



# IVY LEAGUE PROPAGANDA: HOW BROWN UNIVERSITY RADICALIZED STUDENTS AFTER OCTOBER 7

**A CAMERA Follow-Up Report**

# Prioritizing Propaganda Over Education After October 7

## *A CAMERA Follow-Up Report on Brown University*

### CONTENTS

I.	Introduction.....	1
II.	Prioritizing Activism Over Education .....	3
III.	Propaganda Over Intellectual Discourse: Brown University's One-Sided "Educational" Events on the Conflict .....	7
	a. Excluding Mainstream Jewish and Israeli Perspectives While Amplifying Fringe Anti-Zionist Voices.....	8
	b. Demonization and Delegitimization of Israel.....	10
	c. Omitting, Whitewashing, and Legitimizing Palestinian Terrorism.....	17
	d. Stoking Antisemitism.....	22
IV.	The Moral Failure of Brown's Administration.....	26
	a. Capitulating to Student Extremism .....	26
	b. Discrimination, Divestment, and Administrative Inaction.....	28
V.	Conclusion .....	29

#### **I. Introduction**

"Whereas institutions for liberal education are highly beneficial to society by forming the rising generation to virtue, knowledge, and useful literature..." These are the opening words of the Charter of Brown University, written in 1764. Under its current leadership, however, the university has gone astray. Instead of instilling virtue, many faculty are glorifying terrorism. Instead of advancing knowledge, entire academic departments have become centers of intellectual dishonesty and ideological indoctrination. Left unchecked by the administration, these academics and their departments have contributed to the radicalization of students.

In December 2023, CAMERA produced two reports documenting some of the issues plaguing Brown. The first report, entitled "Anti-Israel Extremism and Corrupt Scholarship at Brown University," documented the ideological bias pervading the university's Center for Middle East

Studies (CMES).<sup>1</sup> A week later, CAMERA published the second report, entitled "Brown University's Choices Curriculum is a Platform for an Anti-Zionist Narrative."<sup>2</sup> That report exposed an effort, through the Department of History, to reach K-12 students with the same ideological indoctrination.

This new report builds on CAMERA's previous coverage by focusing on how the university has handled issues of antisemitism and anti-Israel extremism on campus since the Hamas-led Palestinian attack against Israel on October 7, 2023. Once again, CAMERA reviewed dozens of events hosted or sponsored by Brown University regarding the conflict between Israel and terrorist organizations in Gaza. CAMERA also reviewed course materials from 2024 as well as public statements of university officials. Additionally, CAMERA spoke with students, alumni, and individuals affiliated with the Brown Corporation.<sup>3</sup> CAMERA obtained videos, images, and emails documenting some of the problems described herein.

This evidence revealed that the issues extend far beyond just the Center for Middle East Studies. The Watson Institute for Public and International Affairs (Watson Institute), under which CMES resides, has played an increasingly negative role by sponsoring and promoting one-sided propaganda. Instead of reining in the ideological extremism of the CMES and redirecting its focus to its academic mission, the Watson Institute, under the leadership of Edward Steinfeld and Wendy Schiller, fueled its worst excesses.

The university's leadership also failed to maintain the academic mission of Brown University. While occasionally taking action against student conduct violations, President Christina Paxson failed to address the role played by faculty members in fueling the extremism. CAMERA put Paxson and the rest of Brown University's leadership on notice of these issues over a year ago. Their subsequent inaction signals an unwillingness to restore credibility and academic rigor to their institution.

Consequently, since October 7, 2023, Brown University has accelerated in the wrong direction. The ideological indoctrination has become more extreme, as have the students. To understand how this is happening, it is helpful to begin with the words of Beshara Doumani, the founding director of CMES and inaugural endowed chair in Palestinian studies at Brown. Speaking at a university event in March 2016 entitled "Suffocating Embrace? The Futures of Palestinians in

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<sup>1</sup> David M. Litman, *Anti-Israel Extremism and Corrupt Scholarship at Brown University*, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA), 13 Dec. 2023, <https://www.camera.org/article/camera-report-anti-israel-extremism-and-corrupt-scholarship-at-brown-university/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ricki Hollander, *Brown University's Choices Curriculum is a Platform for an Anti-Zionist Narrative*, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA), 21 Dec. 2023, <https://www.camera.org/article/camera-report-brown-universitys-choices-curriculum-is-a-platform-for-anti-zionist-narrative/>.

<sup>3</sup> Brown University is a private institution which is governed by the "Corporation of Brown University," otherwise known as the "Brown Corporation." *The Corporation*, The Corporation of Brown University, <https://corporation.brown.edu/> (last visited 28 Oct. 2024).

Israel," Doumani's own words exposed the indoctrination and rejection of academic values plaguing Brown. The panel on which Doumani sat was asked by an audience member, "Why not also bring people who represent the security aspect of Israel, the security ideas, the ideas of also the religion there? I would truly like to hear a debate that looks at both sides..." This is how Doumani responded:

"It's important to explain that this is not a debate. **It's not meant to be a debate.** Surely the idea is not to have a CNN style 'this is your story, this is my story, let's recognize the humanity of each other and then find some sort of solution that we can both live with.' Because this is really a critical conversation, in what sense? In the sense that – two senses. One is that the departure point is not the punches and counterpunches of public discourse and nationalist narratives, but rather an issue of intellectual and political consequence, using academic standards of knowledge as the baseline. **So what do we share in common, many of us here, is that Israel cannot be properly understood unless, really, the features of it as a settler-colonial project are understood. If most academics looking at that history think that this is an attractive, and maybe even dominant framework for understanding the conflict, then we start from there, and then we go on to debate** well, what does that mean and what can we think about in terms of the future?"<sup>4</sup>

Doumani's answer serves as a succinct summary of the nature of nearly every event held by Brown on the subject since October 7. His remarks were even echoed at one such event by Birzeit University professor Rana Barakat, in October 2023: "Everyone here knows about the history of settler colonialism in Palestine."<sup>5</sup> Brown University events are simply exercises in indoctrinating students with the ideological "truths" of the likes of Doumani and Barakat.

## II. Prioritizing Activism Over Education

At Brown, faculty and guest speakers are using their positions of influence to advance their ideology at the expense of a real education. Doumani's public statements aren't the only evidence of this exploitation. CAMERA's 2023 reports thoroughly documented the hijacking of the academic institution by fundamentally anti-intellectual activists.

Course materials collected by CAMERA continue to attest to this. So, too, do dozens of statements made during university-organized and -sponsored events since October 7, which are

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<sup>4</sup> *Suffocating Embrace? The Futures of Palestinians in Israel*, Brown University, 3 Mar. 2016, <https://events.brown.edu/middle-east/event/32101-suffocating-embrace-the-futures-of-palestinians-in>.

<sup>5</sup> *Gaza 101: Gaza in Context: A Collaborative Teach-in Series*, Brown University, 20 Oct. 2023, <https://home.watson.brown.edu/news/news-from-watson/current-events-israel-and-gaza#:~:text=October%2020%3A%C2%A0%22Gaza%20101%3A%20Gaza%20in%20Context%3A%20A%20Collaborative%20Teach%20in%20Series%22%20moderated%20by%C2%A0Bassam%20Haddad> (video available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAKWgcpeYNo>) (hereinafter, "Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One").

discussed in further detail in the next section. Together, they make clear that many faculty view their role not as truth-seekers and educators, but as ideological activists on a mission.

**Course Syllabi:** CAMERA's first report on Brown highlighted what is being taught in university courses by analyzing dozens of syllabi from CMES courses. These materials showed that students were being indoctrinated in postmodernist, postcolonial perspectives. Alternative theories and perspectives are few and far between. It was clear that the instructors did not mean to educate; they meant to indoctrinate.

In 2024, CMES syllabi continue to espouse the same ideological rhetoric. However, there are two noticeable changes. First, there is an even greater emphasis on, and glorification of, "anti-colonial resistance," by professors such as Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, Omer Bartov, and Suvaïd Yaseen.<sup>6</sup> The phrase is a thinly veiled reference to terrorism, including that carried out on October 7, as Azoulay herself has acknowledged.<sup>7</sup>

The second change is the consistency with which the "genocide" libel has been wielded against Israel. Though the grotesque charge has been around for decades, there is a renewed push to convert the allegation into an academic truth. Classes taught by professors such as Azoulay and Adi Ophir assign as readings South Africa's filings at the International Court of Justice, which accused Israel of carrying out a genocide in Gaza.<sup>8</sup> Noticeably absent from their assigned readings are Israel's rebuttals.

Absent also is any semblance of balance or diversity of thought. Overwhelmingly, assigned readings feature anti-Israel partisans, antisemites, and activist scholars like Ilan Pappé, Sherene Seikaly, Avi Shlaim, Rashid Khalidi, Hanan Ashrawi, Refaat Alareer, and Edward Said. To frame the broader subjects, the same handful of Marxist and post-colonialist names repeatedly appeared: Karl Marx, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Frantz Fanon.

**University Events:** Partisan advocacy goes well beyond just course materials, too. At university-sponsored events, speakers made no secret of their prioritization of activism over education. At the very first university-sponsored event after Hamas's attack, Bassam Haddad, an associate professor at George Mason University, openly acknowledged the organizer's political motivation: "one of the main reasons we're doing this is because of the appalling discourse of government."<sup>9</sup> Compared to other speakers, however, his remark was coy.

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<sup>6</sup> Syllabi for COLT 2822P, Colonial postcard, anti-colonial letters and public address (Prof. Azoulay); HIST 1953S, Costs of Resistance: History Through Film (Prof. Yaseen); HIST 2972E, Essential Readings on Oppression and Resistance (Prof. Bartov). Copies on file.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Seeing Genocide*, Boston Review, 8 Dec. 2023, <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/seeing-genocide/>.

<sup>8</sup> Syllabi for MES 1198, Reflections on "The Jewish Question" (Prof. Ophir); COLT 2822P, Colonial postcard, anti-colonial letters and public address (Prof. Azoulay).

<sup>9</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

Nadya Sbaiti, an assistant teaching professor at Georgetown University in Qatar, bragged that her students were "all politically on the right side of history, on the right side of this political issue..."<sup>10</sup> She continued: "[B]ut, [they] do not have scaffolding, do not have the sort of intellectual or historical infrastructure that they can draw upon.... So I'm hoping that this, and the series of teachings that we're doing, is going to offer that tool." Sbaiti thus praised her students for having been indoctrinated with the "right" opinions even though, as she acknowledged, those opinions are based on no actual knowledge.

