

Columbia University
Graduate School of Arts & Sciences
Human Rights Studies Master of Arts Program

The On-Campus Israel Lobby

How the Suppression of Palestinian Activism on US College
Campuses Is a Multi-Million Dollar Foreign-Funded Industry

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

October 2023

Abstract

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The social groups we form in university are incredibly influential to our world view. As a result, there is a billion-dollar industry that attempts to influence the ideas of these groups. The power of student groups is evident through the long history of suppression of their free speech rights. Historically, media outlets, universities, and the government have engaged in aggressive suppression campaigns of critical American student movements — from the Black Campus Movement in the 60s to the anti-Shah Iranian student movement in the 70s. The student Palestine solidarity movement is the current manifestation of this trend. Its centrality to the debate on Palestinian human rights in the US has been identified by many — from Palestinian human rights organizations to the Israeli prime minister. Nefariously, the current suppression movement of Palestinian activism on US college campuses is galvanized by millions of dollars from foreign actors. This study outlines how the Israeli government spends millions to infiltrate US university student life in order to spread political support for the State of Israel and suppress Palestinian activist voices.

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Acknowledgments

I am incredibly grateful to my thesis advisor, Prof. Mahmood Mamdani, for his thoughtful commentary and his commitment to helping me in the face of many obligations. I would also like to thank my principal investigator, Prof. Katherine Franke, who patiently supported me through the laborious review procedures for this study.

I would like to extend a warm thanks to those who advised me in the early stages of my research — especially the lawyers at Palestine Legal and the Center for Constitutional Rights who took the time to sit down with me and advise me on the best path for this study. I am also incredibly grateful to Prof. Joseph Massad and Prof. Rashid Khalidi, who both offered their insightful feedback at the beginning of my study. Much of what I learned in their classes has informed this research and changed my perspectives.

I would also like to thank my longtime mentor, Dr. Pouya Alimagham, without whom I would have never made it to Columbia or pursued this path.

Thank you to the members of MIT Coalition Against Apartheid for your perseverance and humor in the face of opposition and for being a center of support during the last few years. And thank you to the members of Columbia Students for Justice in Palestine for welcoming me during my short time at Columbia and for your bravery and resilience in face of harassment and threats.

I want to extend love and thanks to my family for supporting my unconventional journey to Columbia and for bearing with me as I find my path. Thank you especially to my mother for the many hours she spent helping me ideate. Finally, thank you to my best friend, Sami, for your encouragement, your insights, and your patience.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to all student activists fighting for justice in Palestine.
From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.

Isn't it just a club? The hidden economic forces behind clubs on US college campuses

Decades of psychology and behavioral science research underscore the overwhelming impact our social networks have on our ideologies.¹ In fact, behavioral science researchers — and every US election cycle — illustrate that most Americans' political opinions are based primarily on their social groups.² For the college-educated American, these social groups are solidified during university.

The university social group is particularly formative. For one, the social groups people form in college often last the rest of their lives — 87% of college-educated Americans keep in touch with their closest friend from university.³ Simultaneously, as we reach young adulthood, our capacity to be changed by social influence wanes.⁴ From around ages 18 to 29⁵, we begin to solidify our belief systems.⁶ Consequently, the social groups we join in university have a high potential of influencing the formation of our core beliefs. Whether through Greek life, team

¹ James H. Fowler and Nicholas A. Christakis, *Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 2009).

² Elizabeth Mitchell Elder and Neil A. O'Brian, "Social Groups as the Source of Political Belief Systems: Fresh Evidence on an Old Theory," *American Political Science Review* 116, no. 4 (November 2022): 1407–24, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055422000326>.

³ Elon University, "Relationships with Mentors, Friends Have Powerful Impact on College Experience," Elon University Poll Archive, August 22, 2018, <https://www.elon.edu/u/elon-poll/archive/2018-08-22/>.

⁴ Lucy Foulkes et al., "Age Differences in the Prosocial Influence Effect," *Developmental Science* 21, no. 6 (April 15, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1111/desc.12666>.

⁵ University of New Hampshire, "What Is Emerging Adulthood," Psychological & Counseling Services, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.unh.edu/pacs/emerging-adulthood>.

⁶ Turgut Keskintürk, "Religious Belief Alignment: The Structure of Cultural Beliefs from Adolescence to Emerging Adulthood," *Poetics*, 90 (February 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2021.101591>; Foulkes et al., "Age Differences in the Prosocial Influence Effect."

sports, the college newspaper, campus radio, or a political club, our university social groups are incredibly influential to our post-college worldview.

The “transformative” potential college has on our ideologies and life trajectories is not just a psychological theory. There is a billion-dollar industry dedicated to controlling *who* students become.

While many student groups are academic (e.g. the student newspaper), every student group is a social group by nature. Clubs, Greek life, and extracurricular activities are meant to give students an opportunity to socialize with their differently — or similarly — minded peers. Time spent in student groups is expected to be “free time” — free of faculty supervision and free of external influence; student clubs are expected to be driven exclusively by student interests. However, with the existence of many national student organizations that are backed by billions of dollars from enterprising funders, student groups are anything but free from external influence. Whether benign or malicious, these funders control, in part, the ideas promoted by and the events hosted by student organizations. They influence whom young students socialize with and what they talk about — and consequently who they may become.

The most notorious example of this is the Greek life industry. There are more than 28 thousand fraternities and sororities in the United States. These groups employ over nine thousand people and have a combined six billion dollars in assets.⁷ Over nine million students participate in Greek life throughout the US and must adhere to their chapters’ academic, behavioral, and financial standards.⁸ These students’ undergraduate social experience is shaped

⁷ “Fraternities and Sororities,” Cause IQ, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.causeiq.com/directory/fraternities-and-sororities-list/>.

⁸ Nicole Glass, “Examining the Benefits of Greek Life,” *USA Today*, May 8, 2012, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/college/2012/05/08/examining-the-benefits-of-greek-life/37392651/>.

by the Greek social events they attend and the associations they form with other members.

These connections can influence the careers they choose and their future social circles.⁹

The Greek life industry is not unique in its capacity for social engineering. Many other on-campus clubs are backed by millions of dollars in funding. In the past decade, many US college campuses have seen the emergence of “Effective Altruism” (EA) clubs, which are part of a larger national movement (funded by crypto billionaires) that believes we can mathematically optimize our approach to the world’s biggest problems.¹⁰ (From their calculations, some of our main priorities should be combating the existential risks of artificial intelligence and preserving animal welfare.¹¹) Collegiate EA clubs can apply for thousands of dollars in funds. Their website promises small, new clubs \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year and large, established clubs \$10,000 to \$100,000+ per year; they advise applicants “to err on the side of requesting more money if you can think of an impactful way to use it.”¹² The larger EA movement has over 26 billion dollars in backing.¹³ EA clubs meet to read books, work on collaborative projects, and host school-wide events spreading their theories — all approved and paid for by national EA charities.¹⁴ Many young EA club members graduate to work on the exact causes they learned about in undergrad (such as AI alignment, X-risk, etc.).

