

STATEMENT FOR THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

House of Representatives
Committee on Education and the Workforce

HON. RITCHIE TORRES
OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, April 17, 2024

EXPRESSING CONCERN REGARDING TARGETED HARASSMENT OF ADMITTED JEWISH STUDENTS ON COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY'S CAMPUS

I write today to express my deep concern regarding an incident that took place on Columbia University's campus in early March 2024.

During an admitted students luncheon at Columbia Law School, a mob of anti-Israel protesters allegedly interrupted the event and attempted to intimidate potential students who were supporters of the State of Israel. According to the American Jewish Committee (AJC), they “confronted attendees with virulently anti-Israel messaging and abusive rhetoric that communicated the unvarnished message that Zionists are not welcome at Columbia Law School.” One week after this incident, leaders from the AJC were on Columbia's campus meeting with Columbia University President Minouche Shafik, “who assured [AJC] that Jewish students should feel safe on campus.”¹ Clearly, President Shafik's sentiment was not shared with the protesters.

In the aftermath of the October 7th massacre against Israel, the surge in antisemitic hate and intimidation on college campuses has led Jewish students nationwide to feel unsafe on campus. A recent ADL and Hillel International study found that before Oct. 7, 67 percent of Jewish students said they felt physically safe on campus; after Oct. 7, only 46 percent felt physically safe. I have met with university students from across the nation who have shared stories of the horrific intimidation and harassment they have faced at institutions that claim to develop the next generation of Americans. Concerningly, Columbia University received a “D” on ADL's new Campus Antisemitism Report Card.

While I do not sit on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, I am deeply grateful to my colleague Congresswoman Kathy Manning of North Carolina for so graciously submitting this statement for the record on my behalf. As a proud member of the New York Congressional Delegation, I wish to relay to President Shafik my deep concerns about the March event on her campus, and I am officially asking Columbia University to respond to my office as soon as possible to inform us of what actionable steps they will be taking to discipline the individuals involved and ensure that all students feel safe on their campus, no matter their ethnic or religious background. Acts to intimidate students for their deeply-held beliefs such as identifying as a Zionist are a form of discrimination and must be treated as such. I am concerned that Columbia's leadership may have fallen into a pattern of failing to hold disruptors to account

¹ <https://www.ajc.org/news/ajc-letter-to-columbia-law-following-admitted-student-luncheon>

and failing to discipline those who break the university's rules to spew hateful anti-Zionist messages.

I am a strong supporter of the First Amendment and the right to protest, but when protests devolve into a form of targeted hate and a disruption of the scheduled programming and activities of the university, it is incumbent on educational institutions such as Columbia to act swiftly in defense of their students. I look forward to hearing from your team soon to understand how you responded to the incident in question and what you will be doing to prevent future acts of intimidation of Jewish students.