

# CUNY Faculty and Staff Reject the Palestine Exception to Free Speech

*October 17, 2023*

We Reject the Palestine Exception to Free Speech at CUNY

We, the undersigned CUNY staff and faculty, strongly object to Chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez's efforts to censure expressions of solidarity with the Palestinian people. In advance of anti-apartheid rallies planned on multiple campuses, the Chancellor claimed that the organizers would "glorify Saturday's [Oct. 7] violence and celebrate the killings, injuries and capture of innocent people." This baseless, prejudicial statement reproduces the racist, Islamophobic rhetoric that has accompanied the drumbeat for war. In preemptively withdrawing support from a whole subset of students, staff and faculty, he has sought to suppress dissent at a time when the university - a public university and the largest urban university system in the nation - should be fostering open, critical discussion.

This is not the only [time that the Chancellor](#) and other CUNY [administrators](#) have scapegoated Palestine solidarity activism. Last week, Brooklyn College president Michelle Anderson capitulated to Councilwoman Inna Vernikov's demand to ban a Students for Justice in Palestine rally from campus. She informed the community that she had "increase[d] campus security," and encouraged students "not to come to campus." When the rally went ahead off campus, Vernikov attended it [with a gun clearly visible](#). These actions make a mockery of the free speech and academic freedom commitments these university leaders claim to uphold.

In rejecting all criticism of Israel, CUNY administrators are not only at odds with Palestine solidarity activists. They are also against the consensus opinion of [regional and international](#) human rights organizations that Israel is an apartheid state and a state that systematically violates international law. This is in no way to condone the death toll of the last ten days - there is no justification for the targeting of civilians in any context.

And there is also no equivalence between the October 7 military operation by Hamas and the subsequent military attack by the Israeli state, and certainly no equivalence to the systemic and the violence of Israeli settler colonialism. Israeli state violence has defined Palestinian life in Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip since 1948. [The dispossession of Palestinian land by ever-expanding settlements](#), the [construction of Israeli educational institutions on settlement land](#), the routine [incarceration](#) and [killing of Palestinian protestors](#), [the eviction of Palestinians and destruction of their homes](#), and the [gunning down of Palestinian and Palestinian-American journalists](#) are but a few examples. The Gaza Strip, described by Human Rights Watch as the [world's largest open-air prison](#), has been under Israeli blockade since 2007. Everyday life for the over 2.4 million Palestinians in Gaza, 55% of whom are children and more than 70% of whom are refugees, is crippled by restrictions on access to food, water, medical aid, electricity, and basic life necessities. Israel's attacks on Gaza in 2008-09, 2014, 2021, and 2022 have resulted in the killing of almost 4,000 Palestinians.

Over the past few days, the situation has worsened considerably. Open calls for the outright elimination of Palestinians are echoing in the United States and abroad. Israel continues its indiscriminate bombing of civilian spaces—homes, schools, universities, hospitals, ambulances—and has cut off the supply of food, water, fuel, and medicine. In just the past week, [over 3,000 Palestinians, including more than 1,000 children](#), have been killed in Israeli air raids. This collective punishment of civilians, whom the Israeli government has long dehumanized and now describes as [“human animals,”](#) is illegal under international law. Now, in preparation for a ground invasion of Gaza, more than half of its residents have been ordered to evacuate. More than 600,000 Palestinians have been forced to leave their homes at least once since October 7, according to the [Palestinian health ministry](#). Many are calling this forced displacement a second “Nakba” that echoes 1948.

As CUNY staff and faculty, we applaud all those in our community who refuse to remain silent in the face of an impending genocide. We stand with them in opposition to Israeli occupation, apartheid, and war crimes, and in support of Palestinian liberation. We bear witness as CUNY administrators have caused students, staff, and faculty to be silenced, vilified and even criminalized when they speak or act in support of Palestinian struggles. We pledge to stand up to CUNY management's attempts to censor dissent. We demand that the Chancellor, campus presidents, and all those in leadership positions end the repression and intimidation of Palestine solidarity activists and fulfill our responsibility to equally protect the rights of all members of CUNY.

