



October 25, 2019

Chancellor Robert J. Jones
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
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Dear Chancellor Jones,

This letter was initially designed as a thank you from the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law (the “Brandeis Center”) for the strong statement you issued on October 9, 2019, condemning the UIUC Multicultural Advocates’ (MA’s) September 25, 2019, presentation titled “*Palestine & Great Return March: Palestinian Resistance to 70 Years of Israeli Terror.*” We are grateful that you not only recognized the antisemitic nature of that presentation, but also acknowledged the UIUC students who “feel[] threatened for expression of [their] personal religious or ethnic identity.” As we noted in our letter to you dated October 8, 2019, there are UIUC students who feel threatened for expressing the Zionist component of their Jewish identity.

Events have overtaken and amplified our original intent in sending you this letter. Two days ago, on October 23, 2019, the UIUC student government adopted a resolution drafted with no input from the UIUC Jewish community that purported to define antisemitism. That resolution asserted that anti-Zionism is never antisemitism. Its only purpose was to shield from rebuke or discipline individuals who engage in antisemitism masked as anti-Zionism.

We urge you to convert this disturbing recent development to a teachable moment. The UIUC community can learn from your response the true nature of antisemitism. As we suggested in our October 8 letter, we ask that you take this opportunity to make students aware that Zionism is an integral part of Jewish identity for many UIUC students and that denying them the right to express the Zionist part of their Jewish identity is antisemitic. Teach your students that the University will not condone demonizing, marginalizing, or harassing UIUC Jewish students because of the Zionist component of their identity. Educating the UIUC community this way could transform the current situation into a valuable educational moment and help provide a safe environment for Jewish students at UIUC.

To assist you in responding effectively to these recent events, we summarize herein key points from our October 8 letter and provide additional documentation for your consideration:

(1) Zionism is an integral part of Jewish identity.

As we noted in our October 8 letter, Zionism - the yearning and desire of Jews to exercise their right to self-determination and to re-establish their Jewish homeland in the Land of Israel - is an inherent ancestral and ethnic Jewish characteristic. Zionism is as integral a component of Jewish identity as observing the Sabbath or adhering to kosher dietary rules. To be a Zionist means to support the right of Jewish self-determination in the ancestral homeland of the Jews. Those who celebrate the fact that Jews have returned once again to the Land of Israel and who take pride in the fact that the Jewish state of Israel exists are Zionists. Being a Zionist does not mean giving blanket support to all policies of the current Government of Israel. It means supporting the right of a Jewish homeland.

(2) Denying the right to Jewish self-determination is an example of antisemitism.

As explained in our earlier letter, denying the right of Jewish self-determination and claiming that the Jews have no right to a Jewish state in any borders in the Land of Israel is antisemitic. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (“IHRA”) Definition of Antisemitism recognizes that “[d]enying the Jewish people their right to self-determination” is an example of antisemitism.¹ Both the United Nations Secretary-General² and the UN’s Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief³ have reaffirmed this position.

Denying the right of Jewish self-determination is antisemitic not only because those who deny this right single out the Jews. They support self-determination for others, including Palestinians and blacks in South Africa, but deny it only to Jews. Denying the right of Jewish self-determination is also antisemitic because it demands that Jews shed a key component of their identity as Jews – namely, the historic Jewish yearning and determination to return to Zion.

(3) Criticism of Israel by those who deny Jews the right to self-determination is antisemitic.

