jewish day of fast remembering the destruction of the temples in Jerusalem. Barakat notably refers to the Western Wall only by its Arabic name, the "Buraq Wall," to disconnect it from its Jewish history. The Western Wall is outside of the Temple Mount compound, the holiest Jewish site, which is also the third holiest Islamic site, known to Muslims as Haram al-Sharif.

After the peaceful protest march, Arab leadership incited mass violence against Jewish worshippers and civilians, falsely proclaiming that al-Aqsa Mosque – which was built on top of the ruins of the Temple Mount – was being threatened. Over 130 Jews were murdered in the orgy of violence, including in the infamous Hebron Massacre.⁹⁷ This is what Barakat glorified as "rising up," Palestinian Arabs violently rioting and massacring innocent Jews simply for desiring greater access to their own holy sites. That is, students were taught that indiscriminate violence is justified to deny Jews their cultural heritage. The parallel made with the events of 2021 is that during the lead up to *Operation Guardian of the Walls*, there had been a surge of rioting and violence against Jews, particularly in Jerusalem.⁹⁸ Though multiple factors led to the situation, Palestinian leadership and terrorist organizations had spent weeks inciting over the same lie as in 1929, that al-Aqsa Mosque was in danger.⁹⁹ While these tensions were underway, it was the 1929 massacres that Barakat held up at Brown as the model.

⁹⁶ See, [Teach-In](#), May 2021.

⁹⁷ Ricki Hollander, *Anti-Jewish Violence in Pre-State Palestine/1929 Massacres*, CAMERA, 23 August 2009, <https://www.camera.org/article/anti-jewish-violence-in-pre-state-palestine-1929-massacres/>.

⁹⁸ See, e.g., Paul Shindman, *Police arrest 30 in wave of Arab attacks on Jews in Jerusalem*, World Israel News, 20 April 2021, <https://worldisraelnews.com/police-arrest-30-in-wave-of-arab-attacks-on-jews-in-jerusalem/>; *Driver assaulted during Jerusalem clashes: 'I thought I was going to die'*, Times of Israel, 24 April 2021, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/driver-assaulted-during-jerusalem-clashes-i-thought-i-was-going-to-die/>; Khaled Abu Toameh, *Fatah, Hamas use Jerusalem unrest to deflect attention from own problems*, 24 April 2021, <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/fatah-hamas-use-jerusalem-unrest-to-deflect-attention-from-own-problems-666228>; Judah Ari Gross, *IDF sends 3 more battalions to West Bank in bid to curb violence*, Times of Israel, 9 May 2021, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-sends-3-more-battalions-to-west-bank-in-bid-to-curb-violence/>.

⁹⁹ Sean Durns, *The Palestinian Authority is trying to set Jerusalem ablaze*, Washington Examiner, 11 May 2021, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/the-palestinian-authority-is-trying-to-set-jerusalem-ablaze>.

ii. *Glorifying Terrorists and their Organizations*

Terrorist organizations are not merely studied in Brown Middle East and Palestinian Studies courses and events. As at Birzeit University, they are instead lionized.

In May 2021, during *Operation Guardian of the Walls*, Brown professor Adi Ophir told students: “ Hamas is fighting for the residents of Jerusalem and those who pray in al-Aqsa [mosque]...”¹⁰⁰

In fact, Hamas is an internationally designated terrorist organization with an overtly antisemitic charter.¹⁰¹ Along with other Palestinian terror groups, by the time of Ophir’s statement, they had indiscriminately fired 4,300 rockets toward Israeli population centers, killing twelve civilians.¹⁰² Only Israel’s revolutionary missile defense system prevented far more casualties.

During the same CMES event, Doumani all but explicitly praised the violence, declaring:

The one state reality, that is Israeli control over Palestine from the river to the sea, has produced a one-people resistance, despite the different priorities of the different sections because they live under different legal regimes and so on. And what we also see is a full spectrum form of resistance. Of many different kinds. I think Weeam [Hammoudeh] hit right on the head when she said that resistance is not a word that should be used lightly, as if it has a single homogeneous meaning. And what we see just in the past two weeks are an amazingly wide range of forms of resistance, often uncoordinated, except by the fact that everybody seems to be drinking from the same water and living the same dream.¹⁰³

Other speakers at the event questioned whether this “this violent form of resistance” was really “the bad form of resistance” and argued that “resistance is the natural condition in the context of colonialism.”¹⁰⁴

Certain terrorists seem to be given almost legendary status. Ghassan Kanafani was a senior member of the PFLP at a time when the terrorist organization had been involved in some particularly horrific terror attacks, such as the Lod Airport massacre in May 1972 that killed 26,

¹⁰⁰ See, [Teach-In](#), May 2021.

¹⁰¹ Available at *Hamas Covenant 1988*, The Avalon Project, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp.