⁹ In fact, 85% of Fortune 500 executives took part in Greek life (Glass.

¹⁰ Dylan Matthews, “How Effective Altruism Went from a Niche Movement to a Billion-Dollar Force,” *Vox*, August 8, 2022, <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2022/8/8/23150496/effective-altruism-sam-bankman-fried-dustin-moskovitz-billionaire-philanthropy-cryptocurrency>.

¹¹ Joey Savoie, “Cause X Guide,” *EA Forum* (blog), September 1, 2019, <https://forum.effectivealtruism.org/posts/kFmFLcdSFKo2GFJkc/cause-x-guide>.

¹² Centre for Effective Altruism, “Funding for Groups,” EA Groups Resource Centre, July 14, 2023, <https://resources.eagroups.org/support-and-funding-for-groups/funding-for-groups#h.6jv0o4q1n15s>.

¹³ Matthews, “How Effective Altruism Went from a Niche Movement to a Billion-Dollar Force.”

¹⁴ Centre for Effective Altruism, “Funding for Groups.”

Even campus religious life is curated by larger national organizations. You may be familiar with Cru (formerly known as the Campus Crusade for Christ International) — a Christian organization which operates at over 6,000 universities worldwide. Cru hosts social events for young Christian students on college campuses including Bible reading groups and lectures.¹⁵ In 2022 alone, Cru fundraised 652 million dollars in the US.¹⁶ Much of its money comes from far-right Evangelical donors.¹⁷

Student groups have such a substantial economic footprint across universities that there is even a competitive market for companies who provide universities with web platforms to manage their student groups. One of the most successful of these companies — CampusGroups — makes five million dollars per year selling a product called *Engage* (which lets students join and receive updates about student groups) to major US universities (including top-tier schools like Yale, MIT, and Cornell).¹⁸

As billions of dollars are funneled into the amplification of certain student groups, millions are funneled into the suppression of others. Well-endowed conservative non-profits fund a number of news outlets that specifically report on faculty, students, and student groups that they claim spread “liberal bias and abuse.”¹⁹ One website, *The College Fix*, receives several hundred thousand dollars per year in backing from right-wing nonprofits.²⁰ Their editorial

¹⁵ Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc., “Welcome Students!,” Cru, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.cru.org/us/en/communities/campus/collegebound/studentwelcome.html>.

¹⁶ Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc., “Cru 2022 Annual Report,” December 9, 2022, <https://www.cru.org/content/dam/cru/about/CruAnnualReport2022-Stories-Financials-June14.pdf>.

¹⁷ Gianna Gronowski and Em Espey, “Uncovering Cru: Exploring the Heavy Toll the Campus Christian Ministry Group Takes on Its Members,” Uncovering Cru, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.uncovercru.com/>.

¹⁸ CampusGroups, “About Us,” CampusGroups, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.campusgroups.com/product/about-us/>.

¹⁹ Campus Reform, “About,” Campus Reform, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://campusreform.org/about>.

²⁰ Jane Lytvynenko, “The College Fix Was Founded To Fight Culture Wars On Campus, But Its Biggest Hit Is About The Coronavirus,” *Buzzfeed*, April 16, 2020, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/janelytvynenko/college-fix-coronavirus-herd-immunity>; Paul Fain and Rick Seltzer, “Family Ties,” *Inside Higher Ed*, February 6, 2017,

board is composed of Fox news alumni and previously included Rick DeVos (the son of Betsy DeVos, the former US Secretary of Education under Donald Trump).²¹ *College Fix* regularly reports on alleged misconduct of student clubs. They have attacked an “LGBT club” for hosting a drag show during a Catholic holiday²², accused an art club of “exclud[ing] white students”²³, and promoted petitions against a “pro-abortion club.”²⁴

Another site, called *Campus Reform*, is operated by the US-based conservative nonprofit the Leadership Institute²⁵ (which had a 2021 revenue of 30 million dollars²⁶). *Campus Reform* recruits and “trains conservative students to monitor, surveil and report on the speech and actions of left-leaning professors, students and campus activist groups for the organization’s daily blog.”²⁷ Both sites have been accused of spreading misinformation.²⁸

A survey in the American Association of University Professors’ *Academe* magazine found 40% of students and faculty who were targets of *Campus Reform* articles received “threats of

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/02/07/betsy-devoss-connection-college-fix-conservative-higher-education-news-site>.

²¹ “Who We Are,” The College Fix, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.thecollegefix.com/about/who-we-are/>; College Fix Staff, “Disclosure,” The College Fix, February 8, 2017, <https://www.thecollegefix.com/disclosure/>.

²² Matt Lamb, “Catholic University’s LGBT Club Hosts Drag Show as Lent Begins,” *The College Fix*, February 22, 2023, <https://www.thecollegefix.com/catholic-universitys-lgbt-club-hosts-drag-show-as-lent-begins/>.

²³ Matt Lamb, “UNC Art Club Excludes White Students,” *The College Fix*, January 11, 2023, <https://www.thecollegefix.com/unc-art-club-excludes-white-students/>.

²⁴ Maria Lencki, “Petition against Catholic University’s pro-Abortion Club Reaches 35,000 Signatures,” *The College Fix*, January 20, 2021, <https://www.thecollegefix.com/petition-against-catholic-universitys-pro-abortion-club-reaches-35000-signatures>.

²⁵ Eleanor J. Bader, “‘Campus Reform’ Is Funneling Koch Money to Groom Right-Wing ‘Journalists,’” *Truthout*, November 15, 2020, <https://truthout.org/articles/campus-reform-is-funneling-koch-money-to-groom-right-wing-journalists/>.

²⁶ Leadership Institute, “Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax” (United States. Internal Revenue Services., 2021), <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/510235174>.

²⁷ Bader, “‘Campus Reform’ Is Funneling Koch Money to Groom Right-Wing ‘Journalists.’”

