



December 19, 2024

VIA EMAIL

Katrina Armstrong, M.D.
Interim President, Columbia University
202 Low Library, 535 W. 116 St., MC 4309
New York, NY 10027

Dear President Armstrong:

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 campus antisemitism. We were horrified to learn that Columbia University has decided to allow Joseph Massad to continue teaching a course on Jewish history and Zionism, scheduled for the spring semester, even though Massad has advocated for Israel's destruction, praised terrorism against Israeli Jews, blamed Jews for antisemitism, denied the Jewish people's connection to the Land of Israel, and praised the terrorist group Hamas's massacre in Israel on October 7, 2023. The university's decision is indefensible, and we urge you to rescind it without further delay.

The day after the terrorist group Hamas slaughtered, raped and mutilated 1,200 men, women and children in Israel on October 7, 2023, Massad wasted no time in praising the atrocities, calling them "[astounding](#)" and "[awesome](#)." But his antisemitism and anti-Israelism are hardly new; they long predate his response to the October 7 massacre:

- In or about 2004, a self-identified Israeli student at Columbia who attended a public lecture by Massad tried to ask Massad a question. But Massad interrupted the student, asked him if he was Israeli and had served in the Israel Defense Forces. When the student answered in the affirmative, Massad asked, "[How many Palestinians have you killed?](#)" and demanded an answer before he would permit the student to speak.
- Massad has glorified Palestinian Arab terrorism against Jews, which he has described as "[anti-colonial resistance](#)," which demonstrates the Palestinian Arabs' "[real and exemplary bravery](#)."
- Massad has disgracefully blamed Jews for antisemitism and for the Holocaust. For example, in 2012, he [wrote](#), "When the Nazis took over power in Germany, the Zionists, sharing Herzl's understanding that anti-Semitism is the ally of Zionism, were the only Jewish group who would collaborate with them." Massad also [wrote](#), "West Germany's alliance with Zionism and Israel after WWII . . . is a continuation of the alliance that the Nazi government concluded with the Zionists in the 1930s."
- Massad denies the Jewish connection to the Land of Israel falsely describing Jews as [Zionist colonial settlers of Palestinian Arab lands](#).

Given his knowing and deliberate distortion of history and his open hostility toward Israel, Zionism and Jews, Massad is a wrong and dangerous choice to educate any Columbia student about Jewish history and Zionism. Especially at this time of soaring antisemitism, Massad will encourage Jew- and Israel-hatred among Columbia students, instead of building knowledge and understanding.

As Professor Lawrence Rosenblatt [wrote](#) in a letter recently announcing his resignation from the Columbia faculty, having Massad teach a course on Zionism is “akin to having a White nationalist teach about the US Civil Rights movement and the struggle for Black equality.” U.S. Rep. Ritchie Torres also condemned Columbia’s decision in a [post on X](#), calling Massad “an apologist for October 7” and asking, “What’s next at Columbia? [Ku Klux Klan leader] David Duke teaching a course on antiracism.”

Columbia University has unfortunately already earned a reputation as a place where Jews are unwelcome and even unsafe. Since October 7, 2023, Jewish students have been spat on and physically assaulted. In April 2024, the environment was so hostile that a rabbi at Columbia recommended that Jewish students leave the university and return home because he believed that Columbia and the New York City police could not assure the safety of Jewish students. The problem is not just Columbia students; it is administrators, too; three administrators were recently [permanently removed from their positions](#) at the university based on their antisemitic texts and behavior.

As you know, U.S. Rep. Virginia Foxx has led a congressional investigation into antisemitism at Columbia and other universities. After the removal of the administrators at Columbia, Rep. Foxx noted that “[‘elite’ institutions are rotting away and antisemitism is as rampant as ever.](#)”

Please do what you can to stop the rotting away at Columbia and to stem the antisemitism that has severely infected the campus. Make the university a learning and living environment where Jewish students feel safe and welcome. A critical and obvious step is cancelling Joseph Massad’s course. Massad is an unfit, irresponsible and even dangerous choice to teach any Columbia student about Jewish history or Zionism.

Very truly yours,



Morton A. Klein
National President



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



Jonathan Ginsburg
Managing Dir., ZOA Campus

P.S. from Morton Klein: Regards to you from Susan Schwartz, wife of the late Dr. Sandy Schwartz, both of whom have been my longtime friends and neighbors. They both told me about your long relationship working with Sandy when you were at the University of Pennsylvania.