Adel Iskandar, an associate professor at Simon Fraser University, complained that the media isn't conveying his preferred narratives, and so, he concluded, "we are forced to break the embargo by making our voices available and present."<sup>11</sup> Asli Bali, a professor at UCLA and the president of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), spoke about how "one of the services I feel I can provide as a president of MESA specifically is drawing attention to that which is being obscured by the dominant narrative."<sup>12</sup> The "dominant narrative" she objected to: that antisemitism is plaguing campuses. Instead, Bali asserted, she wanted to draw attention to how this was harming Palestinian students. Orit Bashkin, a history professor at the University of Chicago, described her academic work as follows: "I try to decolonize the archive."<sup>13</sup> Ziad Abu-Rish fantasized about "go[ing] back to the drawing board and think[ing] about whether we want to build a movement that is capable of stopping a war machine in a moment like this, a genocidal intent and genocidal machine in a moment like this."<sup>14</sup>

Other speakers embraced modern and radical notions of "intersectionality" to connect their extremist cause to other causes. Doumani said, for example, "Gaza under siege is a canary in the mine of global challenges, from climate change and statelessness, forced displacement, [and] humanitarianism..."<sup>15</sup> Ilana Feldman, an anthropology professor at George Washington University, asserted that "Palestine is central to anti-colonial liberation struggle globally in many ways."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>11</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>12</sup> Asli Bâli | *Campus Climate: Know Your Rights*, Brown University, 28 Feb. 2024, <https://events.brown.edu/middle-east/event/280029-asli-bali-campus-climate-know-your-rights> (hereinafter, "*Campus Climate Lecture*").

<sup>13</sup> *Before the Settlers: Gazan Jews, The history of Jews in Ottoman Palestine, and the War*, Brown University, 14 Mar. 2024, <https://events.brown.edu/watson-international-public/event/276540-before-the-settlers-gazan-jews-the-history-of-jews>.

<sup>14</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>15</sup> *Gaza 101: Gaza in Context: A Collaborative Teach-in Series, Part Two*, Brown University, 26 Oct. 2023, <https://home.watson.brown.edu/news/news-from-watson/current-events-israel-and-gaza#:~:text=October%2020%3A%C2%A0%22Gaza%20101%3A%20Gaza%20in%20Context%3A%20A%20Collaborative%20Teach%20in%20Series%22%20moderated%20by%20Bassam%20Haddad> (video available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnyYDLMz95g>) (hereinafter, "*Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part Two*").

<sup>16</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part Two*, Oct. 2024.



Most blatant, however, was Nadjie Al-Ali, a former CMES director and current professor of international studies, anthropology, and Middle East studies. While opening a Brown University event entitled "Campus Climate: Know Your Rights," she remarked:

"I should say that our conversation today, although it is going to focus on campus climate and politics more specifically linked to Middle East Studies, this needs to be put in context, and that is the wider context of attacks on universities over the past years. We've seen this most obviously in relation to right-wing attacks on critical race theory, as well as assaults on universities' diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts to not only recruit and retain faculty and students of color, but also attempts to transform education more profoundly. And whatever critique one might have of the more institutional DEI initiatives, they have contributed to some positive changes and have provided a leverage to address some structural forms of inequality and racism."<sup>17</sup>

Notably absent from the discussion about rights on campus: the rights of Jewish students to participate in university life free from discrimination and hostile environments.

Some event speakers made clear their disturbing intentions. "Palestinians are dealing against the system that has been built over 75 years," remarked Ghassan Abu Sittah, the infamous pro-Hamas doctor, at an event in February, referring to the length of time Israel has existed as a modern state.<sup>18</sup> "[T]hat system," he continued, "needs to be dismantled brick by brick." Sherene Seikaly, an associate professor at UC-Santa Barbara, threatened those well beyond Israel's borders. Less than three weeks after Hamas's attack, she declared: "As the calamity of Israel's onslaught against Gaza becomes apparent, those who cheered it on will panic about reputational damage and plead their earlier ignorance. Do not let them get away with it."<sup>19</sup>

When convenient for the anti-Israel narrative, misinformation was also rampant. Among Abu Sittah's many lies: "Children [in Gaza] on a daily basis are succumbing to starvation and dying."<sup>20</sup> Even the highest claimed figure for starvation deaths in Gaza, published a month after Abu Sittah's remark, was 28 children for the duration of the entire war.<sup>21</sup> Nadim Bawalsa, an associate editor at the Journal of Palestine Studies and affiliated with the anti-Israel activist organization Al-Shabaka, claimed that before 1948, "Jews entered Palestine virtually without check of any kind."<sup>22</sup> The claim was part of a broader narrative about Jews being the "subsequent colonizers

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<sup>17</sup> *Campus Climate Lecture*, Feb. 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Webinar: Dr. Ghassan Abu Sittah: My Time in Gaza, Brown University, 27 Feb. 2024, <https://palestinianstudies.org/events/2024/webinar-dr-ghassan-abu-sittah-my-time-gaza> (hereinafter, "*Ghassan Abu Sittah Lecture*").

<sup>19</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part Two*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>20</sup> *Ghassan Abu Sittah Lecture*, Feb. 2024.

<sup>21</sup> See *Gaza: Israel's Imposed Starvation Deadly for Children*, Human Rights Watch, 9 Apr. 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/09/gaza-israels-imposed-starvation-deadly-children>.

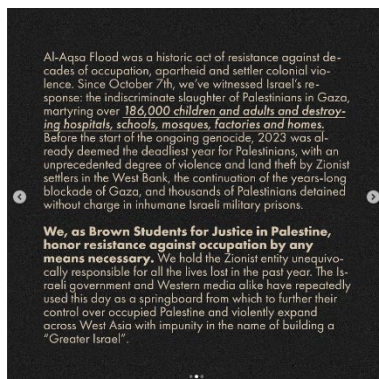
<sup>22</sup> *Transnational Palestine: Migration and the Right of Return Before 1948*, Brown University, 1 May 2024, <https://events.brown.edu/middle-east/event/284117-transnational-palestine-migration-and-the-right-of> (hereinafter, "*Transnational Palestine Event*").

of Palestine” after the British. Bawalsa's claim is also patently false. The British were notorious for restricting Jewish immigration into Mandate Palestine. In one infamous incident, British authorities rejected desperate pleas to allow in 20,000 Jewish children from Poland in 1939.<sup>23</sup>

As these remarks indicate, the participants did not treat Brown University events as educational opportunities for students, but as partisan calls to action. As detailed in the next section, they made this substantially easier by excluding intellectually honest or diverse viewpoints. As Doumani's 2016 remarks foreshadowed, the organizers invited only speakers who shared their anti-Israel viewpoints, with only token exceptions. The effect wasn't, as the university claimed, to further honest discussion and learning.<sup>24</sup> Rather, it was to give the university's anti-Israel extremists an even greater platform.

### III. Propaganda Over Intellectual Discourse: Brown University's One-Sided “Educational” Events on the Conflict

After the events of October 7, and the deplorable celebration of Hamas's atrocities – including at Brown University<sup>25</sup> – university officials faced increasing criticism. How could a center for higher education be the site of such barbaric language? In response, the Watson Institute began promoting a series of events which, they assured, would “provide our community a chance to learn about and discuss current events in Israel and Gaza.”<sup>26</sup> A total of 23 events were listed as a part of this series.<sup>27</sup> Other departments held numerous other events on the same subject.



The single most telling fact about these events: throughout the dozens and dozens of hours of recorded panels, book talks, and conversations, CAMERA could find not a single mention of the Israeli hostages held by Palestinian terrorists in Gaza.

- Based on emails reviewed by CAMERA and conversations with students and alumni, it was obvious early on that the Watson

Institute series would be one-sided. Those in charge rejected or ignored suggestions for speakers sent by Jewish and pro-Israel groups.<sup>28</sup> Instead, as elaborated below, those invited to

<sup>23</sup> Efraim Karsh, *PALESTINE BETRAYED* (Yale University Press, 2011), p.61.

<sup>24</sup> *Current events in Israel and Gaza*, Brown University, 18 Oct. 2023, <https://home.watson.brown.edu/news/news-from-watson/current-events-israel-and-gaza>.

<sup>25</sup> *Brown SJP Statement 2023-10-11*, Brown Students for Justice in Palestine, 11 Oct. 2023, available at [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u0\\_iLkv5fYi47yLzXKELbcta7DfQLZu6dUPp0bqV-gY/edit?tab=t.0](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u0_iLkv5fYi47yLzXKELbcta7DfQLZu6dUPp0bqV-gY/edit?tab=t.0).

<sup>26</sup> *Current events in Israel and Gaza*, Brown University, 18 Oct. 2023, <https://home.watson.brown.edu/news/news-from-watson/current-events-israel-and-gaza>.

<sup>27</sup> Almost all of the events were held and hosted by Brown University. One event was held by another institution but was cosponsored by Brown.

<sup>28</sup> Based on emails seen by CAMERA and conversations with students.



speak were, with token exceptions, of an extreme anti-Israel and often antisemitic pedigree. Events marketed outside of this series, which are also included in the below analysis, were equally one-sided.

What emerged from CAMERA's review of these events fits into four main themes.<sup>29</sup> First, Brown University effectively censored mainstream Israeli and Jewish perspectives, replacing them with the fringe views of anti-Zionist Jews. Second, the speakers who participated obsessively demonized and delegitimized the Jewish state. Third, there was almost no discussion, let alone criticism, of the actions of Palestinians. Finally, the existence of antisemitism was downplayed and even outright denied, even as speakers themselves engaged in antisemitic rhetoric.

#### **a. Excluding Mainstream Jewish and Israeli Perspectives While Amplifying Fringe Anti-Zionist Voices**

Of the 64 speakers and moderators featured in the Watson Institute's "Current events in Israel and Gaza" speaker series, only two (3%) could arguably be considered to represent a mainstream Jewish perspective. One of those two served only as a moderator. None of the events featured mainstream Israeli perspectives. To describe the speaker series as simply "imbalanced" would be an understatement. That would imply the Watson Institute placed something beyond *de minimis* on the other side of the scale.

A small handful of speakers provided disinterested perspectives. A few attempted to discuss the conflict from both perspectives, with limited effectiveness. Another gave the political perspective of the American foreign policy intelligentsia. The vast majority of speakers demonstrated an overwhelming and unyielding hostility toward the Jewish state.

On top of the extreme level of bias was a layer of duplicity, too. In a transparent effort to shield themselves from accusations of bias, the organizers resorted to tokenism. They repeatedly brought in fringe voices from the Israeli and Jewish communities who, in the words of one such token, expressed views held by only a "very tiny minority within Israeli society."<sup>30</sup> Substantively, their remarks did not differ from those of the other speakers.

The Israeli speakers focused almost entirely on the alleged sins of the Israeli society that rejects their radical views. Shaul Magid, a visiting professor at Harvard University, spoke about the "dark rhetoric of Israel" during the war, which he labeled as "classic colonialist language." Magid also railed against what he claimed was the "Zionist de-Arabization," or "Europeanization," of "the Jewish population of the North African and Yemenite and Iraqi and Iranian immigrants to

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<sup>29</sup> Recordings are available for most, but not all, of the events advertised by Brown University about the conflict between Israel and Palestinian terrorists. Where audio was not clear, CAMERA relied on the transcription provided with the video on YouTube.

<sup>30</sup> *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>.

Israel.”<sup>31</sup> By tying Israel to contemporary moral panics over “colonialism,” which have become increasingly disconnected from reality, Magid worked to delegitimize the Jewish state.

Given an opportunity to represent the Israeli story, Magid's Israeli co-panelist, Yuval Evri, an assistant professor at Brandeis University, used it to humanize the terrorists who murdered, raped, mutilated, tortured, and kidnapped their way through southern Israel on October 7. Evri spoke only of one October 7 survivor's story, Rachel Edri, an elderly Jewish woman who cleverly used tea and cookies to buy her rescuers time as terrorists held her hostage in her home.<sup>32</sup> Evri, however, treated her experience as a story of “human contact” that “reveals cultural, linguistic, and human connection.” The Brandeis professor completely glossed over Hamas's atrocities and the impact they had on Israelis. Evri reserved his condemnations instead for Israel, which he accused of “dividing Mizrahim,” like Rachel Edri, “and Palestinians,” like those who brutally slaughtered her neighbors.