²⁸ Bader; Alice Speri, “A Billionaire-Funded Website With Ties to the Far Right Is Trying to ‘Cancel’ University Professors,” *The Intercept*, April 10, 2021, <https://theintercept.com/2021/04/10/campus-reform-koch-young-americans-for-freedom-leadership-institute/>; Reshmi Dutt-Ballerstadt, “Striking a Nerve,” *Inside Higher Ed*, March 1, 2018, <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2018/03/02/what-do-when-you-are-academic-under-attack-right-wing-publications-opinion>.

harm” after publication.²⁹ In some cases, students and professors have had their personal information leaked online. *The Intercept* reports, “more than 12 percent [of targeted individuals] reported facing disciplinary action as a result of a *Campus Reform* story.”³⁰ Ironically, in their plights for “free speech” of conservative students, these websites frequently stifle the free speech of on-campus student groups.

These organizations represent only a selection of the larger cohort of well-funded companies that are explicitly devoted to influencing the social development and expression of college students throughout the United States. Collectively, they form a multi-billion-dollar industry that is trying to shape what students talk about, whom they talk to, and who they want to be. This is an industry which aims to influence free speech in the university. And its mere existence reinforces the transformative power of the university club.

²⁹ Speri, “A Billionaire-Funded Website With Ties to the Far Right Is Trying to ‘Cancel’ University Professors.”

³⁰ Speri.

**Which clubs should not be on your resume?
Free speech exceptions from the Black
Campus Movement to Students for Justice in
Palestine**

In 1991, UC Berkeley built a monument to commemorate the Free Speech Movement, a student movement which began in 1964 to protest the suppression of civil rights and anti-Vietnam war activism on college campuses. The monument is a six-foot-wide granite circle with a 60,000-foot-long imaginary “pole” extending from the circle’s center into the sky. An inscription around the “pole” reads, “This soil and the air space extending above it shall not be a part of any nation and shall not be subject to any entity’s jurisdiction.”³¹ Nearby, students can use their “Cal 1 Cards” to buy a coffee at the Free Speech Movement Café.³²

Berkeley’s tributes are in fact only one of many on-campus monuments commemorating student participation in the 60s movements. (San Jose State University’s “Victory Salute” commemorates the civil rights activism of its student athletes³³, and the University of Mississippi’s monument to James Meredith commemorates the school’s original desegregation.³⁴) In addition to being celebrated, student protest is advertised as protected speech. Most public and private US universities market themselves as free speech havens on

³¹ RoadsideAmerica.com Team, “Free Speech Monument, 60,000 Feet High,” *RoadsideAmerica.Com* (blog), accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.roadsideamerica.com/story/30278>.

³² “Free Speech Movement Café,” University of California Berkeley Library, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.lib.berkeley.edu/about/fsm-cafe>.

³³ “Victory Salute,” San Jose State University, accessed August 22, 2023, <https://www.sjsu.edu/ha-public-art-tour/public-art/black-power.php>.

³⁴ “University of Mississippi Lyceum Building and Civil Rights Monument,” Mississippi Hills: National Heritage Area, accessed August 22, 2023, <https://mississippihills.org/directory/university-of-mississippi-lyceum-building-and-civil-rights-monument/>.

their websites, in their fliers, and even in their founding constitutions — harking back to Enlightenment ideals of the *academe*. This isn't just a flashy advertisement but a legally-binding promise. Public universities — as an entity of state governments — are of course bound by the First Amendment: citizens have a right to free expression that is without interference from their government and its entities.³⁵ Additionally, both private and public universities are legally bound (to some extent) by their contractual promises of freedom of expression in university constitutions, hiring contracts, and even promotional materials.³⁶ Faculty and students can rely on these guarantees of free speech to try to legally enforce the understood contract between the university and themselves.

From these public commemorations and (seemingly enforceable) promises, it would appear the university has historically positioned itself as a defender of students' freedom of speech. But the history of the student movements these documents claim to protect is far less glamorous than their sparkling monuments.

The university's modern tributes to the 60s student movements gloss over the almost unanimous contemporaneous opposition to student radicalism. While we now tend to reflect on the successes of the Black Campus and Anti-Vietnam War movements, at the time, both liberal and conservative media outlets were united in their vehement criticism of student activism. In 1965 and 1966, students protesting the Vietnam War were referred to as “narcotics peddlers”³⁷,

³⁵ Donna R. Euben, “Academic Freedom of Professors and Institutions: The Current Legal Landscape” (American Association of University Professors, May 2002), <https://www.aaup.org/issues/academic-freedom/professors-and-institutions>.

³⁶ David Urban, “Free Speech Rights at Private Colleges and Universities,” *California Public Agency Labor & Employment Blog* (blog), August 14, 2018, <https://www.calpublicagencylaboremploymentblog.com/first-amendment/free-speech-rights-at-private-colleges-and-universities/>; “Private Universities,” Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, accessed August 22, 2023, <https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/private-universities>.

³⁷ “F.B.I. Official Links Crime and the Advocates of ‘Civil Disobedience,’” *The New York Times*, December 15, 1965, sec. Special, <https://www.nytimes.com/1965/12/15/archives/fbi-official-links-crime-and-the-advocates-of-civil->

“filth merchants”³⁸, and “a waste of intellectual resources”³⁹ in mainstream outlets such as *The New York Times*. Coverage of the Black Campus Movement was exceptionally condemnatory and racialized — *The New York Times* compared Black students’ protests to “Hitler’s Germany.”⁴⁰ The media coverage clearly reached its intended target. Altbach and Cohen write, “For a short period in the late 1960s, public opinion polls indicated that the most important concern of the American population was campus unrest.”⁴¹

In addition to the generalized negative media coverage, the student movements of the 60s were subject to widespread suppression from universities and the government. Tens of thousands of students were arrested across these movements.⁴² In 1968, state police murdered three Black students at a civil rights protest at South Carolina State College.⁴³ In 1970, the National Guard murdered four students at an anti-Vietnam War protest at Kent State

disobedience.html. (as cited in Caroline Therese Sarros, “History Through the Media Analysis of Media Bias and Public Opinion Toward Student Protest in the Vietnam Era: Opinion Toward Student Protest in the Vietnam Era,” *Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange, Chancellor’s Honors Program Projects*, n.d., 11, https://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1915&context=utk_chanhonoproj.)

³⁸ “F.B.I. Official Links Crime and the Advocates of ‘Civil Disobedience.’” (as cited in Sarros, “History Through the Media Analysis of Media Bias and Public Opinion Toward Student Protest in the Vietnam Era: Opinion Toward Student Protest in the Vietnam Era,” 11.)

³⁹ Douglas Robinson, “50,000 Expected to Parade Here Today to Back Vietnam Policy,” *The New York Times*, October 30, 1965. (as cited in Sarros, “History Through the Media Analysis of Media Bias and Public Opinion Toward Student Protest in the Vietnam Era: Opinion Toward Student Protest in the Vietnam Era,” 10.)

