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## Endangered Scholars Worldwide

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# Endangered Scholars Worldwide

Attacks on higher education communities are occurring at an alarming rate worldwide, threatening the safety and well-being of scholars, students, and academic staff, as well as the autonomy of higher education institutions. While we continue to publish regular updates in *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, in response to a global increase in threats to academic freedom, Endangered Scholars Worldwide (ESW) has expanded its presence as an online publication under the auspices of the New University in Exile Consortium ([www.newuniversityinexileconsortium.org](http://www.newuniversityinexileconsortium.org)), sharing frequent updates on news and developing cases in contribution to the Consortium's efforts to create a supportive intellectual community for threatened, exiled scholars.



For the most current information and ways in which you can be involved in our efforts to defend academic freedom and free expression, we invite you to visit our website [www.endangeredscholarsworldwide.net](http://www.endangeredscholarsworldwide.net) or follow us at [twitter.com/ESWNEWSCHOOL](https://twitter.com/ESWNEWSCHOOL).

If you are aware of a scholar or student whose case you believe we should investigate, please get in touch with us at [esw@newschool.edu](mailto:esw@newschool.edu).

Thank you for your unwavering support.

## **SPECIAL DELIVERY**

Academic freedom remains under threat from multiple sources as the far right makes gains globally, democratic regress grips many countries, autocracies remain resilient, and armed conflict endangers civilians, including academics, students, and others. The confluence of these factors has meant that violations of academic freedom as a fundamental

human right have been increasing in number. One of the most distressing developments currently is the Gaza crisis, which has rapidly intensified following the October 7, 2023, attack on Israel by Hamas, who killed some 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals and took more than 240 hostages. In response, Israel has launched a military operation into Gaza with the stated goal of freeing the hostages and eradicating Hamas. As of February 1, 2024, the operation has caused the death of more than 26,000 Palestinians and injured and displaced countless others.

These events have sparked intense debate and heightened polarization, which have quickly spread to university campuses around the world, especially in the West, where the commitment to uphold academic freedom and prevent hate speech has been put to the test. This stress test has revealed weaknesses that have to be repaired to render campuses safe for all students, including Jewish, Muslim, Israeli, Palestinian, and other Middle Eastern students, while also upholding the right of all campus members to freely express themselves.

The impact of the crisis has been the biggest where it is closest to the conflict. Ever since the Israeli army entered Gaza, the conflict has become so intense and humanitarian conditions have deteriorated so severely that academic activity has become impossible. While there is no active military conflict in the West Bank, the crisis has significantly disrupted academic life there as well. Local and international media outlets have reported that since October 7 Israeli authorities have arrested hundreds of students and faculty, restricted the movement of many others, and raided university campuses, such as Birzeit University and Palestine Technical University–Kadoorie.<sup>1</sup> The suppression of dissent has not been limited to Palestinian territories. Inside Israel, over 100 students and academics have been investigated for social media posts about the war, and some were reprimanded.<sup>2</sup> As of late November 2023, 20 students were suspended or expelled.<sup>3</sup> According to Israel-based Academia for Equality, at least six faculty have faced disciplinary action, including termination, for allegedly supporting terrorism.<sup>4</sup> In one case, the president and rector of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem sent a letter to a law professor at the university in which they

denounced her statements accusing Israel of committing war crimes and pressured her to resign.<sup>5</sup>

The conflict has had serious reverberations beyond its borders. Since it started, students and faculty in the United States and Europe have been mobilizing, some calling for support for Israel against Hamas, while others expressing solidarity with Palestinians who are suffering the brunt of the military operation in Gaza.

In the United Kingdom, an atmosphere of censorship and self-censorship has developed, according to the European Legal Support Center, an organization that advocates for Palestinian rights, which has identified at least 24 cases of repression in the academia.<sup>6</sup> The government has contributed to this situation, as evidenced by the open letter from the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology calling for the UK Research and Innovation organization to sever ties with two academics who allegedly expressed support for Hamas and accused Israel of genocide.<sup>7</sup> More than 3,000 UK academics have opposed the government in an open letter, arguing that the minister misrepresented these two academics' views and expressing concerns about the impact of such actions on academic freedom. In Germany, in response to increased student activism Berlin local authorities offered schools an option to ban Palestinian symbols, including keffiyehs.<sup>8</sup>

US campuses have also been roiled by events in Israel/Palestine. Local chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) have been suspended for violating campus policies on protests by universities like George Washington and Columbia. Columbia has also suspended Jewish Voice for Peace for the same reason. Brandeis has suspended SJP for allegedly supporting Hamas, which is recognized as a terrorist organization by many Western countries including the US, the UK, and the European Union. Meanwhile, Florida's public university system has issued a ban on SJP chapters on all its campuses on the claim that the group provides support to terrorist organizations (reportedly, two of the 12 system campuses have registered SJP chapters).<sup>9</sup> Faculty have also been directly impacted. For example, the University of Arizona briefly placed two faculty members on administrative leave for categorizing

Hamas as a “resistance group” in class.<sup>10</sup> The situation has also become difficult for university administrators, leading to the resignations of the presidents of the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard University.

Endangered Scholars Worldwide (ESW) is closely monitoring the ongoing impact of the Israel-Palestine conflict on the state of academic freedom and is deeply concerned with the recent rise of antisemitism, Islamophobia, and restrictions on free speech within university campuses. ESW stresses that universities are meant to be safe for all and to be places where free, constructive, respectful debate and mutual understanding prevail. Thus, we call upon all universities to halt rights violations and to protect free intellectual exchange.

Visit [www.endangeredscholarsworldwide.net](http://www.endangeredscholarsworldwide.net) for more information.

—By Özgür Kazaklı

## NOTES

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