



May 19, 2017

**VIA EMAIL ([vboudreau@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:vboudreau@ccny.cuny.edu))**

Dr. Vincent Boudreau  
Interim President, The City College of New York  
Wille Administration Building, Room 300  
160 Convent Avenue  
New York, NY 10031

Dear Dr. Boudreau:

We write on behalf of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), the oldest and one of the largest pro-Israel organizations in the U.S., whose leaders have included U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, Rabbi Stephen Wise, and Rabbi Dr. Abba Hillel Silver. A critical part of the ZOA's mission is fighting anti-Semitism and vicious anti-Israel sentiment in schools and on college campuses. As you may know, in 2015, the ZOA's letter to the Chancellor and Board of Trustees at The City University of New York (CUNY), detailing anti-Semitism on four CUNY campuses, triggered an independent investigation of anti-Semitism at CUNY and the creation of a task force to foster a respectful climate on CUNY campuses.

We were deeply troubled by reports we received about the disruption of an event on Thursday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, at The City College of New York (CCNY). The event, featuring Dani Dayan, Israel's Consul General in New York, was co-sponsored by Chabad and its subdivision, Students Supporting Israel (SSI), the ZOA, CAMERA, and other groups. The CCNY community was privileged to host and hear from a learned and distinguished guest, but shamefully, Mr. Dayan was interrupted and disrespected by CCNY students. He was shouted at and shouted down, subjected to name-calling, and prevented from speaking and answering questions from the audience.

Specifically, we received reports that when the question-and-answer period began, the environment degenerated into chaos. Members and supporters of the anti-Israel campus group that calls itself "Students for Justice in Palestine" (SJP) reportedly yelled insults, such as "Nazi," and "Hitler." There were shouts of "They [the Nazis] killed us [the Jews] in the camps; now you're killing them [the Palestinian Arabs] in camps." There were also shouts that Israel is forcibly sterilizing Ethiopians, an outrageous and demonizing lie. One student reportedly heard comments such as "baby killer" and "Exterminate the Jews." Witnesses also overheard a comment about "Zionist animals."

Because of the protesters' actions, Mr. Dayan could not respond to questions he was asked, and though he and a student leader respectfully requested that the protesters allow Mr. Dayan to speak and to take their shouts and protests outside, SJP members and supporters

refused to listen. Toward the end of the program, they repeatedly and loudly chanted, “Free, free Palestine” and “No justice, no peace,” continuing to prevent Mr. Dayan from speaking. Mr. Dayan’s own security detail reportedly advised him to leave because the situation became so out of control. We were shocked to receive reports that the president of CCNY’s student government not only participated in the disruption and disrespect, but actually initiated the chanting.

### **Violations of CCNY’s Community Standards**

The behavior of SJP members and supporters was despicable, violating CCNY’s community standards. CCNY’s website promotes this [message](#): “We Are One CCNY” – a place, “regardless of the rhetoric in the larger society . . . where all people are welcome, protected and celebrated. Wherever you were born, whatever you believe, and however you came here . . . City College is a place where your experiences, perspectives and identity will be respected.”

That surely was not the experience of Israel’s Consul General, Dani Dayan, or of the students who invited him to campus, or of all those who came to listen and ask questions.

### **Violations of CCNY’s Henderson Rules**

The conduct of SJP members and supporters also violated CCNY’s “[Henderson Rules](#)” which provide, in relevant part, that:

- A member of the academic community shall not intentionally obstruct . . . others from the exercise of their rights. Nor shall he/she interfere with the institution’s educational processes or facilities, or the rights of those who wish to avail themselves of any of the institution’s instructional . . . services.
- Each member of the academic community or an invited guest has the right to advocate his/her position without having to fear abuse, physical, verbal, or otherwise, from others supporting conflicting points of view. Member of the academic community and other persons on the college grounds shall not use language or take actions reasonably likely to provoke or encourage physical violence by demonstrators, those demonstrated against, or spectators.
- Disorderly conduct on college-owned property is prohibited.
- Any action or situation which recklessly or intentionally endangers mental or physical health is prohibited.