⁴⁰ Ibram X. Kendi, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 129.

⁴¹ Philip G. Altbach and Robert Cohen, “American Student Activism: The Post-Sixties Transformation,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 61, no. 1 (February 1990): 32.

⁴² David L. Anderson and John Ernst, eds., *The War That Never Ends: New Perspectives on the Vietnam War* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2014); Kendi, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972*; Karen Aichinger, “Berkeley Free Speech Movement,” in *The First Amendment Encyclopedia* (Middle Tennessee State University, n.d.), <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1042/berkeley-free-speech-movement>.

⁴³ Zinn Education Project, “Feb. 8, 1968: Orangeburg Massacre,” Zinn Education Project: Teaching People’s History, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/tdih/orangeburg-massacre/>.

University.⁴⁴ Eleven days later, the police murdered two Black students during a protest at Jackson State College.⁴⁵

These movements were a massive target of the mainstream media, the university, and even the US government. While students could easily join the College Democrats or Republicans club⁴⁶, participation in the Black Campus Movement or Anti-Vietnam War Movement could lead to serious disciplinary and legal consequences, and, in extreme cases, injury and death.

A key reason why these movements were seen as especially threatening to the university and the government was that they united typically politically-divided students over several causes. These disparate issue-based movements shared a criticism of US imperialism and racial violence. While often led by separate communities, these movements came together in critical moments, and the metaphorical martyrdom of one movement would often lead to a surge in support from the others. For example, Berkeley's Free Speech Movement in and of itself was a response to the suppression of student participation in the Black Campus and Anti-Vietnam War movements nationwide.⁴⁷ The joint movement was particularly powerful because it banded together multiple student coalitions in solidarity — including the Young Socialist Alliance, the W.E.B. DuBois Club, Students for Fair Housing, Students for a Democratic Society, and more.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Jerry M. Lewis and Thomas R. Hensley, "The May 4 Shootings at Kent State University: The Search for Historical Accuracy," *The Ohio Council for the Social Studies Review* 34, no. 1 (Summer 1998): 9–21.

⁴⁵ Samuel Momodu, "The Jackson State Killings, 1970," *BlackPast*, September 9, 2017, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/events-african-american-history/jackson-state-killings-1970/>.

⁴⁶ John A. Rava, "College Political Clubs: Activity, For a Change," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 18, 1956, <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1956/2/18/college-political-clubs-activity-for-a/>.

⁴⁷ Aichinger, "Berkeley Free Speech Movement."

⁴⁸ Bettina Aptheker, Robert Kaufman, and Michael Folsom, "FSM: The Free Speech Movement at Berkeley" (W.E.B. DuBois Clubs of America, February 1, 1965), 2, Online Archive of California, https://oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=kt709nb23t&brand=oac4&doc.view=entire_text.

Trans-organizational solidarity made these movements especially threatening to the university status quo.

Many feel that there hasn't been a truly radical student movement since the 60s, or at least nothing that faced the same intense antagonism.⁴⁹ In some sense, this is true. Several activities that had been banned for on-campus student groups became sanctioned after the end of the 60s student movements. For example, while student groups had the right to meet and advertise on campus in the 60s, many schools forbid them from advertising off-campus protests or from fundraising.⁵⁰ But in 1972, the Supreme Court case *Healy v. James* secured students the legal right to organize⁵¹; students were guaranteed the same free speech rights on- and off-campus.⁵²

But, as some forms of student activism became tolerated, the university learned new modes of suppression. Starting in the 70s, the university began to rely more and more on funding from outside companies and federal partnerships — which consequently put pressure on the university to tighten up its reputation for their funders' sake.⁵³ Political clubs could be a bad look for outside partners. David Schulz writes, “The defining characteristic of higher education in the last forty years [from 1975 to 2015] has been its corporatization, which has transformed the university from an educational community with shared governance into a top-

⁴⁹ Altbach and Cohen, “American Student Activism: The Post-Sixties Transformation.”

⁵⁰ Aptheker, Kaufman, and Folsom, “FSM: The Free Speech Movement at Berkeley,” 2.

⁵¹ Justin Camputaro, “Distancing Universities from Student Organizations: A Look at Public Institutions in Virginia,” *Association of College Unions International: The Bulletin* (blog), February 1, 2017, <https://www.acui.org/resources/bulletin/bulletin-detail/2017/03/07/distancing-universities-from-student-organizations-a-look-at-public-institutions-in-virginia>.

⁵² Joey Senat, “Healy v. James (1972),” in *The First Amendment Encyclopedia* (Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University), accessed August 22, 2023, <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/687/healy-v-james>.

⁵³ David Schulz, “The Rise and Coming Demise of the Corporate University,” *Academe, Journal of the American Association of University Professors*, October 2015, <https://www.aaup.org/article/rise-and-coming-demise-corporate-university>.

down bureaucracy that is increasingly managed and operated like a traditional profit-seeking corporation.”⁵⁴ The budding corporate university began to integrate student groups into the bureaucracy so they could be more easily managed and surveilled.

As the university assimilated many political student groups as part of its nascent corporatization, some types of activism remained an active threat to the university’s stability and reputation. While no movement has surpassed the cultural influence and sheer student turnout of the 60s, there have been student movements since then that media outlets, universities, and even the US government have united to suppress.

One such example is the Iranian student movement in the late 70s. As revolution was brewing in Iran, Iranian students studying in the United States began to organize in protest of the US’s support of Iran’s oppressive government. At the time, Iran was ruled by Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi (or, simply the “Shah,” as he was often referred). The Shah had been installed as an autocrat through a CIA and MI-6 backed coup in 1953.⁵⁵ Throughout his quarter-century-long reign, the Shah committed thousands of human rights abuses — torturing dissenters and attempting to transform Iran into a “Westernized” society.⁵⁶ The US remained a staunch supporter of Iran during the Shah’s rule.⁵⁷

During the 70s, Iranian students represented one of the largest foreign student populations in the US.⁵⁸ Many congregated in student organizations — especially the Iranian Students Association (ISA), which hosted rallies, protests, and educational events to spread

⁵⁴ Schulz.

⁵⁵ Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁵⁶ Abrahamian.

⁵⁷ Abrahamian.

