

Open Letter to Harvard Leadership Regarding Antisemitism on Campus

Dear President Gay and Deans Datar, Elmendorf, Holland, Khurana, Manning, and Hempton:

The expressions of hate and vitriol against Jews have continued and strengthened over the last week on Harvard's campuses. The threatening, violent protests by pro-Palestinian groups on Harvard campuses become more heinous with each passing day. The videos that have been made public, particularly the most recent violent assault of an Israeli student on the Harvard Business School campus, allow us all to see how Jewish and Israeli students are targets of threats and violence from groups of pro-Palestinian students. It goes without saying that singling out any one group of students in verbal and physical attacks based on their religion or because of events halfway across the world is inappropriate, inconsistent with Harvard's values and something that would not be tolerated in any other context. Given that Harvard has been vocal in its advocacy for the rights of students from other religious, racial and ethnic groups, this silence, amidst the meteoric rise in antisemitism, is deafening.

Jewish students have locked themselves in dorm rooms across your campuses afraid for their own safety. Despite these serious concerns, University leadership shockingly has been paralyzed. When another protest was about to occur, the only thing leadership did was to email the heads of the Jewish Student Association to advise them they could counterprotest if they wanted or they could hide for the day in a room the University had reserved for Jewish and Israeli students. Jewish and Israeli students are scared, have been ostracized from their communities and are afraid for their safety.

I know you know all of this, as we have been assured by multiple close stakeholders that you have been ensconced in endless meetings discussing what to do.

This is not leadership.

Your silence as the situation intensifies is both astounding and frightening. Years ago, a small group of alumni met with Dean Nitin Nohria to discuss the ultimate mission of Harvard Business School. The resounding answer was to engage, teach and produce ethical leaders who make positive change in the world. Lofty and important goals and supposedly aligned with the University mission overall.

Without steadfast leadership, Harvard will not produce ethical and wise leaders. Ethical leadership requires a strong moral compass and a deep and committed understanding of what one's mission is. Real leaders can move to action quickly because their values are authentic, and they are deeply committed to their mission. The prolonged silence from you all after multiple violent pro-Palestinian protests and "die-ins" are proof enough that Harvard's leadership does not know how to lead or model true leadership.

Consequently, we offer the following concrete actions that Harvard leadership should take immediately:

- **The University should restate and enforce the University's existing moral code of conduct required of ALL students, employees and faculty members.** Free speech is to be respected but hatred, threats and violence against students and faculty are unequivocally prohibited. Any member of the community who engages in behavior that is in direct violation of Harvard's code of conduct should be held accountable, including by suspension and expulsion. Harvard leadership should immediately convene ALL students in person to communicate this requirement and should follow this up with written communication to the entire community to make clear the standard for moral conduct on the campus.

Leaders should state that the campus police are viewing all videos of these hate-filled, violent altercations and that any students, faculty members or employees who have violated the code of conduct will be suspended or expelled.

- **Recognize that the University campus is private property and that all participants in any protest must be enrolled students.** Any outsiders will be escorted off the campus and, if any person is found to engage in repeated instances of trespassing, they will be charged with trespassing. Security personnel will enforce this by checking student IDs.

- **Permit only protests that have been scheduled and allow only students to attend.** Protestors may NOT cover their faces. A Harvard value is personal accountability; hiding your identity is not accepting personal accountability.

- **In order to become a model for campus free speech, the University should immediately develop and require that all students participate in a semester-long course that teaches productive discourse, critical thinking and the interrogation of facts so students learn to debate through reasoned inquiry.** Among other things, this would help improve Harvard's ranking on the FIRE college free speech ranking where Harvard has consistently failed to meet the standards, ranking 248th -- the very lowest score in this year's ranking.

Moral leadership matters. When strong moral leadership exists, most people rise individually and as a community; in contrast, when weak leadership exists, people sink like stones. Everyone is watching. Parents are asking if their children should attend Harvard. Will they be safe? Are Harvard's campuses vibrant, diverse, positive educational environments with respectful behavioral norms that are upheld or politically charged, leaderless and dangerous? Will their classmates be a source of healthy debate and learning or of heated rhetoric and intolerance? Are students who are eager to spend four of what should be their most special years expanding their thinking and being challenged academically and socially to expand their friend groups, wondering understandably whether the decision to attend Harvard will involve checking themselves continually, fearing that sharing their opinions inside and outside classrooms will ostracize them from their classmates? Will they be forced to hide in rooms to avoid protests where classmates are allowed to harass them? Is Harvard a place where faculty members can effectively teach, or must they carefully lecture, avoiding content and speakers that might challenge students' existing beliefs for fear of retribution?

We fear that history is on the verge of repeating itself. We know from studying the worst episodes of human history that violence must be nipped in the bud, bullies must be confronted, and inaction and handwringing incentivizes more acts of hate. Each of you needs to muster the courage to lead by re-establishing moral and respectful conduct on your campuses. A university is supposed to challenge and expand the forming minds of future leaders; not be bullied by them. Leadership demands courage. We will not be quiet. We will not have our children and grandchildren ask where we were when morality and humanity died, and Harvard looked away.

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