Signed,

1. Abdullah Jawad, PhD Student, Anthropology, CUNY Graduate Center
2. Addy Malinowski, PhD student, CUNY Graduate Center
3. Agnes Eigo, Hunter College
4. Ajantha Subramanian, Professor of Anthropology, CUNY Graduate Center
5. Alan A. Aja, Professor, Brooklyn College
6. Alex Wolf, Professor of Biological Sciences, Bronx Community College
7. Alexa Punnamkuzhyil, GCF, CUNY Graduate Center
8. Alhaji Conteh, Doctoral Lecturer, Hunter College
9. Alycia Sellie, Associate Professor, Graduate Center Library
10. Aman Roy, PhD Student, CUNY Graduate Center
11. Amanda Long, Graduate Lecturer, Queens College
12. Ana Djordjevic, Adjunct Lecturer of Health and Nutrition Sciences, Brooklyn College
13. Anastasia U, Former Administrator, Borough of Manhattan Community College
14. Andrea Morrell, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Guttman Community College
15. Angela Dunne, Adjunct Lecturer, Guttman Community College
16. Ángeles Donoso Macaya, Professor of Latin American, Latino and Iberian Cultures, The CUNY Graduate Center and BMCC, CUNY
17. Angelica Nunez, Student, Hostos Community College
18. Anna Stetsenko, Professor, Psychology and Urban Education, GC CUNY
19. Anthony Alessandrini, Professor of English & Middle Eastern Studies, Kingsborough Community College & CUNY Graduate Center
20. Anthony Gronowicz, Adjunct Full Professor, Borough of Manhattan Community College
21. Anthony O'Brien, Dept. Of English, Queens College (ret.).

22. Ariana Mangual Figueroa, Associate Professor, Urban Education and Latin American, Iberian, Latino Cultures CUNY Graduate Center
23. Asa Mendelsohn, Adjunct Lecturer, Women and Gender Studies, Hunter College
24. Asima Chaudhary, Assistant Professor of Law, CUNY School of Law
25. Atasi Das, Assistant Professor of Childhood Education, Lehman College
26. Austin Bailey, PhD student, CUNY Graduate Center
27. Avery Leshan, Student, CUNY School of Law
28. Babe Howell, Professor, CUNY School of Law
29. Beena Ahmad, Assistant Professor of Law, CUNY School of Law
30. Ben Snyder, Lecturer, Brooklyn College
31. Benjamin Krusling, Graduate student, CUNY Graduate Center
32. Beth Ferholt, Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education, Brooklyn College
33. Bilge Yesil, Associate Professor of Media Culture & Middle Eastern Studies, College of Staten Island and the Graduate Center
34. Boyda Johnstone, Assistant Professor, Borough of Manhattan Community College
35. Brett Stoudt, Associate Professor of Psychology, Urban Education, & Social Welfare, CUNY Graduate Center
36. Britt Munro, Adjunct instructor, PhD student, CUNY Graduate Center
37. Bronislaw Czarnocha, Professor, Hostos Community College
38. Bruno Gulli, Professor of Philosophy, Kingsborough Community College
39. Caitlin Cahill, Associate Adjunct Professor, CUNY Graduate Center
40. Calvin Edward, Graduate Assistant, CUNY Graduate Center
41. Carmelina Cartei, Adjunct Lecturer, Hunter College
42. Carol, Adj Asst. Prof, Bronx Community College
43. Carolina Bank Muñoz, Professor of Sociology, Brooklyn College
44. Caroline K. Hong, Associate Professor of English, Queens College
45. Charles Post, Professor of Sociology, Borough of Manhattan Community College
46. Charles Theonia, Alum and former adjunct (+ BMCC and LaGuardia), Brooklyn College
47. Chaumtoli Huq, Associate Professor of Law, CUNY School of Law
48. Charisa Smith, Professor of Law, CUNY School of Law
49. Charles R. Davidson, Interim Assistant Dean, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
50. Christa Salamandra, Professor of Anthropology, Lehman College and the Graduate Center
51. Christopher Santiago, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, College of Staten Island
52. Christopher Stone, Associate Professor of Arabic, Hunter College and the MA Program in Middle Eastern Studies at the CUNY Graduate Center
53. Cinthya Santos Briones, Adjunct, Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism
54. Claire Sternberg, Staff, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
55. Colette Daiute, Professor, Psychology, Educational Psychology, Urban Education, Graduate Center, CUNY
56. Craig Bernardini, Professor, Hostos Community College
57. Crystal Schloss-Allen, Admin Exec. Associate, Brooklyn College
58. Darializa Avila Chevalier, Writing Fellow, CUNY School of Law
59. Dana Davis, Professor, Urban Studies, Queens College
60. Daniel Polyak, Adjunct Lecturer, Hunter College
61. Danny Katch, Adjunct Professor, The City College of New York