¹⁰² *Victims of Palestinian Violence and Terrorism since September 2000*, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 30 May 2023, <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/general/victims-of-palestinian-violence-and-terrorism> (last visited 29 September 2023); *Operation Guardian of the Walls: Second Week Summary*, Israeli Defense Forces, <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/wars-and-operations/operation-guardian-of-the-walls/second-week-summary/>.

¹⁰³ See, [Teach-In](#), May 2021.

¹⁰⁴ See, [Teach-In](#), May 2021. (“Is the bad form of resistance the unacceptable form, this violent form of resistance?”).

including 17 Puerto Rican Christian pilgrims. Yet Kanafani's interviews and writings are frequently present in MES courses¹⁰⁵ and even in film screenings at Brown.¹⁰⁶

Students are assigned to read and review books either by Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), the man behind the Black September Organization that slaughtered Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics, or Shafiq al-Hout, the man behind the Palestinian Liberation Front that murdered the elderly, disabled Leon Klinghoffer.¹⁰⁷ The purpose: "to appreciate the contrasting motivations and actions of Palestinian revolutionary groups." At "book talks," terrorists belonging to the Iran-backed Palestinian Islamic Jihad are depicted as "political prisoners."¹⁰⁸

Students are also taught that legitimate forms of supporting "Palestine" include celebrating terror attacks. For example, at an October 2022 event, visiting fellow Noura Erakat claimed that a New York Times photojournalist had been unfairly fired for his "tweets in support of Palestine."¹⁰⁹ These posts included celebrating the "brave" "resistance" for a bombing attack at a crowded bus stop that killed a visiting British student.¹¹⁰ Another post, timed immediately after the brutal murder of six Israelis in a synagogue in the Har Nof neighborhood of Jerusalem, similarly celebrated the attack by citing a Quranic passage that calls for believers to "strike the necks" of "disbelievers."¹¹¹

The study of Palestinian terrorist groups and their motives is of course legitimate and important work. But in the Middle East and Palestinian Studies programs at Brown, these violent, racist groups are not just being studied. They are being glorified and celebrated. Groups which have

¹⁰⁵ Syllabi for: HIST 1457, History of the Palestinians, Fall 2021 (Beshara Doumani); MES 1222, Modern Palestinian History, Fall 2022 (Abdel Razzaq Takriti); MES 1501, The Palestinian Revolution, 1948-1993, Spring 2023 (Abdel Razzaq Takriti); HIST 1969F, "Nothing Pleases Me": Understanding Modern Middle Eastern History Through Literature, Spring 2021 (Sreemati Mitter); HIST 1969D, Palestine versus the Palestinians, Spring 2020 (Beshara Doumani). Copies on file.

¹⁰⁶ "The Dupes" Film Screening, Palestinian Studies, 28 October 2014, <https://palestinianstudies.org/events/2014/dupes-film-screening>.

¹⁰⁷ Syllabus for MES 1501, The Palestinian Revolution, 1948-1993 (Prof. Takriti). Copy on file.

¹⁰⁸ Book Talk | Ashjan Ajour | Reclaiming Humanity in Palestinian Hunger Strikes, Palestinian Studies, 9 September 2022, <https://palestinianstudies.org/events/2022/book-talk-ashjan-ajour-reclaiming-humanity-palestinian-hunger-strikes> (Ashjan Ajour: "Two weeks ago, the Palestinian political prisoner Khalil Awawdeh ended his 180 days of hunger strike after he achieved his freedom.... So I was asking, OK we have the political prisoners who are already resistance fighters and revolutionary... These waves, with the hunger strike of Khader Adnan, which was the lengthy 50 [days]...").

¹⁰⁹ See, [The New Antisemitism Panel](#), October 2022 (Noura Erakat: "And yesterday, the New York Times fighter fired Hosam Salim, a photojournalist in Gaza, because of tweets in support of Palestine."). The posts for which Salim was fired included the following: Facebook Post, @hosalem, 23 March 2011 (11:09am ET), <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10150464492860433&set=a.469043050432>; Facebook Post, @hosalem, 18 November 2014 (3:53am ET), <https://www.facebook.com/hosalem/posts/pfbid02XjkERZ3h7yNAZKkTCAdmEkTE52PpvQCZC7PDtk5g35RRsYp9jJvvri9gkNfsECr7l>.

¹¹⁰ Facebook Post, @hosalem, 23 March 2011 (11:09am ET), <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10150464492860433&set=a.469043050432>.

¹¹¹ Facebook Post, @hosalem, 18 November 2014 (3:53am ET), <https://www.facebook.com/hosalem/posts/pfbid02XjkERZ3h7yNAZKkTCAdmEkTE52PpvQCZC7PDtk5g35RRsYp9jJvvri9gkNfsECr7l>.

intentionally butchered civilians and which call for the violent erasure of the Jewish state are cast as “revolutionary” and “anti-colonial” movements. Meanwhile, their maximalist ideologies are taught seemingly without much, if any, challenge.