⁵⁸ Andrea Nasrine Shahmohammadi, “Masked Resistance: The Iranian Student Movement in the United States, 1977–1979” (Baltimore County, University of Maryland, 2009), 2, <https://www.proquest.com/openview/b8a804f3bdeafa7a6f09f0ac3cc97d25/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750>.

awareness of the human rights abuses in Iran and the US's culpability.⁵⁹ The ISA was incredibly active. In 1978 alone, "the ISA sponsored approximately 700 demonstrations with over 240,000 participants."⁶⁰

The media was highly unsympathetic to the Iranian student activists. US coverage of the Shah already suffered from severe misinformation⁶¹, so the public lacked significant context to understand the student protestors' plight.⁶² The mainstream media "often portrayed Iranian students as fanatical and backwards,"⁶³ and, "[a]lthough violence erupted only a few times, Iranian student demonstrators were portrayed by the media as terrorists."⁶⁴ University leadership and, occasionally the newspaper editors themselves, were quoted in the news encouraging the deportation of Iranian protestors.⁶⁵ Figure 1 shows a political cartoon poking fun at the biased news coverage of and negative public sentiment towards the Iranian student movement, depicting student protestors with signs that say "Iranian Students for Violence in the US" and other derogatory slogans.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Shahmohammadi, 11–12.

⁶⁰ Shahmohammadi, 35.

⁶¹ Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*.

⁶² Shahmohammadi, "Masked Resistance: The Iranian Student Movement in the United States, 1977–1979," 7.

⁶³ Shahmohammadi, 7.

⁶⁴ Shahmohammadi, 130.

⁶⁵ Shahmohammadi, 96, 131–32.

⁶⁶ Shahmohammadi, 113.



Figure 1. A 1979 political cartoon of US media perceptions and public opinion of the Iranian student movement. Posters read, “Iranian Students for Violence in the U.S.” and “Let’s Get That 90-Year-Old Woman!” The cartoon was originally featured in a small left-wing American newsletter sympathetic to the Iranian student cause. (Source: March 1979 issue of *Socialist Monthly Changes*, featured as Figure 6 in Shahmohammadi, p. 113⁶⁷)

In addition to media bias, Iranian student protestors faced significant repression from their universities and the US government. Riot police frequently disrupted Iranian students’ demonstrations.⁶⁸ In 1977, Iranian students gathered to protest the Shah’s official visit to the United States. Riot police injured ninety-six protestors after the two days of activity.⁶⁹ In 1978, Iranian students rallied in front of the *LA Times* headquarters to protest its poor coverage of a fire in Iran that was deliberately set by the Shah’s secret police and that killed hundreds of Iranians. Riot police arrested 171 protestors and injured dozens.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Shahmohammadi, 113.

⁶⁸ Shahmohammadi, 88, 91.

⁶⁹ Shahmohammadi, 1.

⁷⁰ Shahmohammadi, 92.

On top of police brutality, the legal consequences students faced for their activism were often highly disproportionate. In one instance in 1978, eleven students were arrested for peacefully protesting the CIA's involvement in bringing the Shah to power at a University of Kentucky lecture featuring then-CIA chief Stanfield Turner.⁷¹ The students were each given the maximum sentence of three months in prison and had a combined 125-thousand-dollar bail.⁷² Their only charge was "disrupting a public meeting."⁷³

Simply attending an anti-Shah protest could immediately put students at risk of excessive punishment. By the end of 1977, the national Iranian Students Association recorded that 100 Iranian students had deportation charges placed against them for their involvement in the student movement.⁷⁴ This number would double by halfway through 1978.⁷⁵

In fact, it was commonplace for student protestors to wear paper bags over their faces while participating in protests because of a widespread fear that students' names would be sent back to SAVAK, the Shah's secret police⁷⁶ (see Figure 2 for an example at a 1977 protest on USC's campus). This fear was validated when it was later revealed by the Shah himself that SAVAK was, in fact, allowed to track and surveil student protestors on US college campuses, with the knowledge and approval of the US government.⁷⁷ In late 1979, *The Washington Post* reported, "At the peak of its influence, SAVAK had at least 13 full-time case officers running a network of informers and infiltrators covering 30,000 Iranian students on U.S. campuses. The

⁷¹ Shahmohammadi, 88–89.

⁷² Shahmohammadi, 88–89.

⁷³ Shahmohammadi, 88.

⁷⁴ Shahmohammadi, 36–37.

⁷⁵ Shahmohammadi, 37.

⁷⁶ Shahmohammadi, 26–27.

⁷⁷ Shahmohammadi, 25–26, 79; Gregory F. Rose, "The Shah's Secret Police Are Here," *New York Magazine*, September 18, 1978, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP81M00980R000600050015-5.pdf>.

head of U.S.-based SAVAK agents until last February [1978] was Mansour Rafizadeh...FBI, CIA and State Department officials were aware of Rafizadeh's true job.”⁷⁸ In addition, SAVAK actively paid and recruited university students to keep tabs on Iranian student protestors.⁷⁹ *The Washington Post* reported, “The going rate at one time was \$70 for a fast report on a student meeting,” equivalent to almost \$300 in 2023.⁸⁰ Even some professors were alleged to be collaborating with Iranian surveillance efforts of US-based activists.⁸¹

The information gathered was used to torture student protestors and their families back in Iran. Andrea Shahmohammadi explains, “Reports from fellow students, friends and family members at home all confirmed accusations that SAVAK tortured and intimidated anyone close to opposition forces abroad.”⁸² Witnesses reported seeing SAVAK’s secret collections of Iranian student profiles which “included strength and weakness assessments of student personalities and the names of students’ relatives in Iran.”⁸³

⁷⁸ “Foreign Spy Activity Found Rampant in U.S.,The Iranians,” *The Washington Post*, August 9, 1979, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/08/09/foreign-spy-activity-found-rampant-in-usthe-iranians/89e17708-7ee8-4580-bbb7-44f4354daafe/>.

⁷⁹ Rose, “The Shah’s Secret Police Are Here,” 4.

⁸⁰ “Foreign Spy Activity Found Rampant in U.S.,The Iranians.”

⁸¹ Rose, “The Shah’s Secret Police Are Here,” 4.

⁸² Shahmohammadi, “Masked Resistance: The Iranian Student Movement in the United States, 1977–1979,” 79.

⁸³ Eitan Meisels, “The Shah’s ‘Fatherly Eye’: Iranian Espionage in the United States and the Anti-SAVAK Campaign (1970-1979)” (Columbia University, 2020), 40, https://history.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2020/05/Meisels-Eitan_SNR-Thesis_web.pdf.



Figure 2. Iranian student protestors at USC in 1977, wearing paper bags as masks (Source: Photo by Mike Mullen in the Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection⁸⁴)

Participation in the Iranian student movement was comparatively low to the 60s movements, but efforts to suppress the Iranian student movement were still incredibly aggressive. Of course, the university and the US government didn't want the Iranian students' protests to blow up into something mainstream that would disrupt public opinion on foreign policy in Iran — like the anti-Vietnam War movement. But, the opposition's fears were not just localized to foreign policy in Iran. The Iranian student movement had deeper tentacles; it represented just one branch of anti-imperialist, left-wing student organizing in the US that aimed to disrupt the university and government's nefarious activities abroad.

