



January 25, 2024

VIA EMAIL

Richard J. Helldobler, President
Board of Trustees
William Paterson University
300 Pompton Road
Wayne, NJ 07470

Re: William Paterson University's Partnership with Birzeit University

Dear President Helldobler and Honorable Members of the Board of Trustees:

We write on behalf of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), the oldest pro-Israel organization in the U.S. and a leader in the fight against antisemitism in schools and on college campuses. We were horrified to learn that William Paterson University signed a [memorandum of understanding](#) with Birzeit University, which is located in what is commonly referred to as the West Bank. Based on the memorandum, the two universities are establishing exchange programs for students and faculty and developing research collaborations and joint degree programs. Given Birzeit's antisemitism, and its support for Hamas and for terrorism and violence against Jews and Israelis, William Paterson University must terminate its partnership with Birzeit immediately.

Media reports (a comprehensive [news article](#) published by the Jewish News Syndicate, which references an equally thorough [news report](#) by Kassy Dillon in The Daily Wire), provide details about Birzeit's abominable conduct, including the following:

- After Hamas' heinous massacre of over 1,200 Israelis and the terrorist group's abduction of more than 240 Israeli men, women and children on October 7, 2023, Birzeit did not condemn the massacre. Instead, in a [post on X](#), Birzeit referred to the Hamas terrorists as "martyrs" and "expresse[d] its sincere condolences to its staff and students, who, every day of the ongoing war on the Gaza Strip, lost loved ones and relatives and calls on the world to halt this onslaught. Glory for martyrs, recovery for wounded ones, and freedom for the captives."
- Birzeit has promoted demonizing lies about Israel, falsely accusing Israel in a [post on X](#) of "genocide," "war crimes" and the "occupation of Palestine." Birzeit has not taken down the post, even though it falsely accuses Israel of "the massacre in Ahli Arab

Hospital (Baptist) in Gaza, resulting in more than 500 martyrs.” In fact, it was a faulty rocket launched by Palestinian Islamic Jihad that hit the hospital’s courtyard and U.S. intelligence estimates that the fatalities were [much lower](#).

- In a [post on X](#) on December 8, Birzeit praised and promoted violence against Jews: “On this day 36 years ago, the first intifada started from Jabaliya camp, and later spread throughout all of Palestine, portraying a perfect example national unity in the face of the oppression.”
- Until at least 2014, Birzeit [officially barred Israeli Jews](#) from campus. According to the Daily Wire, “[it is unclear](#)” if this is still Birzeit’s policy.
- A recent lawsuit filed against Harvard University alleging the university’s unlawful tolerance for antisemitic harassment and intimidation includes allegations about Harvard’s partnership with Birzeit and Birzeit’s abhorrent antisemitic, pro-terrorist conduct. The lawsuit [contends](#) that “Birzeit’s buildings and events are named after convicted terrorists; military parades on campus feature students wearing mock explosive vests while waving Hamas flags; in May 2022, Hamas won the majority of Birzeit student government seats; and, two weeks before the Oct. 7 massacre, eight students were arrested with weapons and plans to carry out a terrorist attack.”
- As reported by The Daily Wire, Birzeit “[openly honors prominent terrorists](#),” including Marwan Barghouti, a leader of the First and Second Intifadas who was convicted of murdering five civilians; Kamal Nasser, a leader of Black September, the terrorist group that killed 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics; and Yahya Ayyash (nicknamed “the Engineer”), who is credited with introducing the technique of suicide bombing and became one of Hamas’ chief bomb-makers, helping to kill more than 70 Israeli civilians. Birzeit hosted an athletic competition and named it for Barghouti, it hosted a reception for new students and named it for Ayyash, and it named [one of the university’s largest rooms](#) for Nasser: Kamar Nasser Hall.

Particularly in this time of soaring antisemitism in the U.S. and around the world, it is unacceptable and unconscionable for any American university to partner with a university that discriminates against Jews, and encourages and glorifies hatred, violence and terrorism against Jews and Israelis. It is particularly intolerable for a university like William Paterson, which is supported by and relies on our U.S. taxpayer dollars.

We demand that William Paterson University immediately cut all ties to Birzeit University and make it clear to the university community why it is doing so. Your community should understand that a continuing alliance with Birzeit is completely at odds with what the university claims are its [core values](#) – “a campus culture that welcomes diversity” and “the responsibility” of students, faculty, staff and alumni “to improve the world around them.”

Please be back to us no later than Thursday, February 1, 2024. And please know that we intend to take all necessary steps to ensure that William Paterson's state and federal funding is terminated unless the University takes the right and moral step and terminates its relationship with Birzeit University and issues a clear and forceful public statement about why it must do so.

Very truly yours,



Morton A. Klein
National President



Susan B. Tuchman, Esq.
Director, Center for Law & Justice

cc: The Honorable Phil Murphy, Governor of New Jersey
The Honorable Nicholas P. Scutari, New Jersey Senate President
The Honorable Craig J. Coughlin, New Jersey Assembly Speaker
The Honorable Bill Pascrell
The Honorable Josh Gottheimer