Another Israeli, Adi Ophir – a Brown University professor extensively featured in CAMERA's December 2023 reports – depicted October 7 as simply a “violent explosion” caused by “the current government of Israel.”<sup>33</sup> In a Watson Institute podcast, another Israeli professor at Brown, Omer Bartov, accused Israel of “apartheid” and “ethnic cleansing.”<sup>34</sup> Bartov also spoke at length to claim that “the Holocaust...has played an increasingly important role in Israeli politics” to “justify actions that otherwise are very difficult to justify, such as oppression of Palestinians.” In a March 2024 event at Brown entitled “Siri, Is Zionism Settler-Colonialism? The pre and post 10-7 discourse,” Arnon Degani, a fellow at the University of Pennsylvania's Center for the Renewal of Israeli Democracy, described Zionism as “settler-colonialism,” a “worldview that pits Jews against Palestinians,” and involving “genocidal thoughts and fantasies of displacement.”<sup>35</sup> According to him, all of Israel is on stolen “Palestinian land.”

Jewish American speakers weren't much better. At a November 2023 event, Harvard professor Derek Penslar highlighted what he claimed were the “colonial qualities” of the “Zionist movement” by making specious comparisons with Afrikaners in South Africa.<sup>36</sup> Penslar also whitewashed the history of Hajj Amin al-Husseini, the infamous Nazi collaborator and early

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<sup>31</sup> *Current Events in Israel–Gaza: with Shaul Magid and Yuval Evri*, Brown University, 8 Nov. 2023, <https://events.brown.edu/watson-international-public/event/272812-current-events-in-israelgaza-with-shaul-magid-and-yuv>.

<sup>32</sup> Julia Frankel, *Woman becomes Israeli folk hero for plying Hamas militants with snacks until rescue mission arrives*, Associated Press, 18 Oct. 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-hamas-war-militants-hero-75f145487afbc74fe28451fe49f79a50>.

<sup>33</sup> YouTube Video, *Trending Globally: Israel, Palestine, and ‘personal history in times of crisis’*, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, 16 Nov. 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZVTIc1JWBU>.

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> *Siri, Is Zionism Settler-Colonialism? The pre and post 10/7 discourse on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in Academia and Activism*, Brown University, 15 Feb. 2024, <https://events.brown.edu/watson-international-public/event/276543-siri-is-zionism-settler-colonialism-the-pre-and>.

<sup>36</sup> *Current Events in Israel–Gaza: The Abuse of Historical Analogy in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Brown University, 20 Nov. 2023, <https://events.brown.edu/watson-international-public/event/272814-current-events-in-israelgaza-the-abuse-of-historical->.

Palestinian leader. Penslar depicted Hussein, who infamously recruited Muslims for Hitler's armies, as guilty merely of broadcasting "antisemitic and pro-Arab nationalist messages." According to Penslar, highlighting Hussein's leadership of Palestinians is problematic: it unfairly associates Hussein with Palestinian Arabs and thus reflects poorly on the Palestinian nationalist movement.

Amb. Daniel Kurtzer, a professor at Princeton, asserted that "according to international law," Israel was still "an occupying authority" in Gaza after the 2005 disengagement.<sup>37</sup> This, of course, isn't a settled fact; scholars continue to debate that question.<sup>38</sup> He also argued that the U.S. should "offer recognition of the State of Palestine" because it "addresses at least one of the asymmetries in the negotiations..."

Some Jewish speakers made a point of separating themselves from their community. At a February 2024 event entitled "Israel and Palestine Beyond the Israel-Hamas War," Gershon Baskin spoke of how he, as an American Jew, went to live with "Palestinian citizens of Israel...simply to gain credibility in the eyes of Israelis" who viewed him as a "naïve, stupid American."<sup>39</sup> He claimed that as a result, he "knew [the Palestinians] much better than most Israeli Jews" who had spent their entire lives growing up alongside them.

By resorting to these outlier views, the event organizers manipulated their audiences. Brown University implied these events would be intellectually honest discussions and learning opportunities. Instead, they were one-sided propaganda sessions. The nature of these events flew in the face of what a credible academic institution is supposed to embody. Instead of fostering intellectual curiosity, debate, and truth-seeking, these events started with Doumani's "truth" of Israeli evil and worked backwards from there.

For an academic institute focused on international and public affairs, this intellectual dishonesty is discrediting. Ivy League students – future leaders of America – are being given an inaccurate, ideological, and stunted understanding of the conflict. From both an academic and U.S. national interest point of view, this is dangerous.

## **b. Demonization and Delegitimization of Israel**

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<sup>37</sup> Amb. Daniel Kurtzer — *Israel, Palestine, and the Old-New Middle East*, Brown University, 5 Mar. 2024, <https://events.brown.edu/watson-international-public/event/276501-amb-daniel-kurtzer-israel-palestine-and-the>.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, the discussion of the question in Michael N. Schmitt, *Israel – Hamas 2023 Symposium – The Legal Context of Operations Al-Aqsa Flood and Swords of Iron*, *Articles of War*, 10 Oct. 2023, <https://lieber.westpoint.edu/legal-context-operations-al-aqsa-flood-swords-of-iron/> ("Whether Israel is occupying Gaza remains a contentious question, one with which the Israeli Supreme Court and the International Court of Justice have struggled.... Reasonable minds differ.... While I accept Professor Dinstein's general premise that the degree of control necessary to establish a state of occupation is not necessarily the exact degree required to maintain it, I find the contention that Israel has not been in occupation of Gaza since it withdrew to be more convincing.").

<sup>39</sup> *Israel and Palestine Beyond the Israel-Hamas War*, Brown University, 28 Feb. 2024, <https://www.brown.edu/academics/race-ethnicity/events/israel-and-palestine-beyond-israel-hamas-war>.

Given this overwhelming ideological skew, it is unsurprising that the events obsessively focused on the sins – real or imagined – of Israel. Every Israeli action was placed under the microscope. Context was treated as irrelevant and facts as malleable. The existence of sinister Israeli motives was assumed. Seemingly the only question for the speakers was the nature and degree of Israeli wickedness.

Once again, several patterns emerge from the rhetoric. First, it depicts Jews as settler-colonizers with no real connection to the land of Israel. Second, it deems Israel an inherently racist entity. It also deems Zionism – the movement for Jewish self-determination – a racist endeavor. Third, it casts Israelis and Zionists in the language of evil and criminality. It treats evidence as to their evil as unnecessary.

***Jews are “Settler-Colonizers” in Israel:*** One way to alter perceptions of the present is to rewrite the past. The postcolonialists at Brown University understand this well. Given the abundance of scientific and historical evidence of Jewish indigeneity, it is challenging to argue that Jews do not belong in the land of Israel. This goes a long way toward explaining why Brown University event organizers were intent on controlling who was allowed to speak in front of students. Given free rein, speakers were able to portray Jews as foreign invaders and colonizers without fear of exposure.

Her pathway to indoctrination unimpeded, Rana Barakat described the return of Jewish people to their indigenous homeland, Israel, as “the onset of settler-colonial invasion in Palestine” leading to “colonial fascism.”<sup>40</sup> The West Bank, she claimed, was now “a maze and a minefield of a settler army and an army of settlers.”<sup>41</sup>

Speakers didn't limit talk of Israel as a “settler-colonial” to describing its presence in the West Bank. They applied that label to *all* of Israel. Palestinians, Doumani claimed, have been subjected to “75 years of colonial rule,” referencing the approximate number of years Israel has existed as a modern state.<sup>42</sup> Barakat told her audience that there has been “over a century of settler-colonial violence.”<sup>43</sup> Doumani also asserted that Israel was waging a war “on all Palestinians to perpetuate a settler-colonial project focused actually [on] the rest of historic Palestine, from the Negev to the Galilee, from Hebron to Nablus, and from Jericho to Jerusalem.”<sup>44</sup> That is, Doumani believes that all of Israel is a “settler-colonial project,” and therefore illegitimate.

These remarks represent a noticeable change in rhetoric at Brown University. Prior to October 7, Israel's capture of Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip during the Six Day War in 1967 was treated as a significant moment – one to which much discussion was devoted. Over the last year, however, its prominence has dramatically declined in the discourse. In its place is the year 1948,

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<sup>40</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>41</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>42</sup> *Transnational Palestine Event*, May 2024.

<sup>43</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>44</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part Two*, Oct. 2024.

when Israel declared independence. The message: the problem isn't "occupation;" it's Israel's existence.

**Zionism is Racism, and Israelis are Racists:** Whereas the first theme worked to associate the Jewish state with the evil of colonialism, the second theme worked to link Israelis and Zionists – that is, the vast majority of Jews – with the evil of racism.

Most often, speakers pursued this through the "apartheid" libel. By maliciously distorting both the law and the facts, anti-Israel activists have sought to make specious comparisons between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the system of apartheid that existed in South Africa. Though the charge has been repeatedly debunked,<sup>45</sup> there were no legitimate or dissenting scholars present to challenge the narrative and its component lies.

Some speakers went beyond the "apartheid" libel, though. Leila Farsakh, a professor at the University of Massachusetts Boston, agreed that there was apartheid and that Israel had created "bantustans" and "population reserves."<sup>46</sup> But she argued that Israel's intentions were even more sinister: "Many contend that Israel never wanted to create an apartheid reality, a contention I

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<sup>45</sup> E.g., Carola Lingaas, *Jewish Israeli and Palestinians as distinct 'racial groups' within the meaning of the crime of apartheid?*, EJIL:Talk!, 6 Jul. 2021, <https://www.ejiltalk.org/jewish-israeli-and-palestinians-as-distinct-racial-groups-within-the-meaning-of-the-crime-of-apartheid/>; Joshua Kern and Anne Herzberg, *False Knowledge as Power: Deconstructing Definitions of Apartheid that Delegitimise the Jewish State*, NGO Monitor, Dec. 2021, [https://ngomonitor.org/pdf/NGOMonitor\\_ApartheidReport\\_2021.pdf](https://ngomonitor.org/pdf/NGOMonitor_ApartheidReport_2021.pdf); Joshua Kern and Anne Herzberg, *Neo-Orientalism: Deconstructing Claims of Apartheid in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict*, NGO Monitor, Mar. 2022, [https://ngo-monitor.org/pdf/NGOMonitor\\_ApartheidReport\\_2022.pdf](https://ngo-monitor.org/pdf/NGOMonitor_ApartheidReport_2022.pdf); Yaffa Zilbershats, *Apartheid, International Law, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory: A Reply to John Dugard and John Reynolds*, 24 EJIL 915, 922 (2013); Prof. Eugene Kontorovich, *The Apartheid Accusation Against Israel is Baseless – and Agenda-Driven*, EJIL:Talk!, 8 Jul. 2021, <https://www.ejiltalk.org/theapartheid-accusation-against-israel-lacks-is-baseless-and-agenda-driven/>; David M. Litman & Yifa Segal, *Reply to the Harvard International Human Rights Clinic and Addameer's Joint Submission*, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis & UK Lawyers for Israel, May 2022, <https://www.camera.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Final-Draft-Reply-Brief-to-Harvard-Law-ClinicApartheid-Submission-with-FN.pdf>; Prof. Robbie Sabel, *The Campaign to Delegitimize Israel with the False Charge of Apartheid*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 4 May 2009, <https://jcpa.org/article/thecampaign-to-delegitimize-israel-with-the-false-charge-of-apartheid-3/>; Prof. Alan Johnson, *The Apartheid Smear*, Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre, Nov. 2022, <https://www.bicom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/BICOM-AS-Update-NOV-2022-3.pdf>; HRW Crosses the Threshold into Falsehoods and Anti-Semitic Propaganda, Kohelet Forum, <https://www.kohelet.org.il/en/article/hrw-crosses-the-threshold-into-falsehoods-and-anti-semiticpropaganda/>; Alex Safian, PhD, *Amnesty International's Big Lie About Israel*, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA), 31 Jan. 2022, <https://www.camera.org/article/amnestyinternationals-big-lie-about-israel/>; Gilead Ini, *Understanding B'tselem's 'Apartheid' Libel*, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA), 27 Jan. 2021, <https://www.camera.org/article/understanding-btselems-apartheid-libel/>; Alex Safian, PhD, *Human Rights Watch Report Maligns Israel with Lies on Top of Lies*, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA), 27 Apr. 2021, <https://www.camera.org/article/human-rights-watch-reportmaligns-israel-with-lies-on-top-of-lies/>.