⁸⁴ Mike Mullen, *Iranian Students Protest Pahlavi at USC*, July 5, 1977, Image, 18 x 25 cm, July 5, 1977, 00091830, Los Angeles Herald Examiner Photo Collection, <https://calisphere.org/item/a5dc4c1ca9b174c01ca0294a418c1808/>.

The US was quick to ramp up its meddling in foreign governments after the “success” of the Iranian coup in 1953 which brought the Shah to power.⁸⁵ Opposition to their meddling in Iran could easily extend to opposition to their meddling elsewhere. Iranian students at least saw it this way. Shahmohammadi explains, “Seeing themselves as part of a ‘global contestation,’ many Iranian students embraced socialist, communist and later more Islamic ideologies, finding solidarity with the worldwide movement against imperialism.”⁸⁶ Many of the Iranian protestors studied other Third World movements and their revolutionary theorists.⁸⁷ If the Iranian student movement was left unfettered, it could potentially grow into a larger movement that would put the university and the government’s precarious foreign policies in danger.

The traits that made the Iranian student movement so threatening to the US are not entirely unique. The Iranian student movement shared several key continuities with the movements of the 60s — continuities that similarly made the Iranian student movement a free speech exception in the 70s. First, it received generalized negative coverage from mainstream media outlets — both liberal and conservative. Second, it faced significant suppression by the university and the government. This went beyond minor disciplinary action; students were arrested, and they and their families faced violence for their participation. Finally, the Iranian student movement served as a nucleus of left-wing organizing on college campuses, and thus represented a larger threat to the status quo.

But, the Iranian student movement also had some key differences from the 60s. While the student movements of 60s were mainly domestic movements, the Iranian student movement

⁸⁵ John Foran, “Discursive Subversions: Time Magazine, the CIA Overthrow of Mussaddiq, and the Installation of the Shah,” in *Cold War Constructions (1945-1966)*, ed. Christian G. Appy, n.d., 157–58.

⁸⁶ Shahmohammadi, “Masked Resistance: The Iranian Student Movement in the United States, 1977–1979,” 12.

⁸⁷ Shahmohammadi, 30.

involved major participation from foreign students. In fact, the number of politically-active Iranian students in the US during the late 70s was “equal to the size of the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) [a main student club that participated in the Free Speech Movement] in its heyday between 1966 and 1967.”⁸⁸ The Black Student and Anti-Vietnam War movements were domestic movements with external implications; in contrast, the Iranian student mobilization was exceptional in its significant international student participation — which precipitated the direct involvement of the Iranian state on campuses.

After the fact, some media outlets strongly criticized the foreign intervention that occurred on campuses during the Iranian student movement. While criticism didn’t necessarily go fully mainstream, major outlets published exposés — like *The Washington Post*⁸⁹ and *The New York Times*⁹⁰ in 1979 — and a Senate report was released revealing the Iranian government had engaged in “rampant” espionage operations in the US.⁹¹ Nonetheless, the presence of the Iranian secret police on US college campuses would leave a legacy of fear for international students who wanted to participate in activism on college campuses in the future.

After the Iranian student movement, the dynamic between the university and student political clubs continued to evolve — with one major driver being the increasing corporatization of the university. Corporatization made the university increasingly reactive to external economic and political pressures.

⁸⁸ Shahmohammadi, 12.

⁸⁹ “Foreign Spy Activity Found Rampant in U.S.,The Iranians.”

⁹⁰ “Senate Panel Reports Major Spying By 5 Nations on Foreigners in U.S.,” *The New York Times*, August 9, 1979, <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/08/09/archives/senate-panel-reports-major-spying-by-5-nations-on-foreigners-in-us.html>.

⁹¹ “Foreign Spy Activity Found Rampant in U.S.,The Iranians.”

One effect of corporatization was the university’s response to growing diversity on college campuses. The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) explains,

As walls of discrimination designed to keep women and disfavored minorities out of many colleges fell, schools saw an unprecedented influx of students from different races and religions and of women and openly gay students. Unfortunately, college administrations—claiming to assist the peaceful coexistence of individuals in their more diverse communities—began looking for ways to prevent the friction that they feared would result from these changes.⁹²

Some of these restrictions came in the form of speech codes intended to bar “offensive” speech, which were ultimately weaponized to punish the on-campus political activities of minorities.⁹³

In the late 2000s and early 2010s, FIRE recorded two-thirds of the campuses they surveyed had speech codes that violated First Amendment protections or universities’ contractual promises free expression.⁹⁴

Corporatization also incentivized universities to legally decrease their responsibility for their student clubs. For example, *Gay Rights Coalition v. Georgetown University* (1987) established that, while a university “cannot deny recognition [to a club] when the organization meets all reasonable rules and regulations, the recognition does not mean that the institution endorses the organization.”⁹⁵ This decision resulted in many universities banning their student organizations from using the university’s name in the organization title⁹⁶ — and thus denying the club the legitimacy of association with the institution.

⁹² Harvey A. Silvergate, David French, and Greg Lukianoff, *FIRE’s Guide to Free Speech on Campus*, ed. Greg Lukianoff and William Creeley, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, 2012), <https://www.thefire.org/sites/default/files/2014/02/FIRE-Guide-to-Free-Speech-on-Campus-2nd-ed.pdf>.

⁹³ Silvergate, French, and Lukianoff.

⁹⁴ Silvergate, French, and Lukianoff.

⁹⁵ Camputaro, “Distancing Universities from Student Organizations: A Look at Public Institutions in Virginia.”

⁹⁶ Camputaro.

The corporate university also brought about more sophisticated surveillance mechanisms of student groups. Since the popularization of the internet, many campuses have integrated web platforms into their administrative functioning. Student groups have become increasingly surveilled through such platforms. CampusGroups — a company that sells software to universities to manage student clubs — was launched in 2005. As of 2023, it makes millions of dollars per year.⁹⁷ On CampusGroups’ university-wide web platforms, student groups are often required to list their members and leadership; while before, student group membership was likely only visible to a few administrators, CampusGroups allows faculty and students across the entire institution to view who participates in every on-campus student club.

On the other end, students’ ability to participate in activism has dampened; as university tuition skyrockets and minimum wage increases at a crawling pace, most students don’t have the financial bandwidth to participate in political clubs.⁹⁸ With all these obstacles, we could expect that student participation in radical movements has faded away.