IV. Contextualizing the Extremism: Postmodernism and Critical Theory

An important element for understanding the extremism within Brown Middle East and Palestinian Studies is how it all fits within academia and, more specifically, in the field of Middle East Studies. As will be seen, much of the rhetoric fits within the general trends both have been characterized by in recent years: a shift toward postmodernism and critical theory.¹¹² Brown is, however, a particularly extreme example and, importantly, with a stated intention of spreading its extreme versions of Middle East and Palestinian Studies throughout academia beyond Providence, Rhode Island.

a. Middle East Studies

Scholars such as Martin Kramer and Neetu Arnold have written extensively about the problems afflicting the field of Middle East Studies. The trends they’ve identified ring particularly true at Brown University.

In her analysis for the National Association of Scholars, Arnold identified several themes that emerged from data and case studies of various Middle East Studies programs. As Arnold explained:

These themes reflect the self-conception of Middle East scholars as educator-activists rather than just educators and researchers. Middle East scholars, in other words, view their occupation as a calling to enact social and political change by altering beliefs about the Middle East, rather than the disinterested pursuit of truth.... Middle East scholars attempt to accomplish their activist goals through carefully crafted, seemingly anodyne messages of “understanding.” These messages avoid anything remotely negative toward Islam or Muslims, making academic study more concerned about perceptions than truth. Academics at American universities also diminish Western and American concerns by fixating on pro-Muslim perspectives.¹¹³

¹¹² “Postmodernism” refers to a philosophy which generally rejects the existence of objective, natural reality in favor of subjectivity and relativism. See, e.g., *Postmodernism*, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/postmodernism-philosophy> (last visited September 29, 2023). “Critical theory,” according to Britannica, is a “Marxist-inspired movement in social and political philosophy” that maintains that “a primary goal of philosophy is to understand and to help overcome the social structures through which people are dominated and oppressed” and which believes that “science, like other forms of knowledge, has been used as an instrument of oppression.” *Critical Theory*, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/critical-theory> (last visited September 29, 2023).

¹¹³ Neetu Arnold, *Hijacked: The Capture of America’s Middle East Studies Centers*, National Association of Scholars, October 2022, <https://www.nas.org/reports/hijacked> (hereinafter, Arnold, October 2022).

Kramer has likewise criticized academics in the field for disregarding or distorting the evidence when “events failed to conform to [their] academic models.”¹¹⁴ While Kramer does not believe that MES academics have much influence in public discussions, his concern is that “Middle Eastern studies still matter, not because of what the academics say or write but because of what they teach.” Kramer explains:

The most prestigious universities are no longer the beacons on a hill they once were, but their degrees are still coveted. One still gets mileage from a Princeton degree, or one from Harvard. These are the most durable brands in America, some predating American independence. So it is not surprising that young people still compete ferociously to get into these schools. And from there, they will go on to make policy, form opinion, and command U.S. power in the world.

While Brown’s center does not have the reputation or reach of other Middle East Studies departments, its reach is not negligible. The center boasts that its events achieved “a viewership of over 20,000.”¹¹⁵ In 2015, Doumani boasted that its curriculum had “attracted more than 1,000 graduates.”¹¹⁶ It also boasts a growing number of faculty members. As a forthcoming CAMERA report will demonstrate, Brown has also sought to expand its influence over K-12 teachers and students on these subjects.

Moreover, as demonstrated below, Brown’s Middle East and Palestinian Studies have set out to fill a niche by establishing and proliferating their distinct version of Palestinian Studies into academia. Yet, the explicit mission at Brown has not been to engage in professional, disinterested scholarship about the Palestinian people, their culture, or their history. Rather, it has set out to use Palestinian Studies as a tool to further an ideological, and frequently extremist, narrative of Israel, the Palestinians, Jews, and Zionism.

b. An Explicit Activist Mission

The mission statement for Brown University’s New Directions for Palestinian Studies (NDPS) states it directly: it “brings together emerging and established scholars to shape the agenda of knowledge production on Palestine and the Palestinians.”¹¹⁷ That is, its mission is not to promote disinterested scholarship on Palestinians, or even just to promote “knowledge production,” however it may be defined. Rather, its mission is to “*shape the agenda of knowledge production*.” That’s not scholarship; it’s activism.

Doumani, who established NDPS as the inaugural director of the Center for Middle East Studies, has been frank about this. In a Spring 2013 Director’s Letter,” Doumani explained that he “joined Brown University to help build a new kind of area studies program that is agenda, not

¹¹⁴ [Kramer](#), March 2022.

¹¹⁵ [Annual Report 2022-2023](#).

¹¹⁶ *Annual Report 2014-2015*, Brown University Center for Middle East Studies, <https://watson.brown.edu/cmcs/files/cmcs/imce/media/print/2014-15%20annual%20report.pdf>.