<sup>46</sup> *Israel, Palestine and the One-State Solution in the Aftermath of the War on Gaza*, Brown University, 11 Apr. 2024, <https://events.brown.edu/watson-international-public/event/280392-israel-palestine-and-the-one-state-solution-in-the> (hereinafter, "One-State Solution Event").

agree with, since Zionism has historically been more interested in negating Palestinian presence and expelling the native from the land than actually in dominating them."

Doumani claimed that Israel was denying "the category of human" to Palestinians. His evidence: "The language of the Israeli government, which talks about them as human animals meaning that some, the Palestinian lives, don't matter."<sup>47</sup> Lisa Weeden, a professor at the University of Chicago, echoed the claim, stating: "If Palestinians are called animals, as Israel's Defense minister insists...then the only grievable people in the scene, the only ones who present as eligible for grief, are the Israelis."<sup>48</sup> This, Weeden insisted, is a "racist and genocidal framing" that "recapitulates the colonial opposition between the civilized one and the animals who must be routed or destroyed so as to preserve so-called civilization."

Contrary to Doumani and Weeden's claims, no Israeli official used the term "human animals" to categorically describe Palestinians. Rather, that term was used specifically for those terrorists who carried out the atrocities on October 7. The words of Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, whom Weeden directly accused, made this distinction crystal clear. In his remarks to soldiers at Kibbutz Be'eri, site of some of the worst of Hamas's atrocities just a few days earlier, Gallant said: "You fought courageously, and you acted in the spirit of the IDF exactly as it should. You resisted valiantly on the front lines, you hit many terrorists and saved lives. You saw with your own eyes against what we are fighting – against human animals – the Islamic State of Gaza."<sup>49</sup>

There were other outright lies depicting Israelis as racist, too. Doumani falsely claimed that Israel's interest in Judea and Samaria was "more about the building of new Jewish-only colonies," whereas its interest in Gaza is about "demographic displacement."<sup>50</sup> Both are complete inversions of the truth. In the West Bank, Israeli settlements are not "Jewish-only" – Arab Israelis can and do live in settlements.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, the Palestinian Authority forbids, under penalty of death, the sale of any land to Jews.<sup>52</sup> In Gaza, except for temporary and lawful evacuation orders during wartime, the only "demographic displacement" carried out by Israel was to remove *Jews* from the territory during the 2005 disengagement.<sup>53</sup>

With nary a Zionist to be found on the panels, Zionism was also divorced from its actual meaning. Speakers like Nadim Bawalsa cast the movement for Jewish rights as an international

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<sup>47</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part Two*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>48</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>49</sup> *Defense Minister Gallant: Gaza will never return to what it was*, i24 News, 10 Oct. 2023, <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/israel-at-war/1696961009-defense-minister-gallant-visits-kibbutz-be-eri-destruction>.

<sup>50</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part Two*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>51</sup> For example, hundreds of Arabs live the Ariel. See Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, <https://www.cbs.gov.il/en/>.

<sup>52</sup> Khaled Abu Toameh, *PA: Death penalty for those who sell land to Jews*, Jerusalem Post, 1 Apr. 2009, <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/pa-death-penalty-for-those-who-sell-land-to-jews>.

<sup>53</sup> *Israel's Disengagement from Gaza and North Samaria (2005)*, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <https://embassies.gov.il/MFA/ABOUTISRAEL/MAPS/Pages/Israels%20Disengagement%20Plan-%202005.aspx>.



conspiracy, describing the Balfour Declaration, a pivotal moment toward achieving Jewish self-determination, as a sinister "British and Zionist scheme."<sup>54</sup> Others, such as Farsakh, revived the antisemitic canard that Zionism is racism, claiming "Zionist ideology" is about "territorial expansion and demographic separation."<sup>55</sup> In fact, Zionism is simply the movement for Jewish self-determination in the indigenous homeland of the Jewish people, one in five Israelis is Arab, and Israel has already traded land in pursuit of peace.

Thus, with the Watson Institute's platform, Doumani et al. were able to deceive students by inverting reality. Not only were representative Jewish and Israeli voices systematically excluded, but they were slandered as being the real racists.

**Vilifying Israelis:** Having depicted Jews and Israelis as being on the wrong side of society's contemporary panics over racism and colonialism, speaker after speaker poured on the demonization. They freely made wild claims of Israeli crimes and atrocities. Colored with ideological catchphrases, the allegations were consistently disconnected from factual reality. They made little to no effort to provide evidence. No such effort was necessary; the absence of opposing viewpoints meant even the most outlandish of claims would be left unchallenged.

Consider just some of the hyperbolic, emotive, and baseless claims made at these events.

Barakat, the Birzeit University academic, decried the "unseen levels of violence on Palestinian bodies..."<sup>56</sup> The meaning of those words is nonsensical, but like many other remarks, the purpose was clear: projection. The sheer horror of what Palestinian terrorists deliberately inflicted on Israeli civilians on October 7 – from horrific sexual violence against numerous women and children<sup>57</sup> to the deliberate amputation of a child's arm<sup>58</sup> – shocked the world's conscience. Creating false equivalencies was one method by which activists like Barakat could distract audience members from those crimes.

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<sup>54</sup> *Transnational Palestine Event*, May 2024.

<sup>55</sup> *One-State Solution Event*, Apr. 2024.

<sup>56</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>57</sup> *Sexual Violence Crimes on October 7*, Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel, Feb. 2024, available at [https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/news/arcci-submits-first-report-to-un-21-feb-2024/en/English\\_Swords\\_of\\_Iron\\_DOCUMENTS\\_Sexual%20violence%20crimes%20on%20October%207-Feb.%202024.pdf](https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/news/arcci-submits-first-report-to-un-21-feb-2024/en/English_Swords_of_Iron_DOCUMENTS_Sexual%20violence%20crimes%20on%20October%207-Feb.%202024.pdf); see also *Mission report: Official visit of the Office of the SRSG-SVC to Israel and the occupied West Bank 29 January – 14 February 2024*, United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Mar. 2024, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/report/mission-report-official-visit-of-the-office-of-the-srsg-svc-to-israel-and-the-occupied-west-bank-29-january-14-february-2024/20240304-Israel-oWB-CRSV-report.pdf>.

<sup>58</sup> X Post, The Lead CNN (@TheLeadCNN), 31 Oct. 2023, <https://x.com/TheLeadCNN/status/1719485074993774792>; see also X Post, Trey Yingst (@TreyYingst), 23 Oct. 2023, <https://x.com/TheLeadCNN/status/1719485074993774792>.

Barakat wasn't alone in this regard. Doumani, who did not utter a single word of disapproval for the actions of Hamas, instead accused Israel of terrorism. His reasoning: "Israel is a terrorist state because it acts as if Palestinian lives don't matter..."<sup>59</sup>

But no word was more stripped of its meaning than "genocide." Speaker after speaker charged Israel with the crime. None furnished evidence.

Just two weeks after Hamas's massacre of Israelis, Noura Erakat, a professor at Rutgers University, was already speaking of "genocidal warfare" – not by Hamas in southern Israel, but by Israel in Gaza.<sup>60</sup> Barakat, her co-panelist, claimed there was a "hysterical genocide" being carried out by a "settler army and an army of settlers" in the West Bank.<sup>61</sup>

Speakers relied heavily on ideologically and emotionally charged language. Consider just some of the other remarks leveling the accusation:

- "We haven't been able to be in a space, I personally haven't been able to be in a space with others, in a very harrowing moment, at the moment that there is genocidal warfare almost with, you know, zealously supported by European and Western capitals."<sup>62</sup> (Noura Erakat, Oct. 2023)
- "Thank you for taking the time to come and hear us talk about the 21st century's first genocidal war."<sup>63</sup> (Ghassan Abu Sittah, Feb. 2024)
- "Second obvious truth is this is not a war. It's a military onslaught against the captive and overwhelmingly civilian population, half of whom are children."<sup>64</sup> (Beshara Doumani, Oct. 2023)
- "...but they have no means of knowing they are born into a world of War on Terror. They're born into a world, the master narrative of which was produced in the 1990s by the very person who is the statesman today in Israel that is overseeing the re-weaponization of this framework for the purposes of extermination."<sup>65</sup> (Asli Bali, Oct. 2023)
- "As we witness the annihilation of Palestinians in that part of Palestine we now call the Gaza Strip, as we face the realities of genocide in real time..."<sup>66</sup> (Sherene Seikaly, Oct. 2023)

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<sup>59</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part Two*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>60</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>61</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>62</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>63</sup> *Ghassan Abu Sittah Lecture*, Feb. 2024.

<sup>64</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part Two*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>65</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>66</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

- "We could go back to the drawing board and think about whether we want to build a movement capable of stopping a war machine in a moment like this. A genocidal intent and genocidal machine in a moment like this."<sup>67</sup> (Ziad Abu-Rish, Oct. 2023)
- "Since the start of this genocide, we've all witnessed a deliberate attack on health care facilities, supplies, and workers."<sup>68</sup> (Loubna Qutami, Feb. 2024)
- "...we will hear a British Palestinian doctor's testimony of the onslaught of events in Gaza and the destruction of its medical systems after 43 days of genocide spent tending to its patients."<sup>69</sup> (Serena Fadel, Feb. 2024)

None presented substantive evidence or offered even the semblance of legal analysis. None seemed perturbed when Ghassan Abu Sittah erased from memory the genocides in Sudan and Myanmar to advance his campaign of delegitimization against Israel. Nor did any stop and ask whether Doumani's "obvious truth" was obvious or even a truth, as credible academics should.

Yet, no speaker was as outlandish as Leila Farsakh, whose remarks at an April 2024 Brown event provided a clear window into the duplicity of the charge. Farsakh described the events of October 7 in two ways. First, she openly legitimized it: "breaking the siege is a way of saying we still matter, we still live..."<sup>70</sup> Second, she used it to mock the victims, while incorporating the "genocide" libel. "Israel's response to Hamas and the people of Gaza thus could not be but brutal, even genocidal," she claimed, "not only because Israel's image of itself as the protector of the Jewish people was shattered, but also...its ability to protect its own citizens."