Nowadays, student activism feels mainstream. Students are excused from classes to attend marches protesting climate change⁹⁹ and advocating gun control.¹⁰⁰ Many students feel comfortable (or even competitive) recording their participation as activists on their resumes for job applications to Fortune 500 companies. Additionally, activism doesn’t really feel like it originates at university anymore (consider recent major movements like Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and #MeToo which all began outside the university). From reading

⁹⁷ CampusGroups, “About Us.”

⁹⁸ Altbach and Cohen, “American Student Activism: The Post-Sixties Transformation.”

⁹⁹ Amnesty International, “Israel’s Apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime against Humanity” (London, UK: Amnesty International, February 1, 2022), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/>.

¹⁰⁰ Roxy Szal, “Across U.S., Students Walk Out of Class to Demand Gun Control Legislation,” *Ms.*, April 4, 2023, <https://msmagazine.com/2023/04/04/student-walkout-gun-control-school-shooting/>.

mainstream news, we might feel that for the most part political speech on college campuses is condoned, if not celebrated. The dominant conversation on “violations” of free speech at the university usually comes from the far-right: think, Milo Yiannopoulos complaining he was “canceled” by Berkeley students.¹⁰¹ Most activism that has made it to these mainstream channels in fact is mainstream; it has been co-opted and sanitized by the university.

Nonetheless, we still see a lot of media coverage of on-campus activism. Typically these stories fall into two generic categories. On one hand, we see a lot of favorable coverage, especially by liberal media, of large-scale protests with student involvement. On the other hand, we also see unfavorable coverage of student activism. Reports of young people throwing tomato soup on Van Goghs characterize student activists as attention-seekers looking for a hill to die on.¹⁰² Headlines are either congratulatory or dismissive, but neither paint the student activist as a real threat.

But, occasionally, through the media noise, headlines with much more aggressive accusations appear. In late 2022, the media was abuzz with articles about Berkeley student groups creating “Jewish-free zones.”¹⁰³ These articles were specifically attacking an organization called UC Berkeley’s Law Students for Justice in Palestine, which added a bylaw to its club constitution that prevented speakers with Zionist ideologies from being invited to their club

¹⁰¹ Public Affairs, “Milo Yiannopoulos Event Canceled after Violence Erupts,” *Berkeley News*, February 1, 2017, <https://news.berkeley.edu/2017/02/01/yiannopoulos-event-canceled>.

¹⁰² Robinson Meyer, “The Climate Art Vandals Are Embarrassing,” *The Atlantic*, October 27, 2022, <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2022/10/vermeer-glue-soup-climate-protest-outrage/671904/>.

¹⁰³ Natalie O’Neill, “UC Berkeley Blasted for Creating ‘Jewish-Free Zones’ with pro-Israel Speaker Ban,” *New York Post*, September 30, 2022, <https://nypost.com/2022/09/30/uc-berkeley-blasted-for-creating-jewish-free-zones-with-pro-israel-speaker-ban/>; Laura Rosen Cohen, “UC Berkeley Law School’s ‘Jew Free Zones,’” *Newsweek*, October 2, 2022, <https://www.newsweek.com/uc-berkeley-law-schools-jew-free-zones-latest-progressive-trend-opinion-1748218>.

events.¹⁰⁴ This is a large departure from calling climate activists “embarrassing”¹⁰⁵ or gun control activists “brave.”¹⁰⁶

While there has been a student movement for Palestinian liberation in the US since the 1950s, the current on-campus Palestine solidarity organizations have mostly formed since the 1990s.¹⁰⁷ The first of these formed at UC Berkeley in 1993, under the name Students for Justice in Palestine (or SJP for short). Currently, there are over 200 campus-based Palestine solidarity organizations in the US and Canada.¹⁰⁸ Many share the original group’s name.

The student Palestine solidarity movement is a grassroots movement, so every campus club has its own mission statement. But in general, the student organizations advocate against the Israeli occupation of Palestine and oppose the US’s support for the occupation. The campus Palestine solidarity movement has grown significantly in the past two decades.¹⁰⁹

The mainstream media has never been complimentary of the student Palestine solidarity organizations. Again and again, media outlets bolster claims from Zionist organizations and the far-right that equate opposition to the Israeli occupation of Palestine (i.e. anti-Zionism) to antisemitism. Op-eds frequently feature authors who are hostile to the Palestinian student movement. For example, in 2018, the *Los Angeles Times* invited UCLA’s chancellor Gene

¹⁰⁴ Nora Barrows-Friedman, “Israel Lobby Fabricates Anti-Semitism Crisis at Berkeley,” *The Electronic Intifada*, October 16, 2022, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/israel-lobby-fabricates-anti-semitism-crisis-berkeley/36516>.

¹⁰⁵ Meyer, “The Climate Art Vandals Are Embarrassing.”

¹⁰⁶ “The New Generation on the Power of Collective Action, and What Must Be Done to Bring about Change,” *Dazed*, July 27, 2018, <https://www.dazeddigital.com/politics/article/40784/1/student-activism-gun-control-movement-ryan-mcginley>.

¹⁰⁷ “About Us,” National Students for Justice in Palestine, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.nationalsjp.org/about>.

¹⁰⁸ “About Us.”

¹⁰⁹ Palestine Legal and The Center for Constitutional Rights, “The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the US” (Palestine Legal, September 2015), 10, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/548748b1e4b083fc03ebf70e/t/560c2e0ae4b083d9c363801d/1443638794172/Palestine+Exception+Report+Final.pdf>.

Block to write an op-ed on the national Students for Justice in Palestine conference (which was being hosted at UCLA the following week). Block expressed concern that the event would promote “hostility against Jewish people,” and he warned of “the dangers of anti-Semitic forms of anti-Zionism.”¹¹⁰ In 2021, Stanford professor Russell Berman wrote an opinion piece in *The Wall Street Journal* lambasting the Palestinian student movement and its allies. He complained — through examples of Palestine solidarity organizations at Harvard, Berkeley, and Wellesley — that “‘progressive’ anti-Semitism is tolerated in higher ed.”¹¹¹

The weaponization of anti-Semitism has been a common strategy to de-legitimize the Palestinian liberation movement in Western media since the creation of Israel.¹¹² Criticism and boycott of the Israeli government is constantly conflated with the hatred of Jewish people. This conflation is particularly ironic given the main demographic of Americans that support and uphold the Israeli state are white Christian nationalists, and not American Jews.¹¹³ Pew Research found that “White evangelical Protestants ...are more likely than Jews to favor stronger U.S. support of Israel.”¹¹⁴ And, the largest pro-Israel organization in the US is actually Christian’s United for Israel — with 10 million members.¹¹⁵ But, more critically, as Palestine

¹¹⁰ Gene D. Block, “The Controversial Students for Justice in Palestine Conference Will Go on at UCLA. Here’s Why,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 12, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-block-ucla-students-for-justice-in-palestine-conference-20181112-story.html>.