¹¹⁷ *Mission*, Palestinian Studies, <https://palestinianstudies.org/about/mission> (last visited September 29, 2023).

legacy, driven.”¹¹⁸ The treatment of academic positions as platforms for ideological activism is also made clear in a plethora of other statements. NDPS conferences declare that their purposes are to “generate critical conversation...around the question of what it means to put intellectual work in the service of emancipatory politics.”¹¹⁹ Disinterested scholarship is treated as problematic, as a “colonial” invention. Middle East and Palestinian Studies materials and events lament that “scholarly production and established ethical codes are guided more by institutional imperatives and power structures than by emancipatory commitments,” and thus scholars are encouraged to “imagine an ethical code that transcends disciplinary constraints.”¹²⁰

That is, partisan bias is not seen as discrediting of scholarship, but rather the purpose of scholarship. It’s an explicit recognition that their concept of their academic positions does not comport with longstanding ethical and professional norms in academia. “Disciplinary constraints” are thus depicted as hurdles to be circumvented in service of the scholars’ self-defined “emancipatory politics.”

That this system would produce partisan activists instead of outstanding scholars and thinkers is the point. Some of those filling the Post-Doctoral Research Associate in Palestinian Studies position illustrate this. The Palestinian Studies’ website writes, about the 2019-2020 postdoc Paul Kohlby, that he “has also worked with grassroots Palestinian organizations in the West Bank and is interested in learning how research can speak to the needs and concerns of movements.”¹²¹

Relatedly, the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs video promotion for the New Directions in Palestinian Studies (NDPS) featured Nadia Hijab, the Executive Director of the activist organization Al-Shabaka, who explains that NDPS is “vital for an organization” like hers to “identify people whose expertise we can tap.”¹²² For context, Hijab is known for making outlandish and incendiary claims, such as her claim in 2010 that Israel was committing “genocide” in Gaza.¹²³ Her organization, Al-Shabaka,¹²⁴ features numerous extremist “policy

¹¹⁸ *Spring 2013 Director’s Letter*, Brown University Center for Middle East Studies, 2013, https://watson.brown.edu/cmcs/files/cmcs/imce/about/Spring_2013_Directors_Letter.pdf (hereinafter, Director’s Letter, Spring 2013).

¹¹⁹ *2013: KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION, ETHICS, SOLIDARITY: STORIES FROM THE FIELD*, Engaged Scholarship, 2013, <https://engagedscholarship.org/archive/2013-knowledge-production-ethics-solidarity-stories-from-the-field/> (hereinafter, NDPS Workshop, 2013).

¹²⁰ *NDPS Workshop*, 2013.

¹²¹ *2019-2020 Paul Kohlby*, Palestinian Studies, <https://palestinianstudies.org/paul-kohlby> (last visited September 29, 2023).

¹²² YouTube Video, @WatsonInstitute, *New Directions in Palestinian Studies*, 3 May 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMI86PclXSg>.

¹²³ Nadia Hijab, *When Does It Become Genocide?*, CounterPunch, 5 January 2010, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2010/01/05/when-does-it-become-genocide/>.

¹²⁴ *Al-Shabaka-The Palestinian Policy Network*, NGO Monitor, 10 September 2023, https://www.ngo-monitor.org/ngos/al_shabaka_the_palestinian_policy_network/.

advisers” like Ali Abunimah,¹²⁵ Omar Barghouti,¹²⁶ and Diana Buttu¹²⁷ who call for the elimination of the Jewish state, while the organization advocates for Congress to cut Israel off from support for its defensive Iron Dome system shortly after Hamas and other Palestinian terror groups launched over 4,400 rockets at Israeli civilians.¹²⁸

In the famous words of Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter:

A university ceases to be true to its own nature if it becomes the tool of Church or State or any sectional interest. A university is characterized by the spirit of free inquiry, its ideal being the ideal of Socrates — ‘to follow the argument where it leads.’ This implies the right to examine, question, modify or reject traditional ideas and beliefs. Dogma and hypothesis are incompatible, and the concept of an immutable doctrine is repugnant to the spirit of a university. The concern of its scholars is not merely to add and revise facts in relation to an accepted framework, but to be ever examining and modifying the framework itself.¹²⁹

Middle East and Palestinian Studies at Brown University has ceased to be true to the nature of a university by way of becoming a tool for sectional interests and its embrace of immutable doctrines.

c. The Enthusiastic Embracing of Subjectivity, Postmodernism, and Critical Theory

How exactly do those in Brown’s Middle East and Palestinian Studies programs intend to “shape” the narrative? In their words, by “decolonizing” the study of Palestinians.¹³⁰ Much of the material provided in previous sections illustrates how this works, but it is worth putting into context what is meant by “decolonizing.”

Part of this can be understood as a reaction to “Orientalism,” that is, the “Oriental studies” that preceded the field of Middle East Studies. The “Orientalist” approach, as explained by Arnold,

¹²⁵ *Extremist Ali Abunimah Speaks at Haverford and Bryn Mawr*, CAMERA on Campus, 2 April 2014, CAMERA on Campus, <https://cameraoncampus.org/blog/aliabunimah/>.

¹²⁶ *BDS: In Their Own Words*, Jewish Virtual Library, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/bds-in-their-own-words> (last visited 29 September 2023).