62. Deeadra Brown, Adjunct Lecturer, Hunter College
63. Derek Ludovici, Adjunct in Anthropology, Brooklyn College
64. Diane Riskedahl, Distinguished Lecturer, CUNY Graduate Center
65. Domenick Acocella, Lecturer, Borough of Manhattan Community College
66. Dominic Wetzel, Associate Professor of Sociology, Kingsborough Community College
67. Donasia Tillery, Former lecturer, Borough of Manhattan Community College
68. Dorien Ediger-Seto, Adjunct Professor, CUNY School of Law
69. Douglas Medina, Instructor, Guttman Community College
70. Dušana Podlucká, Professor of Psychology, LaGuardia Community College
71. Eduardo Vianna, Professor of Psychology, LaGuardia and Graduate Center and Urban Education, Graduate Center
72. Ellen Dichner, Distinguished Lecturer of Labor Studies, CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies
73. Elizabeth Oram, Adjunct Lecturer, Hunter College School of Nursing, Retired
74. Erik Freas, Associate Professor of History, BMCC
75. Erin Tomlinson, Instructor, CUNY School of Law
76. Esther Llamas, Higher Education Assistant, Medgar Evers College
77. Evan Smith, Lecturer, Baruch College
78. Filip Stabrowski, Professor of Anthropology and Geography, LaGuardia Community College & Graduate Center
79. Francisca Suarez-Coalla, Professor, Borough of Manhattan Community College
80. Frank Deale, Professor of Law, CUNY Law School
81. Gary Wilder, Professor, The Graduate Center, CUNY
82. Gaurav Jashnani, IRADAC Postdoctoral Fellow, CUNY Graduate Center
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84. Geo Maher, Distinguished Visiting Scholar, CUNY Graduate Center
85. George Fragopoulos, Associate Professor of English, Queensborough Community College and Associate Professor of Liberal Studies, CUNY Graduate Center
86. Gerry Martini, Staff, CUNY Graduate Center
87. Grace Handy, Archivist, Queens College and CUNY Central
88. Gul Sonmez, Professor, Lehman College
89. Helene Remiszewska, Assistant Professor of English, Lehman College
90. Hosu Kim, Associate Professor of Sociology and Anthropology, College of Staten Island, and Critical Social Psychology, CUNY Graduate Center
91. Howard Pflanzner, Adjunct Associate Professor, Hunter College
92. Ian Olasov, Department of Philosophy, Brooklyn College and CUNY Graduate Center
93. Ibrahim Bechrouri, Adjunct Assistant Professor, John Jay College
94. Irene Siegel, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Arabic, Hunter College
95. Irene Sosa, Professor, Department of TV, Radio and Emerging Media, Department of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies, Brooklyn College
96. Iris Lam, Graduate Student, Baruch College
97. Isabella Irtifa, PhD student, CUNY Graduate Center
98. Itsue Nakaya Perez, PhD student, CUNY Graduate Center
99. Jackie Braje, Adjunct faculty, Brooklyn College
100. Jackie DiSalvo, Retiree Associate Professor, Baruch College

