



ZIONIST ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA

633 THIRD AVENUE, SUITE 31-B
NEW YORK, NY 10017

(212) 481-1500 | FAX: (212) 481-1515 | INFO@ZOA.ORG | WWW.ZOA.ORG

September 17, 2024

BY CERTIFIED MAIL

Mr. Michael R. Bloomberg
Bloomberg Philanthropies
25 East 78th Street
New York, NY 10075

Dear Mr. Bloomberg:

We write on behalf of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), the oldest pro-Israel organization in the U.S., to alert you to a deeply troubling situation at your alma mater, Johns Hopkins University, and to seek your help.

Johns Hopkins says it is unreservedly committed to free expression, no matter how provocative or offensive the views. But in practice, the institution has selectively protected free speech, giving a pass to employees who have openly expressed hatred and hostility toward Israel and Jews, while continuing to penalize a Jewish employee who, in the heat of the moment after Hamas' massacre in Israel on October 7, 2023, criticized Palestinian Arabs and questioned their commitment to peace.

The Jewish employee, Darren Klugman, M.D., is an associate professor of anesthesia/critical care and director of pediatric cardiac critical care at Johns Hopkins. Dr. Klugman opened the first dedicated pediatric cardiac intensive care unit at Johns Hopkins in 2022, a program that achieved the best results in the region for patients.

But after some strongly worded, emotional posts on Twitter (now X) immediately after the Hamas massacre, Dr. Klugman became the target of a smear campaign by anti-Israel groups, which pressured Johns Hopkins to terminate him. Even though Dr. Klugman apologized in writing for his emotional posts, Johns Hopkins suspended him last November. He has been on paid administrative leave ever since, unable to step foot on the campus or see patients. Johns Hopkins refuses to allow Dr. Klugman to return to his position and, because of the public smear campaign, he has effectively been prevented from pursuing other professional opportunities.

We hope that his situation will persuade you to contact officials at Johns Hopkins and urge that Dr. Klugman be reinstated without further delay, with an apology for the treatment he has been enduring. Alternatively, Johns Hopkins should issue a statement completely absolving Dr. Klugman of any wrongdoing so that he can explore other employment opportunities without any impediment.

More details are provided below. Dr. Klugman, who is copied on this letter, would be pleased to furnish more information and answer questions directly.

Dr. Klugman's Understandable Reaction to Hamas' Savagery

On October 7 and 8, 2023, as the shocking news unfolded of Hamas' massacre and abduction of men, women and children in Israel, Jews – and non-Jews – around the world reacted in horror, anguished, angered and traumatized by Hamas' savagery. For Dr. Klugman, the butchery of Israel at a dance festival, and in their homes and communities, affected him personally: His elderly mother and stepfather live in Israel, and he was unable to reach them.

In the heat of these moments, Dr. Klugman spoke out against the atrocities, referring on X to Palestinian Arabs as “blood thirsty morally depraved animals who want nothing short of every inch of Israel and all Jews dead.” He posted that “Israel has no peace partner w[ith] the Palestinians, barbaric animals w[ith] no concern for human life.” And he posted that it was “time to reclaim Gaza.” In an exchange with someone on X who accused Israel of “a large scale slaughter . . . spread out across a year to displace Palestinians,” Dr. Klugman responded, “G-d willing.”

For weeks, Dr. Klugman's social media posts received little if any attention. On November 12, 2023, he learned that an online network called “Stop Zionist Hate” – which promoted extreme anti-Israel and antisemitic views – had instituted a smear campaign against him. Using a photo of Dr. Klugman taken from the Johns Hopkins website, Stop Zionist Hate branded Dr. Klugman “Zionist of the Week” and, taking his social media posts out of context, falsely accused him of being a “genocide supporter.” That triggered antisemitic comments and demands that Johns Hopkins terminate him. Dr. Klugman received death threats and was forced to hire security to protect himself and his family.

On November 13, 2023, Dr. Klugman apologized to his department chair and also sent an email apology to his colleagues. His division chief emailed the department to let them know that leadership was aware of the situation. Within hours, these internal confidential communications were wrongly leaked and they surfaced on Stop Zionist Hate's X account.

CAIR Joins the Smear Campaign Against Dr. Klugman

On November 14, 2023, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) filed a complaint with the Maryland Board of Medicine against Dr. Klugman. The complaint was shared on Stop Zionist Hate.

CAIR has its own record of hostility toward Israel and Jews. At a November 2023 conference, CAIR's executive director praised Hamas' massacre on October 7 and stated that while Gazans have the right to defend themselves, Israelis do not. These statements are not surprising, given CAIR's connection to Hamas; in a 2009 terrorism case, federal prosecutors named CAIR an “unindicted co-conspirator” of Hamas.

The director of CAIR's Maryland chapter, who was responsible for filing the complaint against Dr. Klugman, has her own record of animus toward Jews and Israel. She was suspended from the state's hate commission (and then reinstated because the Attorney General did not have

the authority to suspend her) based on her history of antisemitic social media posts, including one outrageously comparing Israel to Nazi Germany.

Johns Hopkins Suspends Dr. Klugman

On November 15, 2023, Johns Hopkins informed Dr. Klugman that he was being suspended from Hopkins to “ensure that the “University . . . is providing a safe, healthy, diverse, and inclusive environment.” Dr. Klugman was also informed that he could no longer have direct contact with his colleagues.

On the same date, Stop Zionist Hate posted a video of Dr. Klugman that the group took from the Johns Hopkins website, and edited and doctored it. They called for Dr. Klugman’s resignation and again falsely labeled him a supporter of genocide.

