



October 23, 2024

VIA U.S. MAIL AND EMAIL

Katrina Armstrong, MD
Interim President
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Dear President Armstrong,

As the Attorneys General of South Carolina and Arkansas, we are joined by the Attorneys General of the 23 undersigned states to raise grave concerns about antisemitism on the campus of Columbia University, and to encourage your administration to hold the line against demands to divest from Israel. This issue is a matter of special concern to the states because students from [across the country](#) attend Columbia University.

Since Hamas' horrific October 7, 2023, terrorist attack on Israel, antisemitism on university campuses has only grown. In April of this year, several pro-Palestinian groups staged occupation protests on Columbia University's campus in New York City, established encampments, and demanded the university [divest from Israel](#). Even after some protesters were arrested, [occupations continued](#) and the school entered [negotiations with protesters](#). The school appropriately [declined to divest from Israel](#). But demands for divestment have not abated. And the one-year anniversary of the October 7 attacks heralded an escalation in antisemitic rhetoric by pro-Palestinian campus protest groups.

On October 9, 2024, Columbia University Apartheid Divest [rescinded an apology](#) it made after one of its members said the school was lucky he wasn't out killing Zionists. "We support liberation by any means necessary, including armed resistance," the group said in its statement revoking the apology. And it marked the one-year anniversary of the October 7 attacks by distributing a newspaper with a headline reading "One Year Since Al-Aqsa Flood, Revolution Until Victory," while showing a picture of Hamas fighters breaching the security fence to Israel. The group also praised a Tel Aviv attack by Palestinian militants that killed seven people

on October 1 of this year, including a mother who died while shielding her 9-month-old baby. And it voiced support for Iran’s missile attack on the Jewish state that began that same evening. The leader of Within Our Lifetime, another pro-Palestinian group that organized the “[Students Flood NYC for Gaza](#)” protests on Columbia’s campus, recently wrote on X, “[Long live October 7th](#).” And Students for Justice in Palestine, a student group whose chapter at Columbia University has been [suspended](#), is among the pro-Palestinian groups whose members have praised the October 7 attack. “Al-Aqsa Flood was a historic act of resistance against decades of occupation, apartheid, and settler colonial violence,” the Brown chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine [posted](#) on Instagram. Given their extreme activity, it’s no surprise that the Students for Justice in Palestine [is linked](#) to entities that the U.S. Department of State designates as “[foreign terrorist organizations](#).”

Despite this wave of antisemitic rhetoric, Columbia University is not the only institution of higher education that has declined the demands to divest. On October 9, 2024, Brown University announced that its governing board voted to [reject a student proposal](#) to divest from companies involved in Israeli military and security activities. This decision was made in light of a [letter](#) sent by 24 state Attorneys General to Brown highlighting the profound legal consequences of adopting a divestment proposal. In short, the letter explains how yielding to divestment calls rooted in antisemitism could trigger laws in nearly three-fourths of States prohibiting States from associating with entities that discriminate against Israel, Israelis, or their business partners.

Against that backdrop, we commend Columbia University for its decision earlier this year to not divest from Israel. And we urge your administration to continue to maintain that position despite blatantly antisemitic pressure from some pro-Palestinian student groups. While balancing student speech rights against credible threats to people and property can be a delicate task, declining to divest should be an easy call.

Respectfully,



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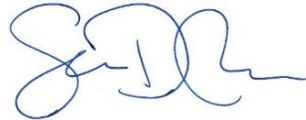
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