101. Jacqueline Nassy Brown, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Hunter College and The Graduate Center
102. Jaime Weida, Assistant Professor, Borough of Manhattan Community College
103. James Dennis Hoff, Associate Professor of English and Editorial Board Member of Left Voice, Borough of Manhattan Community College
104. James Rodriguez, Assistant Professor of Urban Studies, CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies
105. Jane Guskin, Adjunct Lecturer in Urban Studies, Queens College
106. Janice Keuhnelian, writing tutor, Guttman Community College
107. Jeanne Theoharis, Distinguished Professor of Political Science, Brooklyn College
108. Jeannette Graulau, Associate Professor, Lehman College
109. Jeena Shah, Associate Professor of Law, CUNY School of Law
110. Jen Gaboury, Lecturer, Women and Gender Studies. Hunter College
111. Jennifer Queenan, Adjunct Professor, CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies
112. Jeremy Kane, Lecturer, Queens College
113. Jeremy Randall, Assistant Program Officer, CUNY Graduate Center
114. Jessie Daniels, Professor of Sociology, Hunter College, CUNY and Professor of Sociology, Critical Social Psychology, & Africana Studies, The Graduate Center, CUNY
115. Jihyeon Kim, Student, CUNY Graduate Center
116. Jillian Schwedler, Professor of Political Science, Hunter College and the Graduate Center
117. Jocelyn Wills, Professor Emerita, Brooklyn College
118. John Istona, Brooklyn College
119. John P Pittman, Associate Professor, John Jay College of Criminal Justice'
120. John Whitlow, Associate Professor of Law, CUNY School of Law
121. Jonathan Buchsbaum, Professor of Media Studies (Emeritus), Queens College, CUNY
122. Jonathan H. Shannon, Professor, Hunter College & CUNY Graduate Center
123. Jonathan Larson, European Languages and Literatures Faculty, Queens College
124. Jordan Botello-Alcalá, PhD Student/Teaching Fellow, CUNY Graduate Center
125. José del Valle, Professor, Latin American, Iberian and Latino Cultures, Linguistics
126. Joshua Wilkerson, Adjunct Lecturer, Brooklyn College
127. Juline Koken, Professor of Health Sciences, LaGuardia Community College
128. Karen Miller, Professor of History, LaGuardia Community College & Graduate Center
129. Karen Steele, Retired Administrator, Queensborough Community College
130. Karl Steel, Professor, Brooklyn College
131. Katie Gentile, Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies, John Jay College and Graduate Center Keith Rosenthal, History PhD Student, CUNY Graduate Center
132. Kirsten Máiread Gill, PhD Candidate, CUNY Graduate Center
133. Kristofer Petersen-Overton, Alumni, CUNY Graduate Center
134. Kristina Baines, Associate Professor, Guttman Community College
135. Lark Omura, Adjunct Professor, CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies
136. Laura Tanenbaum, Professor of English, LaGuardia Community College
137. Leila Walker, Librarian, Queens College
138. Leslie McCall, Presidential Professor of Sociology and Political Science, CUNY Graduate Center
139. Lindsay Parme, Adjunct Lecturer of Anthropology, Brooklyn College