¹²⁷ Diana Buttu, *Two-state solution and Middle East peace: It is past time to move to a different model*, Gulf News, 10 November 2015, available at <https://al-shabaka.org/op-eds/two-state-solution-and-middle-east-peace-it-is-past-time-to-move-to-a-different-model/>. For many examples of Buttu’s history of blatant lies, see *Diana Buttu*, CAMERA, <https://www.camera.org/people/diana-buttu/> (last visited September 29, 2023).

¹²⁸ Nadya Tannous, *Restricting US Military Aid to Israel in the Age of Normalization*, Al-Shabaka, 14 September 2021, <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/restricting-us-military-aid-to-israel-in-the-age-of-normalization/>; *AN INTERIM ASSESSMENT OF THE GAZA CONFLICT 10-21 MAY 2021*, High Level Military Group, July 2021, <http://www.high-level-military-group.org/pdf/hlmg-interim-assessment-gaza-conflict-may-2021.pdf> (on the number of rockets launched).

¹²⁹ *Paul M. SWEEZY, Appellant, v. STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE by Louis C. WYMAN*, Attorney General, 354 U.S. 234 (1957), available at <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/354/234>.

¹³⁰ *Brochure: New Directions in Palestinian Studies*, <https://palestinianstudies.org/files/mesps/imce/media/NDPS1-5brochure-web.pdf> (In the words of the NDPS 2013-2018 Brochure: “Launched as a research initiative of Brown University’s Middle East Studies program in 2012, New Directions in Palestinian Studies (NDPS) has built an international community of scholars dedicated to decolonizing and globalizing this field of study.”).

“attempted to provide objective, factual information about the region’s cultures, religions, and peoples, and to encourage students to come to their own conclusions.”¹³¹ However, prominent academics like Edward Said, and his many disciples that have since flooded the field, believed that such scholarship was Eurocentric and systematically biased. Their response, however, “was not to seek a more objective perspective,” Arnold explains, but rather they “adopted a postmodern view that no scholarship could possibly be objective; therefore, they must lean into subjectivity...”¹³²

Nowhere is this more seemingly true than at Brown University. Indeed, CMES was apparently modeled on these ideas. In his Spring 2023 letter, Doumani stated that Brown was an “ideal home for this new model” of “agenda...driven” area studies, because it was “[u]nburdened by the legacy of Oriental studies departments...”¹³³ An entire course on “Orientalism and the Question of Palestine” was even given by Adi Ophir, during which students were taught Edward Said’s views on “orientalist bias and myopia” and about “clearing a space for Palestinian subjectivity, with its suffering and loss, ongoing resistance, all weaved into the determined effort to produce a counter knowledge of Palestine.”¹³⁴

A common theme found within the materials reviewed relating to the rhetoric surrounding “decolonizing” research is the idea that old forms of scholarship are flawed because the “knowledge production” was not coming from the “subjects” of those studied.¹³⁵ The examination of alternative perspectives and theories is, of course, part of what academia and scholarship is all about. But at Brown, this examination of Palestinian “knowledge production” is characterized by the exclusion of other perspectives and dispenses with even the pretense of objectivity.

But it’s more than just the exclusionary bias in favor of anti-Israel and postmodern ideologies. While much of the material frames this as giving voice to “overlooked” viewpoints and theories, it is very selective about which overlooked viewpoints are allowed. The language about uplifting overlooked content invariably comes with the incurious and automatic dismissal of counter perspectives, and even calls to silence such opposing viewpoints. At the New Direction in Palestinian Studies’ most recent workshop in 2023, “Palestinian revolutionary anti-colonialism” is described as “anti-colonial *knowledge*,” whereas criticism of it is framed as “colonial *policing*.”¹³⁶ The Brown Undergraduate Journal of Middle East Studies (BUJMES) talks about

¹³¹ [Arnold](#), October 2022.

¹³² *Id.*

¹³³ [Director’s Letter](#), Spring 2013.

¹³⁴ Syllabus for MES 1244, Orientalism and the Question of Palestine: Theory, History, Literature, Summer 2021 (Adi Ophir). Copy on file.

¹³⁵ See, e.g., [NDPS Workshop](#), 2013.

¹³⁶ “How can we generate frameworks for studying Palestinian revolutionary anti-colonialism that can avoid the pitfalls of teleology, presentism, and colonial policing of anti-colonial knowledge?” *The Palestinian Revolutionary Tradition and Global Anti-Colonialism*, Palestinian Studies, 2023, <https://palestinianstudies.org/workshops/2023/palestinian-revolutionary-tradition-and-global-anti-colonialism> (last visited 29 September 2023).

“uplift[ing] often overlooked content, discourses, and voices in order to build knowledge that nuances hegemonic and narrow understandings of the expansive region and its diverse peoples.”¹³⁷ But the journal also declares that it “stand[s] against the perpetuation of...zionism...”¹³⁸ That is, it stands against mainstream Jewish beliefs.