Consider those two remarks alongside a third one, uttered immediately after she mocked Israel for failing to protect its people: "The extent of the violence Israel unleashed on the Palestinians since October 8 is incomprehensible..."

Farsakh's remarks justified the slaughter of Israelis while decrying the death of Palestinians. The killing of Israelis was justifiable, her logic went, because "[Palestinians] still matter," but the killing of Palestinians is "incomprehensible" because, presumably, Israeli lives don't matter to her.

Unable to allow Israelis and Jews any sense of humanity, speakers even portrayed Israeli grief as malicious. Echoing Bartov's Holocaust inversion, Farsakh claimed that "the Israeli media" was using "the past trauma of the Holocaust to justify the starvation of Palestinian children..."<sup>71</sup> Lisa Weeden turned the human emotions of Israelis and Jews into a vast conspiracy: "Israel is a machine for the conversion of grief into power – it transmutes grief into violence."<sup>72</sup> Bali complained about campus screenings of "an Israeli montage of images and footage from

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<sup>67</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>68</sup> *Ghassan Abu Sittah Lecture*, Feb. 2024.

<sup>69</sup> *Ghassan Abu Sittah Lecture*, Feb. 2024.

<sup>70</sup> *One-State Solution Event*, Apr. 2024.

<sup>71</sup> *One-State Solution Event*, Apr. 2024.

<sup>72</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

October 7" – much of which was filmed by Palestinian terrorists themselves – because it "is framed in a pro-Israel light."<sup>73</sup>

In this way, Israelis were not just demonized; they were dehumanized.

### **c. Omitting, Whitewashing, and Legitimizing Palestinian Terrorism**

Speakers also denied Palestinians their own bit of humanity: agency. Audience members wouldn't know, based on the substance of the Brown University events, that on October 7, 2023, Palestinians committed one of the most horrific and well-documented genocidal attacks in history. This is so even though the event series was marketed as addressing happenings in "Israel and Gaza." Nor would audience members know of the long history of Palestinian terrorism and wars waged by Arab armies against the Jewish state.

This was accomplished mainly through two methods. Some simply expunged these historical realities from the record as they delivered their remarks and answered questions. Others acknowledged the existence of aggression and terrorism against Israel, but argued that it was morally right.

***Erasing Arab Terrorism, Aggression, and Rejectionism:*** To obscure history and preserve the "oppressor vs. oppressed" narrative advanced by many Brown University academics, many speakers relied on simple omissions. Others censored history by castigating anyone who dared mention the existence of Palestinian terrorism. While Israelis can do no right, the messaging went, Palestinians can do no wrong.

Adel Iskandar, the Simon Fraser University professor, exemplified the latter tactic of making criticism of Palestinian actions taboo. For Iskandar, Hamas's opening of the war by brutally invading and rampaging through Israeli towns wasn't an issue. The real "problem," according to him, was "that every conversation [about the war] begins with a condemnation of Hamas." He complained that "Hamas, unfortunately, has become a convenient scapegoat" and "convenient adversary." In other words, the evil isn't what Hamas did to Israeli men, women, and children on October 7, but that people are condemning Hamas for its atrocities.

Iskandar was not alone. Noura Erakat admonished the audience over "the dehumanizing, crude, very racist talking point that this is about Hamas."<sup>74</sup> Lisa Weeden similarly insisted that "we need to situate the Hamas attack historically and politically."<sup>75</sup> American University in Cairo professor Rabab El-Mahdi also complained about "the demonization of Hamas."<sup>76</sup>

The rhetoric used to deflect and silence criticism of terrorism often employed the postcolonial jargon that permeates CMES. Maya Mikdashi, an assistant professor at Rutgers University,

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<sup>73</sup> *Campus Climate Lecture*, Feb. 2024.

<sup>74</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>75</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>76</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

concocted the concept of "a settler's understanding of time," which, she argued, is a problematic "incitement to discourse" that tricks people into thinking that the war began on October 7.<sup>77</sup> When Palestinians commit terrorism like on October 7, which Mikdashi called "anti-colonial action," she complained that "those notions of settler time" work such that "an attack becomes a crime" and "national liberation becomes terrorism..."<sup>78</sup> Numerous others employed the same line of attack to justify or distract from Hamas's atrocities by repeating the mantra that "[h]istory did not begin on October 7."<sup>79</sup>

Speakers also employed ambiguous language to mislead audiences. They carefully avoided details about how the war began and what Palestinian terrorists did on October 7. Even when speakers admitted that "Hamas...made mistakes," as Farsakh did, they immediately changed the subject back to Israel's alleged sins.<sup>80</sup> Following her mild acknowledgement of "mistakes" by Hamas, Farsakh argued that the conflict is "not their fault on both sides," but rather only of Israel's "policy of containment, imprisonment, settlements," and Palestinians "saying [they] refuse to die."

Ambiguous language helped speakers avoid having to acknowledge other Hamas "mistakes." Take, for example, Doumani's description of how Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip. According to him, it happened only after what he called a "showdown between Hamas and Fatah."<sup>81</sup> In front of any serious scholar of history, such a description would surely earn Doumani, himself a history professor, a failing grade. Hamas didn't just win a "showdown" – it violently ejected the Palestinian Authority from the territory. Some 600 Gazans were killed, including those political opponents Hamas terrorists threw off rooftops.<sup>82</sup>

Doumani wasn't the only one to omit crucial context that would expose Palestinian aggression and terrorism. Loubna Qutami, a postdoctoral research associate in Palestinian studies at Brown, told her audience: "Since October 7th, the Israeli state has waged a genocidal war on Palestinian life in the besieged Gaza Strip."<sup>83</sup> Qutami's statement frames Israel as the aggressor on October 7, completely disregarding the fact that the day began with thousands of Palestinian terrorists invading Israel and thousands of rockets fired toward Israeli civilians.

You can find the same twisted logic in Farsakh's remarks about "fault" and "mistakes," which work to blame Israel for Hamas's invasion. She further suggested that "the failure of [the] Israeli strategy of managing, rather than resolving, its conflict with the Palestinians" is why the war

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<sup>77</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>78</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>79</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>80</sup> *One-State Solution Event*, Apr. 2024.

<sup>81</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>82</sup> Devorah Margolin & Matthew Levitt, *The Road to October 7: Hamas' Long Game, Clarified*, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, Oct./Nov. 2023, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-road-to-october-7-hamas-long-game-clarified/>.

<sup>83</sup> *Ghassan Abu Sittah Lecture*, Feb. 2024.

happened.<sup>84</sup> Notice those last five words: "its conflict with the Palestinians." It isn't an Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but, in her words, *Israel's* conflict with Palestinians.

Speakers also erased Arab responsibility for past wars. The outcome of the Israeli War of Independence, invariably referred to as the "Nakba,"<sup>85</sup> was regularly discussed. How it started was not. Palestinian Arabs launched attacks on Jewish civilians, neighborhoods, and towns within hours of the United Nations voting to recommend partition – the creation of two states, one for Jews and one for Arabs.<sup>86</sup> When Israel declared independence several months later, surrounding Arab armies immediately invaded, declaring their intent to destroy the Jewish state.<sup>87</sup> The academics skipped over these historical realities as they falsely depicted Israel as the aggressor.

They were so unwilling to assign agency to Palestinians that even when they addressed Palestinian behavior, they still treated Israel as the actor. Doumani and Farsakh, for example, falsely argued that it was Israel that ejected the Palestinian Authority from the Gaza Strip, leaving Hamas in charge. Doumani claimed that Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 "in a particular way to create a geographic and political division in the Palestinian body politic..."<sup>88</sup> Such is Israel's deviousness, Doumani's logic went, that it could force Hamas and Fatah to fight a civil war. They blamed even the "geographic...division" between the West Bank and Gaza on Israel. Farsakh, too, claimed that Israel's "legal system governing the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip...has left them to Hamas to rule over the population."<sup>89</sup> Blaming Israel for Hamas's rule ignores that it was Gazans themselves who voted for the terrorist organization during the 2006 legislative election.

They even lied about specific, well-documented aspects of Palestinian terrorism. Ghassan Abu Sittah, the infamous propagandist doctor, spent a substantial part of his remarks denying the presence of Hamas tunnels underneath al-Shifa hospital, which he described as just a "narrative."<sup>90</sup> He also continued to claim that Israel struck al-Ahli hospital in October, killing 483 Gazans. Once again, there was no serious academic or expert in the room to call Abu Sittah out on his lies. The existence of tunnels under al-Shifa has been extensively documented with video footage, and is further evidenced by foreign intelligence agency reports, the testimonies of

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<sup>84</sup> *One-State Solution Event*, Apr. 2024.

<sup>85</sup> Arabic for "catastrophe," the term coined by Arabs to refer to their failure to militarily defeat Israel in 1948-49.

<sup>86</sup> Adi Schwartz & Einat Wilf, *THE WAR OF RETURN* (All Points Books 2020), p.7; see also Efraim Karsh, *PALESTINE BETRAYED* (Yale University Press 2011), p.100-01.

<sup>87</sup> Efraim Karsh, *PALESTINE BETRAYED* (Yale University Press 2011), p.209; Harris O. Schoenberg, *A MANDATE FOR TERROR: THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE PLO* (Shapolsky Publishers 1989), p.134; *Verbatim Records of the 1039<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, A/PV.1039*, United Nations, 18 Oct. 1961, available at <https://undocs.org/a/pv.1039> (paragraph 48, citing a BBC News broadcast); Dore Gold, *TOWER OF BABBLE: HOW THE UNITED NATIONS HAS FUELED GLOBAL CHAOS* (Three Rivers Press 2004), p.46.

<sup>88</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part Two*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>89</sup> *One-State Solution Event*, Apr. 2024.

<sup>90</sup> *Ghassan Abu Sittah Lecture*, Feb. 2024.



journalists and medical professionals, and even the hospital's own CCTV footage.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, video footage, expert analysis, and foreign intelligence analyses have definitively debunked Abu Sittah's libel about al-Ahli hospital.<sup>92</sup>

Another easily debunkable lie, made to shield Palestinians from criticism, came from Farsakh, who claimed: "But in 2017, they produced a new charter in which they made a clear distinction between Jews and Zionist, Jews and Israelis, and also proposed that they are willing to accept Israel's existence in the two-state solution"<sup>93</sup> The 2017 document referred to was not, in fact, a "new charter." Hamas's original charter remains its governing document, including all of the antisemitic and genocidal language contained therein. Additionally, the 2017 document did not agree to "accept Israel's existence in the two-state solution." To the contrary, it declared:

"Palestine, which extends from the River Jordan in the east to the Mediterranean in the west and from Ras al-Naqrurah in the north to Umm al-Rashrash in the south, is an integral territorial unit.... There shall be no recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist entity.... Hamas believes that no part of the land of Palestine shall be compromised or conceded, irrespective of the causes, the circumstances and the pressures and no matter how long the occupation lasts. Hamas rejects any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea."<sup>94</sup>

The brazenness of Farsakh's lies illustrate just how badly the Brown University's events failed. Instead of "learning" about the conflict, as the university promised, students were fed one-sided misinformation by partisans.