140. Lynn Horridge, CUNY GC alum; Adjunct Professor of Psychology, Brooklyn College (recent, not current)
141. Maddy Fox, Associate Professor, Sociology, Brooklyn College
142. Majella Sheehan, Assistant Program Officer, CUNY Graduate Center
143. Maram Hallak, Associate Professor of Psychology, BMCC/CUNY
144. Marc Kagan, Non-Teaching Adjunct, School of Labor and Urban Studies
145. Marc Lamont Hill, Presidential Professor of Urban Education, CUNY Graduate Center
146. Marcia Newfield, Adjunct lecturer, BMCC ret.PSC Adjunct Advocate
147. María Elena Torre, CUNY Graduate Center
148. Mariel Acosta, CUNY Graduate Center
149. Marva Lilly, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Retired
150. Mary Taylor, CUNY Graduate Center
151. Matt Brim, Professor of Queer Studies, College of Staten Island & CUNY Graduate Center
152. Matthew Lau, Associate Professor, Queensborough Community College
153. Matthew Martin, Writing Tutor, Guttman Community College
154. Maura McCreight, Adjunct Lecturer, Brooklyn College
155. Maya Latif, Student, CUNY Graduate Center
156. Melissa Castillo Planas, Associate Professor of English, CUNY Graduate Center & Lehman College
157. Michelle Fine, Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Urban Education, CUNY Graduate Center
158. Michelle King, Adjunct English Lecturer, Brooklyn College
159. Miriam Ticktin, Professor of Anthropology, CUNY Graduate Center
160. Mobina Hashmi, Assistant Professor of Television, Radio, and Emerging Media, Brooklyn College
161. Mohamed Alshami, Campus Peace Officer, Department of Public Safety, Hunter College
162. Muaad Alody, Assistant Director, Master's in Translational Medicine (MTM), City College
163. Mudassar Toppa, Staff Attorney, CLEAR Project, CUNY School of Law
164. Muhammad Ali Khalidi, Presidential Professor of Philosophy, CUNY Graduate Center
165. Nantina Vgontzas, Assistant Professor of Labor Studies, CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies
166. Naomi Braine, Professor of Sociology, Brooklyn College
167. Naomi Schiller, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center
168. Natalie Nagpal, CUNY Graduate Center
169. Nathan Nikolic, Adjunct Lecturer, Baruch College
170. Naz Ahmad, Adjunct, CUNY School of Law
171. Neelima Anwara, IT Assistant, CUNY School of Professional Studies
172. Nermeen Arastu, Associate Professor of Law, CUNY School of Law
173. Nic Nicoludis, Graduate Assistant and Adjunct, CUNY Graduate Center
174. Nicolás Montano, Adjunct, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
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179. Rebecca L. Salois, Lecturer, Black and Latino Studies, Baruch College
180. Rebecca Smart, Adjunct Lecturer, Borough of Manhattan Community College
181. Rebecca Teich, Graduate Student, CUNY Graduate Center
182. Reed Rushes, Alumni, Hunter College
183. Reiko Tahara, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Hunter College
184. Renate Bridenthal, Professor (retired), Brooklyn College
185. Renee Bell, Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Lehman College
186. Rhea Rahman, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Brooklyn College
187. Rosa Martinez, Writing Tutor, Guttman Community College
188. Rosalind P. Petchesky, Distinguished Professor Emerita, Graduate Center/Hunter College
189. Rose M. Kim, Associate Professor of Social Sciences, BMCC/CUNY
190. Roxanne Shirazi, Assistant Professor and Librarian, CUNY Graduate Center
191. Rupal Oza, Professor, WGS, Hunter College
192. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Professor, EES, CUNY Graduate Center
193. Ryan Laychak, Graduate Student, Hunter College
194. Ryan Skrabalak, Alum, Brooklyn College
195. S. Harris, Adjunct Professor, Queens College
196. S.E. Hackney, Queens College
197. Saada Muntasser, Educator, The City College of New York
198. Sabrina Kissack, Queens College
199. Salman Hayat, Student, CUNY Graduate Center
200. Sam Al Khatib, Associate Professor, CUNY Graduate Center
201. Sarah Wolf, Lecturer, Brooklyn College
202. Seo-Young Chu, Associate Professor, Queens College
203. Shaimaa Elsafoury, CUNY SPH alumna former research assistant at CUNY SPH, CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy
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207. Shirley Lung, Professor, CUNY School of Law
208. Silvia Alvarez-Olarra, Associate Professor of Spanish, Borough of Manhattan Community College
209. Siraj Ahmed, Professor of English, Lehman College & CUNY Graduate Center
210. Sofya Aptekar, Associate Professor of Urban Studies, CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies
211. Soniya Munshi, Associate Professor of Urban Studies, Queens College and Critical Social Psychology, CUNY Graduate Center
212. Stephanie Boyle Associate Professor of History, New York City College of Technology
213. Stephen Blum, Professor of Music Emeritus, CUNY Graduate Center
214. Stephen C. Hosmer, Adjunct Lecturer in English Language Center (now retired), LaGuardia Community College
215. Steven Swarbrick, Assistant Professor, Baruch College

216. Stuart Chen-Hayes, Professor, School and Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Lehman College
217. Stuart Davis, Assistant Professor, Baruch College
218. Sumeja Tulic, Graduate Assistant, CUNY Graduate Center
219. Surya Teja Gavva, Doctoral Lecturer, Queens College
220. Susan Buck-Morris, Distinguished Professor of Political Science, CUNY Graduate Center
221. Susannah Pittman, The City College of New York
222. TJ Islam, PhD Student, CUNY Graduate Center
223. Tanya Agathocleous, Professor of English, Hunter College
224. Tarek Z. Ismail, Associate Professor of Law, CUNY School of Law
225. Tatiana Cozzarelli, Adjunct, Brooklyn College
226. Terri Ginsberg, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Arabic Program, Hunter College
227. Tiffany Wheatland-Disu, Adjunct Lecturer, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
228. Tim Cusack, Adjunct Lecturer in Theatre, Hunter College
229. Travis R. Sweatte, Adjunct Professor, Medgar Evers College
230. Tyler Morse, Alumni, CUNY Graduate Center
231. Utkarsh Rajawat, Adjunct Lecturer, Brooklyn College
232. V Gaddy, Hunter College
233. Valerie Tevere, Professor, Department of Media Culture, College of Staten Island
234. Varnica Arora, PhD student, CUNY Graduate Center
235. Yana Kuchirko, Assistant Professor of Psychology, Brooklyn & Graduate Center CUNY
236. Yve Laris Cohen, Assistant Professor, Hunter College
237. Zhun Xu, Associate Professor of Economics, John Jay college and Graduate Center
238. Zoe Griffith, Assistant Professor of History, Baruch College