Those who oppose Zionism deny Jews the right to self-determination. Judea Pearl, father of the late journalist Daniel Pearl, coined a term for this. He calls it “Zionophobia” – an irrational fear or hatred of a homeland for the Jewish people.⁴

¹ Working Definition of Antisemitism, Int’l Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/node/196> (last visited Oct. 25, 2019)

² U.N. Secretary-General’s Remarks, Sept. 26, 2018, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2018-09-26/secretary-generals-remarks-high-level-event-power-education> (last visited Oct. 25, 2019)

³ Ahmed Shaheed (U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief) *Report on Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance*, U.N. Doc. A/74/358 (Sept. 23, 2019), https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A_74_47921ADV.pdf

⁴ Judea Pearl, *Inspiration and a Rallying Cry*, *Algemeiner* (June 28, 2019), <https://www.algemeiner.com/2019/06/28/inspiration-and-a-rallying-cry-for-jewish-students-and-graduates/>

Criticism of Israel by “Zionophobes” - those who deny Jews the right to a homeland in Israel - is antisemitic even if it is cloaked in human rights terminology. If one does not believe that Jews have a right to a Jewish state in any borders and does not believe that the Jewish State of Israel has a right to exist, his or her criticism of Israel is not intended to reform the policies of the Government of Israel. Such criticism is intended to destroy the Jewish state.

(4) Students for Justice in Palestine (“SJP”) explicitly denies Jews the right to self-determination.

To accurately identify antisemitism masquerading as anti-Zionism, it is essential to distinguish between the “Zionophobes” – those who oppose a homeland for the Jewish people and seek to destroy the Jewish state – and those who genuinely seek coexistence between Jew and Arab. Students for Justice in Palestine does not seek coexistence.

The goals that SJP has posted for its 2019 Annual Conference (scheduled to take place November 1-3, 2019) demonstrate that SJP seeks the end of Israel as a Jewish state. The conference goals include “challenging the notion that justice for Palestinian people can be attained within a Zionist framework.”⁵ This means that justice for Palestinians is incompatible with Zionism and the notion of a Jewish homeland. SJP’s goals also state, “the Palestinian struggle against Zionism extends beyond the confines of 1967, and well before the Nakba (the Catastrophe) of 1947-1948.”⁶ In other words, according to SJP, justice for Palestinians requires not merely withdrawal from the land Israel acquired in 1967, but complete destruction of the Jewish state established in 1948.

Dialogue on the difficult sensitive issues relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict is only possible if each party recognizes and accepts the humanity of the other. By denying the right of Jewish self-determination and demonizing Jews who express the Zionist part of their Jewish identity, SJP makes such dialogue impossible.⁷

⁵ National Students for Justice in Palestine, Our 2019 Conference Theme & Goals, <https://www.nationalsjp.org/2019-conference.html> (last visited Oct. 25, 2019)

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Numerous SJP chapters have adopted a policy of “anti-normalization,” urging their members to avoid all forms of cooperation and even dialogue with pro-Israel groups. See Anti-Defamation League (ADL) *Background on Students for Justice in Palestine* (SJP), 9, (Nov. 2018), <https://www.adl.org/media/12176/download>

(5) The resolution adopted by the UIUC student government on October 23, 2019, marginalizes and alienates UIUC pro-Israel Zionist students.

The hearing held by the UIUC student government the evening of October 23 and the resolution adopted during that meeting have divided the UIUC community. Over the loud and clear objection of the UIUC Jewish community (which was not consulted in the drafting of the resolution), the student government pushed through a statement that deliberately excluded from the definition of antisemitism activities on campus that threaten UIUC students on the basis of the Zionist component of their Jewish identity.

A 2018 study by the AMCHA Initiative demonstrated that as the number of antisemitic incidents on campus rise, it is the antisemitism masked as anti-Zionism that university students find most threatening.⁸ According to this study, on-campus incidents that provoke the most fear among students include those where (a) the perpetrator expresses a clear intent to harm Jews or Jewish property, and (b) where there is more than one perpetrator.⁹ In 2017, fewer than 25% of the “classic” antisemitic incidents on campus demonstrated intent to harm Jewish students, while a whopping 94% of anti-Israel incidents showed such intent, and 73% of anti-Israel incidents had multiple perpetrators.¹⁰