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<sup>91</sup> See, e.g., Julian E. Barnes, *Hamas Used Gaza Hospital as a Command Center, U.S. Intelligence Says*, New York Times, 2 Jan. 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/02/us/politics/gaza-hospital-hamas.html>; Terrence McCoy, *Why Hamas stores its weapons inside hospitals, mosques and schools*, Washington Post, 31 Jul. 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/07/31/why-hamas-stores-itsweapons-inside-hospitals-mosques-and-schools/>; X Post, Jan Franke (@Franke\_schrijft), 16 Nov. 2023, [https://x.com/Franke\\_schrijft/status/1725037285249306726](https://x.com/Franke_schrijft/status/1725037285249306726); Taghreed El-Khodary and Ethan Bronner, *In the midst of war's horror, a terrible vengeance*, New York Times, 29 Dec. 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/29/world/africa/29iht-gaza.4.18986499.html>; Nancy A. Youssef & Warren P. Stobel, *U.S. Relied on Intercepts in Assessing Hamas's Operations at Gaza Hospital*, Wall Street Journal, 15 Nov. 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/u-s-relied-on-intercepts-in-assessinghamass-operations-at-gaza-hospital-0d99e623>; X Post, Israel Defense Forces (@IDF), 27 Dec. 2023, <https://x.com/IDF/status/1740084607762973123>; X Post, Eylon Levy (@EylonALevy), 19 Nov. 2023, <https://x.com/EylonALevy/status/1726247051053375881>; X Post, Emanuel Fabian (@manniefabian), 13 Nov. 2023, <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1724054178836672713>; *Hamas Takes Hostages to Shifa Hospital After Abuduction*, Israel Defense Forces, 20 Nov. 2023, <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/hamasisrael-war-24/war-on-hamas-2023-resources/hamas-takes-hostages-to-shifa-hospital-after-abuduction/>.

<sup>92</sup> See, e.g., Margherita Stancati, Yaroslav Trofimov, Nancy A. Youssef, and Stephen Kalin, *U.S., Experts Say Evidence Suggests Palestinian Militants' Rocket Hit Gaza Hospital*, Wall Street Journal, 18 Oct. 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/israel-tries-to-back-up-claims-it-didnt-attack-gaza-hospital-a8cc3405>.

<sup>93</sup> *One-State Solution Event*, Apr. 2024.

<sup>94</sup> *Hamas in 2017: The document in full*, Middle East Eye, 2 May 2017, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/hamas-2017-document-full>.

***Justifying and Glorifying Terrorism:*** At several events, Palestinian terrorism wasn't omitted – it was justified and glorified by academics who rejected concepts like law, human rights, and basic morality. Speakers cast the murder and rape of Jewish civilians as morally righteous acts.

Instead of expressing horror at what her fellow Palestinians did to innocent civilians on October 7, Barakat told the audience: "We do not need to speak of our right to resist, for it is not a right but a way of being and survival for Palestinians...Our ability to narrate was never out of our hands and resistance in all of its manifestations and forms do not need the pre-approval of static international codes."<sup>95</sup>

The irony of Barakat's remarks is that she simultaneously justifies Hamas's massacre by reference to a supposed "right" while simultaneously rejecting "static international codes" from which such a right would, if real, be derived. Her views were thus the legal equivalent of wanting to have your cake and eat it too. She wants the benefits of international law without the responsibilities. Barakat wasn't alone in this regard. Asli Bali, the Middle East Studies Association president, derogatorily referred to law as "the master's tools."<sup>96</sup>

Of course, there is no such thing as a "right to resist."<sup>97</sup> Even if such a right did exist, it would be subject to the laws of armed conflict – those "static international codes" Barakat and Bali dismiss – which prohibit the war crimes regularly carried out by Palestinian terrorists.

Speakers also worked to legitimize terrorism by labeling it as anything but, using the postcolonial rhetoric that dominates Brown's Center for Middle East Studies. Hamas was referred to as an "anti-colonial movement" (Doumani), while its acts of terrorism were called "anti-colonial action" (Mikdashi), "anti-colonial resistance" (Bali), "anti-colonial liberation struggle," (Feldman) and "armed struggle" (Doumani).<sup>98</sup> Bali waved away the horrors of such "anti-colonial resistance" by declaring that "decolonizing is not an aesthetic."<sup>99</sup>

Rana Barakat's glorification of October 7, however, stands above them all. The Birzeit professor proclaimed: "2023 will be reported historically as the year that Palestinians stood boldly in the face of colonial fascism."<sup>100</sup> How, exactly, terrorists slaughtering hundreds of men, women, and children at a music festival and in their homes amounted to standing up to "colonial fascism" is left unexplained.

Israelis, the speakers argued, deserved the atrocities inflicted on them. Farsakh called October 7 a "logical conclusion" of the conflict.<sup>101</sup> "[W]hy would Hamas accept Israel?" Farsakh rhetorically

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<sup>95</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>96</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>97</sup> This so-called "right" does not exist in any legally binding document, nor is it accepted as customary international law. The source for the claim comes from several non-binding United Nations General Assembly resolutions, which are fundamentally political in nature and carry no legal consequence.

<sup>98</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>99</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>100</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>101</sup> *One-State Solution Event*, Apr. 2024.

asked. She excused surveys showing widespread support among Palestinians for Hamas's atrocities because "October 7...represents people rebelling against a siege..." Doumani also attempted to explain away Palestinian support for Hamas. In reference to the organization's early years, Doumani said there was a "tsunami of public opinion among Palestinians that there should be self-determination, end of occupation, and establishment of a state," and that the "Muslim Brotherhood either [had to] go with the flow or end itself, and they decided to go with the flow" through the "resumption of armed struggle."<sup>102</sup> His remarks about Hamas just "go[ing] with the flow," juxtaposed with the horrific irony of Hamas naming its October 7 attack "Al-Aqsa Flood," helps illustrate the moral bankruptcy of the messages given at Brown University events.

#### d. Stoking Antisemitism

Not only were representative Jewish voices excluded, but Jewish people were consistently the subject of bigoted remarks and conspiracy theories which took various forms. Doumani, for example, engaged in Holocaust inversion, describing the Gaza Strip as "the Gaza ghetto."<sup>103</sup>

Most commonly, however, speakers downplayed or outright denied the extent of antisemitism. Though it is baked into the organization's charter,<sup>104</sup> and Hamas's leadership continues spewing antisemitic rhetoric to this day,<sup>105</sup> Farsakh claimed that "if you dig really deep about Hamas, it is clear that it is anti-Zionist, but not anti-Jewish." The children trotted out on Hamas's Al-Aqsa TV to talk about "the criminal Jews" or to declare "we want to wage jihad and blow up the Jews" might disagree.<sup>106</sup>

Closer to home, speakers denied the extent of antisemitism on college campuses and protests. Jews were accused of "weaponizing" the charge and, in doing so, were harming the "real" victims: Palestinians. As exposed in CAMERA's first report on Brown, speakers continued denying and distorting Jewish history and identity, too.

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<sup>102</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part One*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>103</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part Two*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>104</sup> *The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement*, The Avalon Project, 18 Aug. 1988, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/hamas.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp) (containing lines such as "The Zionist plan is limitless. After Palestine, the Zionists aspire to expand from the Nile to the Euphrates. When they will have digested the region they overtook, they will aspire to further expansion, and so on. Their plan is embodied in the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion", and their present conduct is the best proof of what we are saying.").

<sup>105</sup> E.g., *Senior Hamas Official Osama Hamdan: No One Has Seen Pictures Of The Holocaust Or What Happened In Auschwitz, Whereas We See What The Zionist Neo-Nazis Are Doing In Northern Gaza On Live TV; It Is A Crime Unseen In The History Of Mankind*, Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), 22 Oct. 2024, <https://www.memri.org/reports/senior-hamas-official-osama-hamdan-no-one-has-seen-pictures-holocaust-or-what-happened>.

<sup>106</sup> *Children on Hamas TV: We Want to Wage Jihad and Blow Up the Jews*, Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), 4 Sep. 2015, <https://www.memri.org/tv/children-hamas-tv-we-want-wage-jihad-and-blow-jews>; *Children In Hamas TV Kids' Show: The Criminal Jews Are Plotting To Replace Al-Aqsa Mosque With Their False Temple, But We Will Defend Jerusalem To Our Last Drop Of Blood; Jihad Is The Pinnacle Of Islam*, Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), 21 Jul. 2022, <https://www.memri.org/reports/children-hamas-tv-kids-show-criminal-jews-are-plotting-replace-al-aqsa-mosque-their-false>.

**Jews "Weaponize" Antisemitism:** Accusations that Jews have "weaponized" charges of antisemitism - a theme identified in CAMERA's first report on Brown - also continued. The allegations, which were consistently devoid of detail, followed a familiar ideological pattern. Jews, as "oppressors," are not allowed to be victims. Claims to the contrary, the reasoning goes, are conspiratorial in nature, designed to oppress the real "victims" - Palestinians.

One event, entitled "Campus Climate: Know Your Rights," featuring the Middle East Studies Association's (MESA) president, Asli Bali, illustrated this best. Consider her remarks:

"But the core problem in [the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working Definition of Antisemitism], and it's not just IHRA, but many other political moves in the contemporary climate that don't even reference the definition, but engage in the same strategy, is the conflation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism or the conflation of criticism of Israeli state policies or actions or conduct of hostilities with antisemitism."<sup>107</sup>

Bali suggested that many accusations of antisemitism are based on a faulty conflation of criticism of Israel with hatred of Jews. But this argument is built on a lie. There is no such conflation in the IHRA definition. In fact, the definition explicitly rejects such conflation, stating: "However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic."<sup>108</sup>

Bali then builds on this lie to discredit evidence of antisemitism. "[D]ata on the side of antisemitism [is] being blurred by that conflation," she claimed.

Bali's deceit distracts from the extremism that has pervaded campus protests over the past year. This is evident from how she rejects the data that suggests an inconvenient conclusion (widespread antisemitism), yet then makes her own conclusions without any data to counter the former conclusion. Bali acknowledged that "we have data that's also very bad about what's actually happening on our campuses," referencing the anti-Israel encampments and protests and reactions to them. Nonetheless, she went on to conclude that "organized efforts...[are] being made to depict the campus as a hotbed of antisemitism because campuses have so much critical speech about Israel taking place." She never explains how she can make a conclusion about the nature of the speech if the data is flawed.

That there is "so much critical speech about Israel" is a red herring, anyway. While there is concern about anti-Israel speech for a variety of reasons,<sup>109</sup> there has undeniably been a surge in

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<sup>107</sup> *Campus Climate Lecture*, Feb. 2024.

<sup>108</sup> *Working definition of antisemitism*, International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, adopted 26 May 2016, <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>.

<sup>109</sup> In particular, over the amount of false information and the level of extremism being exhibited by campus protestors.

clear antisemitism on campuses, often under the guise of anti-Israel protests.<sup>110</sup> When a student organization at Columbia says, "White Jewish people are today and always have been the oppressors of all brown people," that isn't anti-Zionism or criticism of Israel; that's antisemitism.<sup>111</sup> When professors rant about "the Zionist Jew lobby...riding the world's empire," that's antisemitism.<sup>112</sup> When student BDS activists post images of an arrow, painted in the colors of the Palestinian flag, piercing a Star of David, that is antisemitism, not anti-Zionism.<sup>113</sup> These are just a few examples out of hundreds, if not thousands, from just the past year.