In what other ways does this decolonized, counter knowledge of Palestinians look like in practice, though?

As with the avoidance of topics that might shine a negative light on Muslims in Middle East Studies, within Palestinian Studies at Brown there is a careful avoidance of critical discussion of various aspects of Palestinian society. A February 2022 seminar on “gender violence” illustrates just how far this goes.¹³⁹ There was virtually no discussion on the issue of gender violence in Palestinian society itself. Rather, the participants focused their remarks on criticizing *perceptions* of the problem of gender violence in Palestinian society, or as put by one speaker, her “real sense of discomfort, particularly with the sort of hegemonic representations of gender relations and Palestinian society...” Another speaker, Lila Abu-Lughod, criticized the “international feminist agenda” because its focus on gender-based violence...leave[s] aside the violence of states like the ones that we considered here, like Israel and India...” (Notably, two non-Muslim states in predominantly Muslim regions). Abu-Lughod even questioned “why the gruesome sensationalism about sexual slavery under ISIS” when there were the “costs of war in Afghanistan and Iraq...” Another speaker, Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, decried how conditions were being placed on funds for combating violence against women to ensure the aid was not being diverted toward terrorist activities. Such conditioning, said the speaker, “ignores the overarching problems that create violence against women: settler colonialism, military occupation, political violence...” The conditional funding amounted to, in her words, “supremacist toxic feminism.”

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is cast in black-and-white terms of oppressed, indigenous people and an all-encompassing evil of Western-style colonialism and imperialism. Even Israel’s War of Independence – during which the tiny, nascent state was invaded by multiple surrounding armies – is treated as an example of *Israeli* colonialism, with Doumani writing: “The settler-colonial paradigm frames the destruction of Palestine and the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1948 as yet another tragic example of a global phenomenon of European capitalist expansion and imperialist conquest that has devastated indigenous populations...”¹⁴⁰

That Jews are a “settler-colonial” presence in “Palestine” is taken as a given, and there appears to be little, if any, consideration of the fact that the Jewish people are indigenous to the land. In the

¹³⁷ *Brown Undergraduate Journal of Middle East Studies*, Brown University Library, <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/collections/bdr:xxkz2hes/> (last visited 29 September 2023).

¹³⁸ *The Brown Undergraduate Journal of Middle East Studies (BUJMES) Releases 2022 Issue*, Watson Institute, 3 September 2022, <https://watson.brown.edu/cmcs/news/2022/brown-undergraduate-journal-middle-east-studies-releases-2022-issue>.

¹³⁹ *Seminar | The Cunning of Gender Violence: Geopolitics and Feminism*, Palestinian Studies, 25 February 2022, <https://palestinianstudies.org/events/2022/seminar-cunning-gender-violence-geopolitics-and-feminism>.

¹⁴⁰ Syllabus for HIST 1969D, “Palestine versus the Palestinians,” Spring 2020 (Beshara Doumani). Copy on file.

“Modern Palestinian History” class, the very first sentence dictates this, stating: “This course examines the origins of one of the longest running and most significant settler colonial realities in modern history.”¹⁴¹ In that class, students are told that there are “Palestinian natives” and “Zionist colonists.”¹⁴² A review of available syllabi for courses under the MES program reveals virtually no substantive challenge to these depictions.

d. Reinventing Academic Freedom

The application of postmodernism and critical theory work to create a worldview in which one’s personal perceptions of righteousness and justice are irrefutable and untouchable. Meanwhile, those with different perceptions are castigated as representing evil, and therefore must be silenced and kept out of the conversation. But how do those involved justify such positions that contravene the very idea of academic freedom, a cherished concept in academia? In short, by redefining it to mean anything but academic freedom.

Doumani’s views on academic freedom expose a level of hypocrisy, in which the rules to be applied to others need not be applied to him. That is, his views on academic freedom seem less about nuanced and principled positions to be equally applied, but rather on what will benefit his preferred ideological viewpoint. Consider, for example, that in a 2005 article, Doumani depicted as a threat to academic freedom the fact that “universities have become much more dependent on donations from wealthy donors” which, according to him, makes them “much more vulnerable to the myriad ways in which outside forces are reshaping the landscape of intellectual production.”¹⁴³ Yet his endowed professorship in Palestinian Studies was funded by “donations from wealthy donors” and he has been explicit about his intention to reshape the landscape of intellectual production on the subject.¹⁴⁴

The “do as I say, not as I do” nature of his views are evident in other ways, too.

Doumani’s views on academic freedom consistently seem to work in such a way that benefits his ability to purvey his anti-Israel viewpoint while limiting the expression of those with a different perspective. Consider part of a lecture he gave on the subject of academic freedom at Leiden University in September 2022:

What do we mean when we say academic freedom? So *praesidium libertatis*, as we just heard, is widely understood to mean freedom of individual scholars from censorship in research, teaching and free speech. Can there be academic freedom without collective access to education? Without institutional autonomy of universities? Can it exist under conditions of social inequality, and especially for the Palestinians under conditions of settler colonialism? What governs which claims and by whom, for freedom are heard and

¹⁴¹ Syllabus for MES 1222, “Modern Palestinian History,” Fall 2022 (Abdel Razzaq Takriti). Copy on file.