In addition, according to a 2019 report by the AMCHA Initiative, between 2017 and 2018, Israel-related harassment on campuses increased 70%.¹¹ During this same period, antisemitic acts involving the singling out of Jewish and pro-Israel students and groups more than doubled, and calls for the total boycott or exclusion of Zionist students or Zionist expression from campus life nearly tripled.¹² On a growing number of US campuses, including UIUC, many pro-Israel students feel pressure to hide or shed the Zionist part of their Jewish identity in order to be accepted as members of the campus community. The resolution adopted two days ago by the UIUC student government compounds this pressure and increases the vulnerability of the UIUC Zionist students. It is incumbent upon you, as Chancellor, to protect UIUC’s Jewish community by condemning in the strongest terms the UIUC student government’s one-sided antisemitic spectacle.

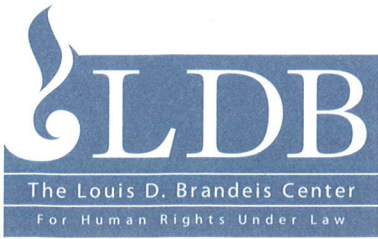
⁸AMCHA Initiative, “*Zionists Off Our Campus!*,” (August 2018), <https://amchainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Campus-Antisemitism-2017.pdf>

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.* at 6, 10.

¹¹AMCHA Initiative, *The Harassment of Jewish Students on U.S. Campuses*, (Sept. 2019) <https://amchainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Eliminationist-Anti-Zionism-and-Academic-BDS-on-Campus-Report.pdf>

¹² *Id.*



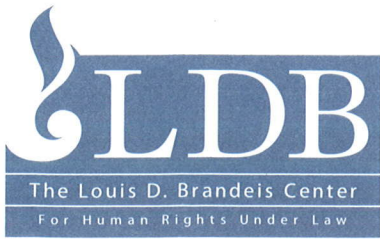
(6) Title VI of the Civil Rights Act requires UIUC to protect Jewish students from a hostile environment.

As we noted in our October 8 letter, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 obligates the University of Illinois to protect its Jewish students from harassment and discrimination on the basis of the Zionist component of their Jewish identity. We urge you to use this opportunity to educate your administrators, staff and students and to demonstrate that UIUC stands firmly against antisemitism. We recommend the following corrective and preventive actions:

- (A) Promptly issue a statement declaring your support for those UIUC students who have been targeted. The statement should recognize that Zionism is a key component of Jewish identity for many UIUC students. The following language should achieve this result:

"We condemn antisemitism in all its forms. We recognize that Zionism is a key component of the religious and ethnic identity of many students on our campus. Efforts to demonize Zionism and make UIUC students feel unsafe expressing this religious and ethnic identity is contrary to our university's basic values of mutual respect and inclusion. Our university must be a place for the free and open exchange of ideas. It is never acceptable to harass, intimidate, marginalize, exclude or demonize any part of our university community on the basis of identity."

- (B) Announce that UIUC notes the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism as an educational tool to understand contemporary examples of antisemitism.
- (C) Remove the MA who delivered the September 25 presentation from her MA position and take such other disciplinary action as is authorized by UIUC policies and applicable constitutional protections.
- (D) Promptly establish a comprehensive training program to be administered this semester in coordination with the Jewish United Fund for Metropolitan Chicago (JUF), the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) or the Brandeis Center, to ensure that UIUC administrators, staff and students fully understand and recognize antisemitism in all its manifestations.



The support you showed the Jewish community when you issued your statement on October 9 is deeply appreciated. We urge you to demonstrate that those were not empty words by condemning the divisive, antisemitic hearing held by the UIUC on October 23, disciplining the MA who gave the September 25 presentation, and promptly implementing a formal training program on antisemitism for all UIUC administrators, staff and students.

We remain available to share our expertise on these issues and further to discuss our recommendations with you. If we can be of assistance, please feel free to contact me via email at alewin@brandeiscenter.com or by phone at (202) 559-9296.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alyza D. Lewin'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Alyza D. Lewin

President and General Counsel

The Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law

cc: President Timothy Killen ~ tkilleen@uillinois.edu