

**Testimony of
Talia Dror**

**Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives**

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**From Ivory Towers to Dark Corners: Investigating the Nexus Between
Antisemitism, Tax-Exempt Universities, and Terror Financing**

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Neal, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

Thank you for your time and the invitation to testify today.

My name is Talia Dror. I'm a Junior at Cornell University studying Industrial and Labor Relations with minors in business and legal policy.

But beyond that, I am a human manifestation of the American dream. I am the child of an immigrant who fled Iran after facing religious persecution, dreaming of an America where she could openly raise a Jewish family. At the same time, I grew up hearing the cautionary tales of blatant antisemitism: how my grandfather was stabbed for being a Jew, how my mother was called a dirty Jew on a daily basis, how my family had to pretend they weren't Jewish. But I never thought the horrific antisemitism that they faced would follow us to the country they fled to for refuge.

Thirty nine days ago, as I witnessed the mass rape, mutilation, and massacre committed by Hamas, my own reality, as a college student in the United States, radically transformed.

Students, professors, and administrators on Cornell's campus, celebrating the brutal massacre of innocent civilians.

Just five days after the heinous terrorist attacks, the Cornell Student Assembly introduced a resolution justifying Hamas' actions and placing full blame on Israel.¹ At the hearing, I spoke about the fact that the terrorist organization endorsed by the resolution called for a global day of rage the very next day. I explained that as a Jewish student leader, my community is terrified to

¹ <https://cornellsun.com/2023/10/12/israel-palestine-supporters-discuss-proposed-sjp-resolution-at-student-assembly-meeting/>

walk around the school they pay to attend because they are afraid of getting threatened, assaulted, or killed.

Students at rallies chant genocidal phrases such as “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.” This is a chant that calls for the elimination of the state of Israel and all 7 million Jews inside of it. This is a chant that calls for a second Holocaust. Students scream, “there is only one solution, intifada revolution,” which is a call for deadly terror attacks on civilians. A Cornell professor, announced that he was “exhilarated” and “energized” by the Hamas attacks.² By the murder of my family and friends.

On October 25th, Jewish students at Cornell woke up to a campus vandalized with graffiti that said “zionism = genocide” and “new intifada.”³ That day, Jewish students walking into their classes had to step over slogans that called for deadly attacks and accused them of being genocidal for supporting the existence of the state of Israel.

Historically, Cornell’s administration has made firm statements on everything from Supreme Court⁴ decisions to the war in Ukraine⁵ to Black Lives Matter.⁶ But in the wake of the darkest day in Jewish history since the Holocaust, administrators have excused endorsements of terrorism under the guise of free speech. In their initial statement, they compared the “loss of life in the middle east” to deaths caused by natural disasters. They allowed tensions to fester on campus, professors to use their captive audiences to preach terrorist sympathies, and the targeting of Jewish students on their campus.

They paved the perfect path for radicalized individuals to shift calls for the murder of Jews in Israel to calls for the elimination of Jews on campus.

On the morning of Sunday, October 29th, the provost of the university—in an address to concerned Jewish parents—explained that while he understands concerns for their children’s physical safety, they should not be worried.

Not 7 hours later, Jewish students on campus received threats that said:

“If I see another Jew on campus I will stab you and slit your throat. If I see another pig female jew i will drag you away, rape you, and throw you off a cliff. Jews are human

² <https://cornellsun.com/2023/10/16/cornell-professor-exhilarated-by-hamass-attack-defends-remark/>

³ <https://cornellsun.com/2023/10/27/anti-israel-graffiti-rally-for-palestine-jewish-community-gathering-week-roundup-of-campus-israel-palestine-demonstrations/>

⁴ <https://statements.cornell.edu/2023/20230629-supreme-court-decision.cfm>

⁵ <https://statements.cornell.edu/2022/20220302-ukraine.cfm>

⁶ <https://statements.cornell.edu/2020/20200529-oq5bv7-recent-killings.cfm>

animals and deserve pigs' death. Liberation by any means, from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.”⁷

“Gonna shoot up 104 West, the kosher dining hall, glory to hamas, liberation by any means necessary.”

“Gonna bomb Jewish house in retaliation for the murder of 500 martyrs. You have been warned.”

That night, I sat in my locked house pondering my mortality. I knew that with my roommates and I being outspoken Jewish community leaders, having a mezuzah on our door, our apartment would be one of the first targets for someone looking to actualize these heinous threats. I thought back to the stories my mother told me as I grew up, how as a young child I found so much comfort in being an American, having the right of being protected by a country that was built on the foundation of equal opportunity and individual liberty.

For two days, I was petrified. How could I not be? I’ve opened my phone to texts from my friends at Ohio State about two of their Jewish friends who are in the hospital with a broken nose and jaw after getting punched for being Jewish?⁸ Or watching a video of Jewish student at Tulane who was sent to the hospital after getting bashed in the head with the pole of a Palestinian flag?⁹ Or the video of a student at Harvard who was mobbed by pro-Palestinian students just for wearing a Jewish headcovering?¹⁰

Two days later, I got news that the threats were made by a fellow student who lived down the street at the same school I have worked my whole life to get into. The school I invested my family’s life savings to attend. The school that promised me that they would uphold a community of belonging.

When universities fail to recognize the inextricable link between antisemitism and anti-Israel activity, they reinforce the idea that violent threats against Jews are acceptable.

Today, college students, professors, and administrators are falsely equating Palestinian liberation with the massacre of innocent Israeli civilians. Their disguised language targets innocent Jews around the world.

⁷ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/cornell-university-says-suspect-made-antisemitic-threats-police-custod-rca123020>

⁸ <https://abcnews.go.com/US/ohio-state-antisemitic-incidents/story?id=104794723>

⁹ <https://www.nationalreview.com/news/tulane-student-criticizes-school-after-being-assaulted-while-preventing-israeli-flag-burning-just-unthinkable/>

¹⁰ <https://nypost.com/2023/11/01/news/harvard-student-mobbed-by-pro-palestinian-demonstrators-on-campus-video/>

Many universities are unfortunately failing their Jewish students. They have failed to uphold their self proclaimed values of equity and belonging when it comes to Jewish students. The hypocrisy is glaring. In light of the horrific antisemitism, students have been courageous and resilient. But we shouldn't need to be- American Jewish students on campus deserve better.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.