¹⁴² Syllabus for MES 1222, “Modern Palestinian History,” Fall 2022 (Abdel Razzaq Takriti). Copy on file.

¹⁴³ Beshara Doumani, *Academic Freedom Post-9/11*, *Isim Review*, 15(1), p.22-23, available at <https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A2717407/view> (hereinafter, Doumani, 2005).

¹⁴⁴ E.g., the Masri Foundation. See *supra*, Section II.

which ones shunned? How to align the liberal notion of critical thinking with the ethical responsibility of engaged scholarship for the social good? What if our conceptual vocabulary, research questions, theories and methodologies are themselves products of a history, of colonialism and imperial domination? Would, *praesidium libertatis* then also mean freedom from epistemologies, colonial epistemologies, and a serious engagement with indigenous ways of knowing? And finally, how to institutionally shift universities from a market orientation that reproduces existing power relations to an agent that facilitates an agent of change, that facilitates a more just, equal, inclusive, and sustainable world?¹⁴⁵

The implications of Doumani's reinterpretation of the concept place conditions on academic freedom. As long as "conditions of social inequality" exist, the reasoning goes, academic freedom cannot be universally achieved, and thus must be reinterpreted as something entirely different. Given the endurance of social inequality throughout human history, Doumani's view of academic freedom essentially amounts to one in which the principle will be perpetually in a state of suspension.

According to Doumani, conditions of social inequality exist that disfavor Palestinians, therefore restrictions on the academic freedom of Israelis and Zionists must be employed. His position was laid out when, ironically, he was attacked by BDS activists when the CMES logo was used for an event featuring an Israeli diplomat, Yehuda Yaakov. Under pressure, Doumani told the anti-Israel website Electronic Intifada:

As a person who supports BDS and who has signed on to BDS statements, I believe [Yaakov's position on BDS] constitutes a justification for not only actions against academic freedom and discussion on campus, but I believe it also constitutes a justification for violations of international law.¹⁴⁶

In essence, Doumani was arguing that placing politically-motivated restrictions on Israeli academics is academic freedom, while expressing opposition to such restrictions against Israeli academics amounts to "actions against academic freedom." It is true that Brown's CMES has featured Jewish and even Israeli speakers, but these individuals are – almost without exception – fringe perspectives from their respective communities. One of these Israelis, Adi Ophir, stated as much himself during the May 2021 "teach-in" when he acknowledged his views are those of only a "very tiny minority within Israeli society."¹⁴⁷ Jewish speakers on the topic of antisemitism invariably come from perspectives outside that held by mainstream Jewry and use their platforms to disparage mainstream views. As Asaf Romirowsky has explained, Middle East Studies departments often pretend to be balanced by pointing at the presence of an Israeli faculty

¹⁴⁵ YouTube Video, @lucis.leiden, *What Do We Mean When We Say "Academic Freedom"?* | Beshara Doumani | LUCIS Keynote, 25 November 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GaR0ZITIX8> (hereinafter, Doumani's Leiden Lecture, November 2022).

¹⁴⁶ Ali Abunimah, *Palestinian American professor criticized over Israeli diplomat's appearance at Brown*, Electronic Intifada, 17 November 2014, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/palestinian-american-professor-criticized-over-israeli-diplomats-appearance-brown>.

¹⁴⁷ See, *Teach-In*, May 2021.

member, notwithstanding that “many Israeli academics have built their reputation on scholarship that is critical of Israel and Israel’s existence,” and by such departments giving them appointments, it “gives Israeli scholars the visibility they seek while allowing their hosts to claim balance...”¹⁴⁸

It’s also worth exploring what kind of restrictions on Palestinian universities CMES points to justify their avoidance of mainstream Israeli perspectives. During his speech at Leiden University, Doumani pointed to the European Union’s attachment of “a clause to any contract for funding of research projects that the university like Birzeit may win”¹⁴⁹ that prohibits the involvement of anyone on the EU’s list of designated terrorist organizations.¹⁵⁰ That list includes organizations like Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigade.¹⁵¹ Doumani has, in the past, also complained about conditions on grants from foundations that required the grantees to not promote or engage in “violence, terrorism, bigotry or the destruction of any state,” following the controversial role numerous non-governmental organizations played at the antisemitic spectacle of the 2001 Durban Conference.¹⁵²

Academic freedom may be a somewhat amorphous and hotly debated concept, but Doumani’s view takes it to an extreme in which opposition to favored ideas (e.g., BDS) is a violation, while funding proscribed terrorist organizations and severely restricting the ability of entire categories of people¹⁵³ to participate in scholarly activities is the embodiment of academic freedom. Were

¹⁴⁸ Asaf Romirowsky, *Asaf Romirowsky on Academics against Israel and the Jews*, by Manfred Gerstenfeld, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, April 16, 2008, <https://jcpa.org/article/asaf-romirowsky-on-academics-against-israel-and-the-jews-by-manfred-gerstenfeld/>.

