

I want to offer support and solidarity to students and scholars who are facing expulsion, termination, suspension, and academic sanctions due to their advocacy for Palestinian freedom, for their criticism of Zionism, for their opposition to the occupation, and for their condemnation of genocide. It feels like a distraction to think about academic repression in US universities in this moment, during a livestreamed genocide, because no group of students or scholars are facing the dangers of the present moment more than students, scholars, and academic staff in Gaza.

And yet we know that, through its actions at the UN, its military aid, and its silencing of dissent, the US administration is complicit in this genocide and universities in the US, like their counterparts in Israel, produce the knowledge and expertise used to justify settler colonialism. Therefore, to focus on the US is in no way to take attention away from what is happening in Gaza, and throughout Palestine; rather, it is to show how challenges to US and Israeli hegemony are being mounted in US academies. We are witnessing a process of realignment within solidarity movements, as well as new iterations of repression and fascism.

Across Europe and the US, scholars who condemn the ongoing genocide, criticize Zionism, or support Palestinian freedom have been doxxed, suspended, and fired. Almost every university administration in the US has released statements condemning Hamas; however, these same institutions have remained silent about the assault on Gaza's higher education infrastructure, about the genocide in general, and about attacks on their own faculty and students by Zionist organizations. As a whole, the attack on Palestinian knowledge production and solidarity movements represents an appalling complicity with genocide and a frontal attack on all knowledge production that does not serve the interests of war.

Moreover, what has been especially pernicious in the present period has been the weaponization of accusations of anti-Semitism to silence dissent, analysis, and solidarity. For decades now, Zionist organizations in the US have successfully appropriated the language of civil rights and the civil rights movement to argue that Jewish safety (always imagined as aligned with Israel) should be the primary interest of the university. It is not only that Palestinian, Muslim, and Jewish anti-Zionist students are deemed subjects undeserving of safety, but also that their very existence creates a state of unsafety for imagined Jewish students. Moreover, universities' censorship of the word 'genocide', of any analysis of what might constitute legitimate resistance, and of slogans like 'Free Palestine' and 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free', are particularly anti-intellectual forms of silencing and dehumanization. Most campuses, arguing for academic freedom, go out of their way to offer protections for white supremacist speakers, or for Zionist speakers who can call for the outright ethnic cleansing of Palestine; yet, no similar protections are afforded to Palestinian or Muslim students who merely demand an end to war and justice for all.

In congressional hearings to investigate anti-Semitism on campuses, a topic that has reached the stage of moral panic due to the successful and scurrilous linking of Palestinian solidarity to anti-Semitism, university presidents have defamed students, staff, and professors who dare to criticize what the UN has termed a 'plausible genocide'. Meanwhile, neo-conservatives who espouse the anti-Semitic 'great replacement theory' stand in judgement and condemnation of Palestine solidarity activists.

To be clear, there is troubling anti-Semitism in Europe and America; however, it is more likely to come from the white nationalist allies of Israel than from Palestine solidarity activists. I am thinking here of Joe Biden's recent claim that, were it not for Israel, Jewish Americans would have no safe place in the world. This facile argument elides centuries of Jewish cohabitation and safety in the Arab world, while projecting European and American anti-Semitism onto stateless Palestinians.

It is important to recognize that the current wave of attacks on US higher education has an historical arc that goes back to the ways in which members of the New Left in the 1960s and 1970s went on to embrace neo-conservatism in the 1980s in their rejection of Black power and Third World student movements. Indeed, many of the most vociferous activists targeting Palestine solidarity activists today were themselves part of left-wing and socialist organizations in the 1960s. Much has already been written on the rightward trajectory of liberal intellectuals and, for now, I will merely state that understanding how the New Left became neo-conservative, and how demands for redistributive justice in the 1960s morphed into the 'safety' discourse we hear about today, reveals much about the authoritarian and fascist turn we witness in politics and higher education today. However, this is an analysis that will have to wait for an end to the present killing.

I think it is important to understand that the moral panic of anti-Semitism in US higher education is a counter-insurgency being waged in response to the success of a multi-racial and multi-faith Palestine solidarity movement. Zionist organizations and their allies are terrified that Palestinian, Muslim, Black, and Jewish non-Zionist students will join in solidarity and shatter the legitimacy of Zionism as a narrative of justice and tolerance in the West. Thus, while it is difficult to imagine the present moment as one that contains any glimmer of hope for a transformative future, there is a case to be made that young people are leading us towards a new future, and that there is a change taking place in metropolitan public discourse through our university campuses.

Across the US, the current generation of students are less attached to Israel than their parents, are more likely to participate in multi-racial movement-building, and are highly skeptical of political and university leaderships. Not only do these students face the necropolitical consequences of war and elimination, as do their Palestinian counterparts, but their futures are also attenuated by ascendant oligarchy, debt, and fascism. Within these contexts, Palestine has become a nexus for imagining the future; it is the symbol of a new movement against militarism and securitization, against starvation and genocide, and against apartheid: Palestine is a litmus test for thinking about collective ways of life that reject the partitioning of humanity, the partitioning of home, and the partitioning of justice.