

Universities Under Fire: Have They Addressed Antisemitism on Campus?

Barnard College has expelled two students following their disruptive protest during a “History of Modern Israel” class at Columbia University on earlier this week. The students, whose identities have not been publicly disclosed, entered the classroom wearing masks, distributed inflammatory flyers, and interrupted the lecture.

The protest was organized by Columbia University Apartheid Divest (CUAD), a student group advocating for pro-Palestinian causes. During the disruption, protesters handed out flyers depicting violent imagery, including a boot stomping on a Star of David and an Israeli flag set aflame with the caption “Crush Zionism.” The demonstrators also shouted slogans such as “Free Palestine,” causing significant disturbance to the class.

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In response to the incident, Barnard College conducted an investigation and subsequently expelled the two students involved. President Laura Rosenbury emphasized the college’s commitment to maintaining an environment conducive to learning, stating, “When rules are broken, when there is no remorse, no reflection and no willingness to change, we must act.” She further noted that, “As a matter of principle and policy, Barnard will always take decisive action to protect our community as a place where learning thrives, individuals feel safe, and higher education is celebrated.”

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The expulsions have been met with mixed reactions. CUAD condemned the disciplinary actions. The group has called for a week of activism to demand the reinstatement of the expelled students and has encouraged similar protests, stating, "We disrupted a Zionist class, and you should too."

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Conversely, members of the academic community have praised Barnard's decision. Brian Cohen, executive director of Columbia/Barnard Hillel, lauded the college for taking decisive action, asserting that "These former students disrupted a class, handed out anti-Semitic flyers, and harassed students who only wanted to learn. These individuals don't belong on campus – and now they won't be."

This event is part of a broader series of anti-Israel demonstrations at Columbia University, which have intensified since the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks by Hamas terrorists. The university has faced challenges in balancing the protection of free speech with the need to maintain order and ensure the safety and well-being of its community members. In response to the recent incident, Columbia's interim president, Katrina Armstrong, condemned the classroom disruption and pledged to investigate those responsible.

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