¹⁴⁹ [Doumani’s Leiden Lecture](#), November 2022.

¹⁵⁰ See, e.g., *Annex II: General conditions applicable to European Union-financed grant contracts for external actions*, European Union External Action, July 2019, article 1.5bis, p. 4, https://www.ecas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/e3h2_gencond_en_0.pdf.

¹⁵¹ *COUNCIL IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) 2022/147 of 3 February 2022 implementing Article 2(3) of Regulation (EC) No 2580/2001 on specific restrictive measures directed against certain persons and entities with a view to combating terrorism, and repealing Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/1188*, Official Journal of the European Union, L.25, Vol.65, L.25/1 to L.25/4, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L:2022:025:TOC>.

¹⁵² [Doumani](#), 2005. For an overview of just how antisemitic the Durban Conference was, see: Tom Lantos, *The Durban Debacle: An Insider’s View of the UN World Conference Against Racism*, The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs, Vol. 26:1, Winter/Spring 2002, available at <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/nm/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Lantos-Durban-PDF.pdf>; Anne Bayefsky, *THE UN WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM: A RACIST ANTI-RACISM CONFERENCE*, Proceedings of the Annual Meeting (American Society of International Law), Vol.96, p.65-74, 13-16 March 2002, available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25659754>; Ron Kampeas, *20 years ago, the UN Durban Conference aimed to combat racism. It devolved into a ‘festival of hate’ against Jews.*, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 9 September 2021, <https://www.jta.org/2021/09/09/politics/20-years-ago-the-un-durban-conference-aimed-to-combat-racism-it-devolved-into-a-festival-of-hate-against-jews>.

¹⁵³ Proponents of BDS claim that the academic boycott is not targeted at individuals, but at institutions. It’s a dubious claim both in practice and in effect. See, e.g., Eugene Kontorovich, *The Anti-Semitic Nature of Boycotts Singling Out Israel: Written testimony of Prof. Eugene Kontorovich before the House Committee on Homeland Security and the Subcommittee on Intelligence & Terrorism*, for the Subcommittee on Intelligence and Counterterrorism of the Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives, 15 January 2020, available at <https://democrats-homeland.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Testimony-%20Kontorovich.pdf> (“Refusals to deal that target

Doumani's conception to take hold in academia, the result would not be more freedom to speak and explore new ideas, but precisely the opposite.

V. Conclusion

Brown University has a long, proud history as one of the United States' finest universities. This is what makes it all the more concerning what is emanating from its Middle East and Palestinian Studies programs. Were Doumani to succeed in spreading his model for Palestinian Studies beyond just Providence, Rhode Island, the danger of these rigid, ideological, extremist and often antisemitic messages – much of which is completely at odds with what academia is supposed to be about – would only multiply.

The danger of indoctrinating young minds with bigoted messages, and glorifying political violence, is obvious, and we are already seeing some of the consequences after the 10/7 Massacre in Israel. Between the ideological uniformity of the faculty and curriculum, and the absence of any meaningful counter-perspectives from Israelis and Zionists, Middle East Studies students at Brown are being at best left uninformed and at worst being actively disinformed about the perspectives of the Jews and Israelis they hear so much about. But another important consideration is that raised in a broader sense by Martin Kramer and Neetu Arnold. Those taught at a prestigious university like Brown will likely “go on to make policy, form opinion, and command U.S. power in the world.”¹⁵⁴ Suffice it to say that America would be profoundly disserved by policymakers who did not actually receive credible, rigorous academic training, but rather were indoctrinated in rigid, ideological explanations that foster a belief that the mass murder, torture, rape, mutilation, and kidnapping of Jews was a “just” act.

It is the author's belief that the rigorous study of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples is crucial not just from a policy perspective, but from the perspective of desiring a peaceful solution to the long-running Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is nothing inherently wrong with the presentation of Palestinian perspectives, or Israeli perspectives for that matter. They should both be studied and considered in an intellectually honest and academically rigorous way. It is the hope of the author that this report will serve as a warning against the wider adoption of the Brown University model of Middle East and Palestinian Studies. Furthermore, it is hoped this information will instigate reflection and reconsideration of the direction at Brown University itself. With peace still elusive in the Middle East, the American public and policymakers need serious scholarship, not extremist dogma.

Israel alone and not any other country offer a clear proxy for engaging in anti-Semitism under the cloak of political legitimacy. Partial boycotts are boycotts. Furthermore, discrimination need not be 100% congruent with the targeted class to be discrimination. Anti-discrimination laws make it clear that the use of proxies for race, sexual orientation, and so forth can be discriminatory.”).

¹⁵⁴ [Kramer](#), March 2022.