In violation of the Henderson Rules, the protesters intentionally obstructed the May 11<sup>th</sup> event and prevented Mr. Dayan from exercising his right to speak and the audience’s right to listen to and learn from him. Mr. Dayan was an invited guest to CCNY. As the Henderson Rules provide, he had every right to express his views no matter how much SJP members and

supporters opposed them. SJP members and supporters created a hostile learning environment, rather than a climate that encourages the exchange of opinions and ideas.

### **Remedial Steps are Necessary**

The Henderson Rules mandate that any student who engages in prohibited conduct be subject to a range of sanctions, including suspension and expulsion. If a student group authorized the prohibited conduct, then the group “shall have its permission to operate on campus rescinded.” Whatever penalties are imposed, they should include a requirement that all violators (1) issue a written unconditional apology to all the co-sponsors of the Dayan event and a commitment not to engage in the disruptive and disrespectful behavior again; and (2) issue a written unconditional apology to Dani Dayan.

In addition to fully investigating this incident and sanctioning the wrongdoers, we urge you to take the following steps:

- Ensure that CCNY security personnel are sufficiently trained to respond to incidents like this one. We understand that SSI took all necessary and appropriate steps to ensure that this event would proceed successfully and without problems, including arranging in advance for security. Security personnel were helpful and cooperative. Yet reportedly, they did not intervene when the protesters obstructed Dani Dayan’s speech and prevented him from responding to questions. Security should have immediately escorted the protesters from the room, so that the event could proceed unhindered. Security must be fully prepared for future events, to respond effectively to disruptions and other problems, and to ensure that events proceed unimpeded and consistent with the rules.
- Issue a statement to the CCNY community unequivocally affirming that student groups had the right to invite Israel’s Consul General to speak on campus, that the protesters violated CCNY’s rules and policies by shouting him down, disrespecting him and preventing him from expressing his views and preventing others in the community from hearing and learning from him, and that the violators will be punished consistent with the rules and policies. If the evidence shows that SJP and the student government president violated the rules, then your statement should publicly condemn them.

You did issue a statement to the community on May 12<sup>th</sup>, but it did not make these points. Indeed, it was troubling that in your statement, you thought it important to identify Mr. Dayan as “a well-known advocate of expanding Israeli settlements in the contested territories.” Accurate or not, the characterization was gratuitous – and irrelevant to the fact that as an invited guest to the campus, Mr. Dayan had the right to speak about “settlements” or anything else without interference or abuse.

As it turns out, we understand that Mr. Dayan said nothing about the so-called settlements in his presentation, nor did he address the Arab-Israeli conflict. Instead, he focused on Israel’s positive relations with nations around the world, and Israel’s many achievements and contributions to the global community, including its many humanitarian efforts – all of which are beyond dispute.

We were deeply concerned that there are students on your campus who believe that Israel's Consul General "should never have been invited to speak in the first place." (See <https://medium.com/the-campus-mag/who-are-we-if-were-not-united-9c3d4031e12c>). These students plainly need to learn that all student groups have the right to invite anyone of their choosing to speak, including those who love and support Israel.

Please turn this shameful incident into something meaningful. We urge you to educate the CCNY community – that the protesters' behavior was wrong, it violated CCNY's rules and values, and it will not be tolerated.

We are glad to know that you have taken the step of meeting with SSI and SJP students yesterday. We look forward to learning what additional steps you will be taking to respond to this incident in accordance with CCNY's rules and policies, and to ensure that such a reprehensible and insulting display – toward a dignitary, of all people– does not happen again.

We look forward to hearing from you. And we offer our help in making sure that CCNY is truly a place where all people are welcome, protected, and celebrated, including those who are Jewish and support the Jewish State of Israel.

Very truly yours,



Morton A. Klein  
National President



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



Zach Stern  
Executive Director, NY Chapter