Bali's avoidance of the true nature of the issue, however, enables her to invert victimhood. Since charges of antisemitism have been "weaponized," Bali argued, "Palestinians are not allowed to talk about their experience." Her statement echoed that of Nadjie Al-Ali, the former Center for Middle East Studies director, who opened Bali's event by remarking, "We also know that many of us working in Middle East Studies, as well as students, have been accused of antisemitism as a way to silence us, as a way to criminalize us."<sup>114</sup>

Bali's conspiracy theory didn't end there, however. The "organized effort" to "conflate" criticism of Israel with antisemitism, she claimed, isn't aimed only at silencing Palestinians. It's also "connected to that broader right-wing attack on higher education as a whole," she argued.

With the Watson Institute's platform, Bali has thus turned Jews concerned about discrimination into societal boogymen.

**Zero-Sum View of Victimhood:** Bali's remarks help illustrate another tactic to deflect on the issue of antisemitism. Whereas speakers regularly engaged in the rhetoric of intersectionality, which encourages conversation about multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, they discouraged acknowledging antisemitism on the grounds that it takes the conversation away from Palestinian victimhood.

Bali complained that anti-Palestinian "violence" has "not [been] part of the national narrative at all," and so, "as a president of MESA," she felt she should be "drawing attention to that which is

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<sup>110</sup> See, e.g., *Incidents Database*, AMCHA Initiative, <https://amchainitiative.org/search-by-incident#incident/display-by-date/> (last visited 14 Oct. 2024); *Campus Antisemitism: A Study of Campus Climate Before and After the Hamas Terrorist Attacks*, Anti-Defamation League, 29 Nov. 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/campus-antisemitism-study-campus-climate-and-after-hamas-terrorist-attacks>.

<sup>111</sup> *Incident Details*, AMCHA Initiative, 20 Oct. 2023, <https://amchainitiative.org/search-by-incident#incident/display-by-date/details/6537efb4ace1090027b0002e/> (Remarks by the president of LionLez, a student organization at Columbia University, following criticism of the organization's policy of "Zionists aren't welcome.").

<sup>112</sup> X Post, Anti-Defamation League (@ADL), 29 May 2024, <https://x.com/ADL/status/1795874617841557794> (Showing screenshots of posts by Murray State University professor Ihsan Alkhatib).

<sup>113</sup> X Post, David Litman (@dmlitman), 30 May 2024, <https://x.com/dmlitman/status/1796186165717921793/photo/1> (Showing screenshot of an Instagram post by "binghamtonbds").

<sup>114</sup> *Campus Climate Lecture*, Feb. 2024.

being obscured by the dominant narrative." What is the "dominant narrative" according to her? "[O]ne of an enormous uptick of antisemitic incidents on campuses."

To be clear, Bali didn't deny that antisemitism had risen. Rather, she complained that "there's a political valence to the reason that we see that particular dominant narrative" which, she claims, "stands in some tension with the actual pattern" of "targeting people on the basis of wearing keffiyehs."

Whereas Bali criticized others using "conflated" data to talk about antisemitism, she didn't hesitate to make a conclusion about discrimination against Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims while acknowledging the absence of good data.

Instead, Bali cited a pair of anecdotal examples: "the shooting of three Palestinian students in Vermont," who were wearing keffiyehs at the time; and a "student on Stanford University's campus" who "was struck by a car in the midst of a protest." Though Bali only provided those two examples, she claimed that "actually, the violence has been much broader."

But at least one of those two examples was not a case of discrimination. Instead, Bali was, ironically, conflating a case of gun violence with anti-Palestinian discrimination. The three students in Vermont were not shot because they were Palestinian, and no hate crime charges were filed.<sup>115</sup> In fact, their shooter had publicly made anti-Israel and pro-Hamas statements. Notably, her other anecdotal example raises some questions, too. In the case of the student at Stanford, an independent Stanford newspaper reported that "[m]ultiple students describe [the alleged victim] as a 'pathological liar'" who has "lied about and fabricated many other aspects of his life."<sup>116</sup>

**Distorting Jewish identity and denying Jewish history:** Another continuing trend identified in CAMERA's December 2023 report is the distortion of Jewish identity. Nadjé Al-Ali said that "Jews and Judaism comes to mind" when she thinks about "racialization of a religious group," which she depicts in negative terms. In doing so, Al-Ali denied Jewish peoplehood and nationhood. Though the ethno-religious character of Jewish people may be unique, it is borne out by the evidence.<sup>117</sup> The purpose of this denialism is plain. As CAMERA wrote in its first report on Brown: "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."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Sasha Goldstein, *Driven by Hate? Man Charged in Burlington Shooting Was a Volunteer With a Troubled Personal Life*, Seven Days, 6 Dec. 2023, <https://www.sevendaysvt.com/news/driven-by-hate-man-charged-in-burlington-shooting-was-a-volunteer-with-a-troubled-personal-life-39673363>.

<sup>116</sup> Josiah Joner & John R. Puri, *BREAKING: Stanford's Hit-and-Run "Hate Crime" is Dubious*, The Stanford Review, 5 Nov. 2023, <https://stanfordreview.org/breaking-stanfords-hit-and-run-hate-crime-is-dubious/>.

<sup>117</sup> See, e.g., Doron M. Behar et al., *The genome-wide structure of the Jewish people*, Nature, 9 Jun. 2010, <https://www.nature.com/articles/nature09103>.

<sup>118</sup> David M. Litman, *Anti-Israel Extremism and Corrupt Scholarship at Brown University: How Middle East and Palestinian Studies Fuel Antisemitism*, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis



Related to this denialism of Jewish identity is the negation of Jewish history. For thousands of years, Israel has been the indigenous homeland of the Jewish people. This truth is supported by an overwhelming amount of archaeological, genetic, linguistic, textual, and other historical evidence. Yet, the academics summoned by Brown University regularly dismissed this reality. Doumani claimed that the land was "under constant pressure of being Judaized," as if the Jewish people were a foreign entity in their own homeland.<sup>119</sup> Nadim Bawalsa dismissed Jews as simply the "subsequent colonizers of Palestine" following the British.<sup>120</sup>

The meaning of Zionism – the movement for Jewish self-determination in the indigenous homeland of the Jewish people – was also regularly distorted. To attack Zionism, speakers employed strawman arguments. As with Al-Ali, Farsakh proved incapable of discussing Jews or Zionism without centering Palestinians, claiming, "Zionism is built on the negation of Palestinians." Doumani depicted Zionism as a global conspiracy, saying: "I think this Zionist movement and its efforts have been in many ways a larger European and U.S. imperial project..."

The treatment of Jews at these events is disturbing. Some of the darkest chapters in history began with Jewish voices being removed from academic spaces, while academic institutions lent their imprimatur to antisemitic conspiracy theories.

#### **IV. The Moral Failure of Brown's Administration**

The problem at Brown University went beyond extremist, pseudo-intellectual academics. Their toxic indoctrination had a predictable effect on the student body, as well. This was visible during campus protests with the open displays of extremism and antisemitism.

The university's response, however, revealed yet another issue: the administrators themselves. Brown's leadership knows about the problems identified in this and CAMERA's previous reports. Both of CAMERA's 2023 reports were delivered to university leadership. The administration privately acknowledged to third parties the reports and the concerns raised. Yet they took no corrective action to address the problems identified. To the contrary, their actions, and inaction, has contributed to the toxic environment.

##### **a. Capitulating to Student Extremism**

A recent AMCHA Initiative study found that anti-Israel faculty "are not only influencing student-led antisemitic activism but are also spearheading the promotion of academic boycotts that

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(CAMERA), 13 Dec. 2023, <https://www.camera.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Brown-Report-with-Cover-Page.pdf>.

<sup>119</sup> *Gaza 101 Teach-In, Part Two*, Oct. 2024.

<sup>120</sup> *Transnational Palestine Event*, May 2024.

target Jewish students, faculty, and pro-Israel organizations for harm.”<sup>121</sup> This is evident at Brown.

Students have demonstrably adopted the antisemitic and extremist rhetoric of the faculty members. Just days after the October 7 massacre, 50 student organizations published a statement describing Hamas's attack as "just."<sup>122</sup> On the anniversary of the attack, Brown Students for Justice in Palestine called "Al-Aqsa Flood," the name given to Hamas's attack, "a historic act of resistance," and declared: "As Brown Students for Justice in Palestine, we honor resistance against occupation by any means necessary."<sup>123</sup> Jewish institutions have been threatened,<sup>124</sup> and Jewish students at Brown University report being subjected to antisemitic chants on campus as well as genocidal slogans on protest signs.<sup>125</sup> Video reviewed by the author shows one visibly Jewish student being the target of a hostile gesture while walking on campus grounds past a group of anti-Israel protestors.<sup>126</sup> On the basis of their sincerely held religious beliefs, Jews are excluded from student-run activities like the Brown Undergraduate Journal of Middle East Studies, which declares that it "stands against the perpetuation of...Zionism."<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> *Academic Extremism: How a Faculty Network Fuels Campus Unrest and Antisemitic Violence*, AMCHA Initiative, Sep. 2024, [https://amchainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Academic-Extremism-Report\\_Sept2024.pdf](https://amchainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Academic-Extremism-Report_Sept2024.pdf).

<sup>122</sup> *Brown SJP Statement*, Brown Students for Justice in Palestine, 11 Oct. 2023, [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u0\\_iLkv5fYi47yLzXKELbcta7DfQLZu6dUPp0bqV-gY/edit?tab=t.0](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u0_iLkv5fYi47yLzXKELbcta7DfQLZu6dUPp0bqV-gY/edit?tab=t.0) (signed by: Brown Students for Justice in Palestine; RISD Students for Justice in Palestine; RailRoad; Decolonization at Brown; Party for Socialism and Liberation Rhode Island; Asian/American Political Alliance at Brown/RISD; BASE; Resource Generation at Brown; Brown Himalayan Cultural Association; Brown Undergraduate Journal of Middle East Studies; Burlesque at Brown; DARE PVD; Stop Torture RI / Reform Solitary RI; Brown Grad Muslim Student Association; Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere; Graduate Labor Organization; Brown Muslim Student Association; Brown Beekeeping Society; Students for Educational Equity; Harambee House; Madrasa/Beit Midrash; Carceral State Reading Group; Brown Student Labor Alliance; Natives at Brown; The College Hill Independent; Teaching Assistant Labor Organization; Brown/RISD Young Democratic Socialists of America; Brown Palestine Solidarity Caucus; The Poler Bears; Brown University's Eritrean & Ethiopian Student Association; Latinx Student Union; Brown Activist Coalition; CounterPower PVD; La Casita; Brown Food Not Bombs Central American United Student Association; Sunrise Brown; Black Student Union; AfriSA; VISIONS Magazine; SEASI; Myanmar Students at Brown; Cambodian Students at Brown; Arab Society; Community Activists through Responsive Exploration; Filipino Alliance at Brown; MECHA de Brown; Hansori; Vietnamese Student Association; and BISA).