The next day, November 16, 2023, Johns Hopkins sent a hospital- and university-wide email alerting the Hopkins community to Dr. Klugman’s suspension. That internal email was also leaked to Stop Zionist Hate, which posted it.

Johns Hopkins’ Conduct Toward Dr. Klugman Violates Its Own Policies

Johns Hopkins makes it clear on its website that it “embraces and actively supports a culture of free expression and debate in every aspect of university life.” So long as the views expressed “do not threaten, incite violence or raise demonstrable health or safety concerns,” then Johns Hopkins supports “the right to engage in acts of public expression and the right of an audience to receive that expression,” no matter how controversial. Not one of Dr. Klugman’s social media posts on October 7 and 8, 2023, threatened anyone, or incited violence, or raised demonstrable health or safety concerns.

The commitment to free expression is affirmed in Johns Hopkins’ Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom – “the right to speak and create, to question and dissent, to participate in debate on and off campus, and to invite others to do the same, all without fear of restraint or penalty” [emphasis added]. Academic freedom, according to Johns Hopkins, “is designed to afford members of the community the broadest possible scope for unencumbered expression, investigation, analysis, and discourse” [emphasis added].

Even “offensive” views are protected and cannot be suppressed or punished: “[A]cademic freedom necessarily permits the expression of views that even the vast majority of the community may find misguided, ignorant, or offensive. The appropriate response to such statements in an academic setting is not to censor or punish, but to challenge, criticize, and persuade” [emphasis added].

University leaders affirmed Johns Hopkins’ commitment to free expression in two recent statements. In a statement last month regarding the university’s policy of “institutional restraint” when it comes to public statements issued on the university’s behalf, President Ron Daniels and other leaders made it clear that the policy did not apply to individual faculty members “speaking

in their own scholarly or personal capacity.” They should be free, university leaders explained, “to share their insights and perspectives without being concerned about running counter to an ‘institutional’ stance.”

Then, in a statement issued this month about the concept of a “duty of care,” President Daniels again encouraged the expression of one’s views. Holding back those views, he wrote, “deprives the community of the opportunity to benefit from the varying, and even outlier, perspectives that allow us to explore the contours of our own core beliefs.”

Dr. Klugman acted consistent with Johns Hopkins’ policies. His suspension was wrong and should be lifted without further delay.

Johns Hopkins’ Double Standard

In contrast to how Johns Hopkins is treating Dr. Klugman, the institution has imposed no penalty on staff who have publicly expressed hatred and hostility toward Jews and Israelis and, unlike Dr. Klugman, showed no remorse for their actions. This includes a staff member who openly threatened to harm “Zionists,” i.e., Jews, for whom the staff member was directly responsible.

This staff member – a graduate student and teaching assistant in the chemistry department – threatened on X to lower students’ grades if they were Zionists, posting: “ethical dilemma: if you have to grade a Zionist student exam, do you still give them all their points even though they support your ethnic cleansing? like idk.” The staff member included a poll on X with two options: “yes rasha. be a good ta [teaching assistant],” and “free palestine! fail them.”

On November 20, 2020, this staff member openly expressed hatred of Israelis and white people, too. She tweeted about mentoring undergraduate chemistry students and expressed relief that she “[d]idn’t get pinned with an Israeli or some b**ch, white boy to have to share my knowledge with. alhamdulillah [thank God].”

In another social media post the same day, this staff member slammed an undergraduate student simply for having gone on a Birthright trip to Israel: “we had an undergrad in lab who had been on Birthright and [sic] had one of the street signs to Tel Aviv on her laptop. It stabbed me every time she opened it. If I had been paired to one [sic] of them or one of these conceited white boys I would have lost it.”

Despite the threat she posed directly to the students for whom she was professionally responsible, this staff member remained at Johns Hopkins and is still there today, according to her LinkedIn profile, as a postdoctoral researcher.

Please also consider that Johns Hopkins has not penalized an assistant professor of medicine for her antisemitic, anti-Israel social media posts after the October 7 massacre, which include the following:

- Reposting this message: “I hate Israel not because it’s a Jewish state, but because it’s a Jewish supremacist state committing genocide.”
- Reposting this message: “Jews shout Nazis, Nazis, Nazis at the Zionist Israeli police who raided the Mea shearim neighborhood in Jerusalem. Israel is not the state of the Jews. Zionists are today’s Nazis.
- Reposting this message: “Zionism is a death cult.”
- Reposting an image of a coffee machine spewing blood into a Starbucks cup, next to bloodied bodies lying prone, with the message: “Do something for Gaza and BOYCOTT.”
- Reposting a message that twists the contents of an article in *Haaretz* and denies the fact that Israelis were sexually assaulted on October 7: “According to the Israeli newspaper ‘Haaretz’ the Israeli prosecutors are unable to identify any actual Israeli case of sexual assault or harassment on the 7th of October.”

The double standard is indefensible and inconsistent with the policies and principles that Johns Hopkins professes to adhere to. If you are as troubled as we are by Johns Hopkins’ actions, please contact the university and do whatever you can to restore Dr. Klugman’s position, so that he can continue his pioneering work in treating some of the most vulnerable young patients in the U.S.

We would be pleased to connect you directly with Dr. Klugman. We are confident that meeting and talking with him will reinforce how unfairly he has been treated and that Johns Hopkins should welcome him back with a full-throated apology without further delay.

Thank you for considering our concerns.

Respectfully,



Morton A. Klein
National President



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

cc: Darren Klugman, M.D.