



**The Center for the Study of  
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The Lester and Sally Entin  
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## **PERSPECTIVES**

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The Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry publishes commentary and analysis on Jewish identity and culture. You are welcome to share your thoughts on our Perspectives with us: [cst@tauex.tau.ac.il](mailto:cst@tauex.tau.ac.il). We are glad to share with you the twenty-eighth issue of Perspectives.

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# **Boycott Harvard**

**An American university risks becoming an illegitimate entity**

*Uriya Shavit and Carl Yonker*

Harvard University, once a glorious academic institution, is on the verge of losing its moral legitimacy.

Human rights activists, American patriots, Jews with a sense of pride, and any normal human being who thinks that the cold-blooded murder of babies and the kidnapping of elderly women is wrong must send a clear message to its administration: If your premises continue to serve as a hub for denials of the right of the Jewish people to exist, the right of Harvard to exist will be questioned as well. If your premises continue to serve as a hub for antisemites, then it will be recognized as a hub for antisemites.

Freedom of expression is sacred and almost absolute. The freedom to boycott is sacred and almost absolute. Fine. The Harvard administration should be made to understand this works both ways.

A year and a half ago, the *Harvard Crimson*, the daily student newspaper of the Ivy League university, published an editorial endorsing the BDS movement. As analyzed

in our Perspectives 14, this intellectually embarrassing piece failed to make clear whether its authors accept the existence of Israel in its internationally recognized borders. It more than hinted, though, that they do not.

Following the Hamas massacre of hundreds of civilians last Saturday, more than 30 student organizations at Harvard published the equivalence of a statement of support for Japan the day after Pearl Harbor or of Bin Laden the day after 9/11.

The text is almost as incomprehensible as the photos of the atrocities committed by Hamas militants in the Israeli south. It reads (according to the link appearing in *Politico*):

**We, the undersigned student organizations, hold the Israeli regime entirely responsible for all unfolding violence.**

**Today's events did not occur in a vacuum. For the last two decades, millions of Palestinians in Gaza have been forced to live in an open-air prison. Israeli officials promise to "open the gates of hell," and the massacres in Gaza have already commenced. Palestinians in Gaza have no shelters for refuge and nowhere to escape. In the coming days, Palestinians will be forced to bear the full brunt of Israel's violence.**

**The apartheid regime is the only one to blame. Israeli violence has structured every aspect of Palestinian existence for 75 years. From systematized land seizures to routine airstrikes, arbitrary detentions to military checkpoints, and enforced family separations to targeted killings, Palestinians have been forced to live in a state of death, both slow and sudden.**

**Today, the Palestinian ordeal enters into uncharted territory. The coming days will require a firm stand against colonial retaliation. We call on the Harvard community to take action to stop the ongoing annihilation of Palestinians.**

Let us get the facts right.

Hamas, the governing power in Gaza following the elections there, is a branch of the Muslim Brothers movement that has, since its inception, denied the right of the Jewish people to exist.

The declared objective of Hamas, as presented in its Charter, is the total elimination of the state of Israel.

Hamas' worldview is informed, and the movement advances, deep-seated antisemitic views that deny the humanity of Jews.

Hamas is an open enemy of the United States and liberal values.

Hamas turned Gaza into a hell where women are oppressed and gays are thrown off balconies.

If Israel is a colonial enterprise, then so – and much more – are the United States, Canada, Australia, Argentina, and Saudi Arabia. Israel was founded based on a United Nations’ General Assembly Resolution on a Partition Plan, which the Arab world rejected, and Hamas still rejects. Most populated Jewish towns and settlements before its establishment existed on lands purchased by Jews with money. Aside from the ancestral affinity between Jews and their land, the Jewish presence in the Land of Israel was consistent, while an Arab, or a Palestinian, nation-state never existed in that land.

To blame Israel for a defensive war against the mass killers of its civilians before the IDF even fired a shot is to effectively ask the main military ally of the United States in the Middle East to surrender without a fight to a declared enemy of America. That is the work of a fifth column. It borders on treason.

The signatories to the letter are cowards. Not only did they not publish their names, hiding behind student organizations, they later deleted the names of those organizations as well, fearing backlash. They don’t mind inflaming violence as long as others bear the consequences.

Students have the right to be ignorant. Students have the right to show poor moral judgment.

Professors don’t. Presidents of universities don’t. That’s because they are no longer students.

In response to the outrageous letter published by the Harvard student organizations, Harvard President Claudine Gay and the university’s leadership issued a lengthy statement that made clear the only thing she cares about is not angering anyone.

Take this morally insipid sentence, for example:

**We are hopeful that, as a community devoted to learning, we can take steps that will draw on our common humanity and shared values in order to modulate rather than amplify the deep-seated divisions and animosities so distressingly evident in the wider world. Especially at such a time, we want to emphasize our commitment to fostering an environment of dialogue and empathy, appealing to one another’s thoughtfulness and goodwill in a time of unimaginable loss and sorrow.**

The next day, perhaps fearing the backlash, Gay issued a shorter and somewhat more strongly worded statement.

What Gay did not do is unequivocally condemn the poor moral judgment and ignorance of some of her students and put the facts right.

What she did not do is unequivocally delegitimize those who deny the right of Israel to exist.

What she did not do is explain whether Harvard would allow students to deny the right of other nations and states to exist. Say, Iran or Russia.

What she did not do is state whether she believes Israel is a colonial enterprise and an Apartheid state or not.

What she did not do is clarify whether, at Harvard, professors also have opinions.

It is unclear how Harvard became the signature of militant antisemitism disguised as progressive liberalism.

It is clear that Jews, pro-Zionists, or sane liberals cannot feel safe on a university campus where such views thrive.

And it is time those in charge there are made to realize this comes at a very costly public and financial price.

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Prof. Uriya Shavit is Head of the Center. Dr. Carl Yonker is Senior Researcher and Project Manager at the Center.

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