<sup>123</sup> Instagram Post, Brown Students for Justice in Palestine (brown.sjp), 7 Oct. 2024, [https://www.instagram.com/p/DA2DymItHer/?img\\_index=2](https://www.instagram.com/p/DA2DymItHer/?img_index=2) (Screenshot on file).

<sup>124</sup> Julianna Chang, *Violent threats sent to Brown-RISD Hillel, police searches find "no imminent threat"*, Brown Daily Herald, 11 Feb. 2024, <https://www.browndailyherald.com/article/2024/02/violent-threats-sent-to-brown-risd-hillel-police-searches-find-no-imminent-threat>.

<sup>125</sup> Mark Patinkin, *After talking to these students, Mark Patinkin says Brown has an antisemitism problem*, The Providence Journal, 26 Nov. 2023, <https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/columns/2023/11/26/brown-university-student-actions-display-antisemitism-problem-patinkin/71656513007/>.

<sup>126</sup> Copy on file.

<sup>127</sup> See, e.g., *Anti-Oppression Platform*, Brown Undergraduate Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol. 3, no. 1 (2023) ("We stand against the perpetuation of...Zionism...").

Instead of demonstrating moral clarity and leadership, President Paxson caved to the demands of these extremists in April. She agreed to forward their error-laden<sup>128</sup> proposal to divest from companies connected to Israel to her Advisory Committee on University Resource Management (ACURM) and then to the Brown Corporation.<sup>129</sup>

According to one inside source, a major reason why Brown University leadership capitulated to the encampment demands in April was because of pressure from faculty members like those mentioned in this report.<sup>130</sup> Some of these faculty members were involved in fueling these protests and campus activism, including Doumani and Ariella Aisha Azoulay.<sup>131</sup>

### **b. Discrimination, Divestment, and Administrative Inaction**

Even more disturbing, however, is that in implementing her agreement with the extremist protestors, President Paxson's office acquiesced to discrimination against a Jewish member of ACURM.

CAMERA has reviewed dozens of emails involving the appointment and subsequent removal of a Jewish student from ACURM. The documents suggest a case of discrimination and double standards. They also show that both President Paxson and Vice President Russell Carey were informed of these concerns, and yet neither took any action.

According to these emails, the reasoning for the removal of the Jewish student from ACURM involved an alleged "conflict of interest:" his involvement with the Israeli cultural club Brown Students for Israel. That is, his identity was treated as a conflict.

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<sup>128</sup> For an analysis of the dozens of false claims contained in the divestment proposal, see: *BDS Lies: Exposing 45 False Claims in the Brown University Divestment Proposal*, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA), 3 Sep. 2024, <https://www.camera.org/article/bds-lies-exposing-45-false-claims-in-the-brown-university-divestment-proposal/>.

<sup>129</sup> *Agreement between University, student leaders will end 'divestment' encampment at Brown*, Brown University, 30 Apr. 2024, <https://www.brown.edu/news/2024-04-30/encampment-agreement>.

<sup>130</sup> Based on the author's conversation with an individual affiliated with the Brown University Board of Trustees.

<sup>131</sup> E.g., Alec Schemmel, *'This Was In Fact a Victory': Inside an Ivy League Student Group's Private Response to Hamas's October Attack*, Free Beacon, 20 Nov. 2023, <https://freebeacon.com/campus/this-was-in-fact-a-victory-inside-an-ivy-league-student-groups-private-response-to-hamass-october-attack/>;



But concerns over "conflicts of interest" seemed to apply only to the Jewish student. At least one other member of ACURM had a direct conflict of interest, and yet was allowed to remain on the advisory committee. Pictures show Keenan Wilder, a graduate student member, participating in demonstrations organized by the Brown Divest Coalition itself, which had submitted the very proposal being decided on by ACURM.<sup>132</sup> Emily Mansfield, who replaced the Jewish student on ACURM, wrote an article describing the divestment movement as "calling for universities to divest from Israel's genocidal campaign against the Palestinian people..."<sup>133</sup> The social media profile of Noliwe Rooks, a faculty member, is also replete with anti-Israel sentiment.

In fact, there's a clear conflict of interest surrounding the person who led the process to remove the Jewish student from ACURM. Isaac Slevin, who was just elected as the Brown Undergraduate Council of Students (UCS) appointments director, was a member of one of the most active pro-divestment organizations on campus and a signatory on a public statement opposing the existence of "the Israeli state."<sup>134</sup>

Though both President Paxson and Vice President Carey were informed about this, they took no action. That ACURM eventually recommended against divestment changes little. The administration was aware that a Jewish student was excluded from a university advisory committee and that the student government was applying double standards against him. That Paxson and Carey tolerated this, without even investigating the circumstances, sets a disturbing precedent that raises concerns about their compliance with Title VI.

## V. Conclusion and Recommendations

Brown University is being led down a dark path. The Ivy League institution's commitment to a liberal education is being eroded from within by faculty who instead desire ideological indoctrination. Although this report focused on Brown University, it serves as a case study and a warning regarding an issue plaguing academic institutions across the United States.

To understand the danger of inaction, consider Birzeit University, where Brown University professor Beshara Doumani served as president for a two-year period beginning in August 2021. As CAMERA's first report on Brown highlighted, Birzeit – long a hotbed of terrorism – became even more extreme during Doumani's tenure. Terror factions won landslide victories in student

<sup>132</sup> Copies on file.

<sup>133</sup> Emily Mansfield, *Sight & Might: Brown University as the Surveillance State*, The College Hill Independent, 24 Apr. 2024, <https://www.theindy.org/article/3286>.

<sup>134</sup> *An open letter from Jewish students*, The Brown Daily Herald, 7 Nov. 2023, <https://www.browndailyherald.com/article/2023/11/an-open-letter-from-jewish-students>.

elections. Terrorists and their murderous attacks were glorified, and students themselves carried out attacks. Doumani's administration celebrated two convicted terrorists, ceremonially awarding them with degrees.<sup>135</sup>

In July, 28 members of Congress wrote to another Ivy League institution, Harvard University, expressing serious alarm over its relationship with Birzeit University:

"We find Harvard's relationship with Birzeit University, whose student government openly supports Hamas, and names buildings after convicted terrorists, to be extremely concerning. The university also has had a policy of barring Israeli Jews from campus. Shockingly, following the October 7 attack, Birzeit University posted, 'Glory for martyrs, recovery for wounded ones, and freedom for the captives.' This type of behavior stands in direct opposition to the values Harvard claims to uphold.... We call upon you to...immediately end Harvard's relationship with Birzeit University."<sup>136</sup>

This type of extremism is now also being cultivated at Brown University, with little to no pushback by administrators. Students are openly supporting Hamas. Jewish students are being excluded from university governance under concerning circumstances. Terrorism is being legitimized and glorified.

True, credit should be given for what little action has been taken. The Brown Corporation ultimately rejected the divestment proposal, albeit without expressing moral clarity and denouncing the discrimination that characterized the proposal. More recently, the administration finally issued a strong statement denouncing the behavior of students at campus protests:

"On Friday, members of our community — administrators, members of Brown's governing board and also staff workers — reported experiencing these unacceptable behaviors. These reports include banging on a vehicle carrying members of the community, physically blocking passage of a vehicle, screaming profanity at individuals at close and personal range, profanity and a racial epithet directed toward a person of color, and following and screaming at individuals while filming them."<sup>137</sup>

Ultimately, Brown Students for Justice in Palestine was suspended. This is welcome, though results will be what matters. It is also telling that action was only taken when staff and corporation board members were harassed after months of Jewish students being subjected to such rhetoric.

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<sup>135</sup> Maurice Hirsch, *Palestinian terrorist murderer finishes MA in Israeli prison*, Palestinian Media Watch, 18 July 2022, <https://palwatch.org/page/31846>.

<sup>136</sup> Walberg & Stefanik Lead Colleagues Outlining Concerns in Harvard's Antisemitism Task Force Report, Congressman Tim Walberg, 16 Jul. 2024, <https://walberg.house.gov/media/press-releases/walberg-stefanik-lead-colleagues-outlining-concerns-harvards-antisemitism-task>.

<sup>137</sup> Russell S. Carey, *Friday's unacceptable protest behavior; community standards*, Brown University, 20 Oct, 2024, <https://campus-life.brown.edu/announcements/fridays-unacceptable-protest-behavior-community-standards>.

However, none of these actions address the root of the issue. Radical members of faculty have rejected the university's commitment to higher education. Instead, they treat their positions within Brown University as an opportunity to exploit impressionable young minds. Until the university's leadership acknowledges and counteracts these abuses, extremism and antisemitism on campus will only grow. Brown University must take action.

**Key Conclusions:** Instead of using the events during and after October 7, 2023 as an opportunity for students to discuss and deepen understanding of the region and the conflict, Brown University officials and faculty cynically exploited them for ideological ends. Instead of being exposed to diverse, credible, and intellectually sound analysis, students were fed ideological propaganda.

During university-sponsored events, and in CMES courses, students were inundated with overwhelmingly anti-Israel and often antisemitic messaging. Key aspects of the conflict, such as Palestinian terrorism, were downplayed. The fact that Hamas still holds Israeli civilians, including children, hostage - one of the main sticking points preventing the end of the current war - was entirely ignored. Palestinian terrorism and antisemitism was legitimized and even glorified.

The surge in antisemitic extremism on campuses and throughout the United States was similarly ignored or downplayed. Efforts to fight antisemitism were, once again, depicted as cynical conspiracies.

Finally, Brown University leaders cannot claim to have been caught by surprise or to have been unaware of the extent of the problem. CAMERA's 2023 reports detailed many of these issues. The administration's subsequent inaction, even as the situation continues to deteriorate, demonstrates negligence, at best.

**Recommendations:** The issues identified herein affect the entire Brown University community, not just its Jewish and Israeli members. When academic institutions are coopted into serving an anti-Israel and anti-Jewish agenda, the quality of education inevitably suffers. So too will the institution's reputation. To avoid this outcome, especially in light of ongoing Congressional investigations into antisemitism in universities, Brown University must start taking practical steps toward introducing and maintaining intellectual diversity and academic rigor within the Watson Institute and Center for Middle East Studies. Featuring truly representative Jewish and Israeli voices on relevant topics at university-sponsored events is a necessary but insufficient step in this regard.

As the AMCHA Initiative recommended in its September 2024 report, "How a Faculty Network Fuels Campus Unrest & Antisemitic Violence,"<sup>138</sup> Brown University "administrators must establish robust safeguards and enforcement mechanisms to prevent faculty from using their academic

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<sup>138</sup> *Academic Extremism: How a Faculty Network Fuels Campus Unrest and Antisemitic Violence*, AMCHA Initiative, Sep. 2024, [https://amchainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Academic-Extremism-Report\\_Sept2024.pdf](https://amchainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Academic-Extremism-Report_Sept2024.pdf).



positions and departmental affiliations to promote politically motivated advocacy and activism that directly targets their own students and colleagues for harm." Similarly, Brown University must adopt safeguards to prevent faculty from coopting entire academic departments to serve ideological ends. The university's mission is higher learning, not indoctrination.

Students and faculty who preach violence and hatred must be condemned and disciplined where appropriate. Administrators must be clear, through both their voices and actions, that antisemitic ideologies, rhetoric, and conduct are unwelcome at Brown University.