¹¹¹ Russell Berman, “‘Progressive’ Anti-Semitism Is Tolerated in Higher Ed,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 26, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/stanford-apology-progressive-anti-semitism-israel-zionism-11666676021>.

¹¹² Asa Winstanley, *Weaponising Anti-Semitism: How the Israel Lobby Brought Down Jeremy Corbyn* (New York, NY: OR Books, 2023); Matthew Abraham, *Out of Bounds: Academic Freedom and the Question of Palestine* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014); Malaka Shwaikh and Rebecca Ruth Gould, “The Palestine Exception to Academic Freedom: Intertwined Stories from the Frontlines of UK-Based Palestine Activism,” *Biography* 42, no. 4 (2019): 752–73.

¹¹³ Joseph Massad, “Pro-Zionism and Antisemitism Are Inseparable, and Always Have Been,” *Middle East Eye*, May 15, 2019, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/pro-zionism-and-antisemitism-are-inseparable-and-always-have-been>.

¹¹⁴ Michael Lipka, “More White Evangelicals than American Jews Say God Gave Israel to the Jewish People,” *Pew Research Center*, October 3, 2013, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2013/10/03/more-white-evangelicals-than-american-jews-say-god-gave-israel-to-the-jewish-people/>.

¹¹⁵ “Christians United for Israel,” Christians United for Israel, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://cufi.org/>.

Legal reports, “such conflation silences meaningful conversation about Palestinian rights and distracts from genuine forms of hatred and antisemitism.”¹¹⁶ Palestine Legal was founded in 2012 to defend “college students, professors, grassroots activists, and affected communities who stand for justice in Palestine.”¹¹⁷ In just 2020, two-thirds of the cases Palestine Legal handled had to do with false accusations of antisemitism against “students and faculty who were...merely supporting Palestinian rights.”¹¹⁸

Furthermore, since 9/11, fueled by anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia, the “war on terror” has been used to justify threats and punishment against academics who speak out against the Israeli occupation of Palestine.¹¹⁹ Founder of Palestine Legal, Dima Khalidi, explains, “False accusations of connections with groups that are designated as ‘terrorist organizations’ by the U.S. government are also very pervasive, especially with students. There is a particularly pernicious effort to associate Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) chapters, of which there are dozens [as of 2015] in schools across the United States, with Hamas, in particular.”¹²⁰ In the midst of constant accusations of antisemitism and terrorism, the general American public lacks the context to understand what the SJPs are fighting for.

¹¹⁶ Palestine Legal and The Center for Constitutional Rights, “The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the US,” 5.

¹¹⁷ Palestine Legal and The Center for Constitutional Rights, 2.

¹¹⁸ Robin D. G. Kelley, “Resisting Israel’s Lobby on Campus and in the Community,” in *2021 Conference Magazine*, 2021, 55–57, <https://www.wrmea.org/2021-june-july/resisting-israels-lobby-on-campus-and-in-the-community.html>.

¹¹⁹ Beshara Doumani, *Academic Freedom after September 11* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 2006); Ellen Schrecker, *The Lost Soul of Higher Education: Corporatization, the Assault on Academic Freedom, and the End of the American University* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2010); R. Kenton Bird and Elizabeth Barker Brandt, “Academic Freedom And 9/11: How The War On Terrorism Threatens Free Speech On Campus,” *Communication Law and Policy* 7, no. 4 (2002): 431–59; Marcy J. Knopf-Newman, “Fair and Balanced?: On Academic Freedom in Post 9/11 America,” *Palestine - Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture* 12, no. 2–3 (December 2005): 101–8.

¹²⁰ Dima Khalidi, “Pressures on Universities to -Discipline And Punish Students and Faculty for Speech Activities,” <https://www.wrmea.org/the-israel-lobby-is-it-good-for-the-us-is-it-good-for-israel/pressures-on-universities-to-%C2%ADdiscipline-and-punish-students-and-faculty-for-speech-activities.html>.

There is also a legally-documented history of suppression of the Palestinian student movement by universities and the government. In 2015, Palestine Legal, along with the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), published a groundbreaking report titled “The Palestine Exception to Free Speech” that chronicled the hundreds of cases of suppression of Palestinian activism on college campuses that they had personally handled since their founding in 2012.¹²¹ Palestine Legal and CCR summarize the multitude of obstacles that Palestine solidarity organizers — especially student organizers — faced in their activism.

First, Palestine Legal and CCR explain how many Palestinian activist groups are barred from even forming. As recently as 2021, Fordham University banned the formation of a Students for Justice in Palestine club on their campus.¹²² The report explains the types of bureaucratic barriers Palestine solidarity organizations frequently face. Student organizers often have to jump through administrative hoops including “repeated administration requests to meet with student group leaders about their events...[and]...periodic reviews of their groups’ activities and plans.”¹²³ Many faced “lengthy review periods” for group applications, event approvals, and room reservations.¹²⁴ Some clubs were prevented from using the words “apartheid” or “Palestine” in their fliers and educational materials.¹²⁵ In all these cases, the hurdles Palestine solidarity organizations faced were disproportionate compared to any other political student group or cultural club on the same campuses.

¹²¹ Palestine Legal and The Center for Constitutional Rights, “The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the US.”

¹²² “Fordham Bans Students for Justice in Palestine,” *Palestine Legal*, June 10, 2021, <https://palestinelegal.org/case-studies/2017/3/9/fordham-bans-students-for-justice-in-palestine>.

¹²³ Palestine Legal and The Center for Constitutional Rights, “The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the US,” 24.

¹²⁴ Palestine Legal and The Center for Constitutional Rights, 24.

¹²⁵ Palestine Legal and The Center for Constitutional Rights, 24.

Even if Palestine solidarity organizations are able to overcome these bureaucratic barriers, they often face significant disciplinary repercussions for their participation. For example, at Loyola University Chicago in 2014, members of the Students for Justice in Palestine club “lined up at a Birthright Israel table to ask questions that highlighted the discriminatory nature of the program.”¹²⁶ The SJP student members were investigated by the university for their actions, and the SJP was suspended “for the remainder of the year for failing to register the ‘demonstration.’”¹²⁷ Ironically, the Birthright Israel table also hadn’t been properly registered — but its student leaders were only required to attend a training on school policy.¹²⁸ In 2019, students at Bard college organized a protest of a schoolwide event that featured panelists “with a history of making racist and dehumanizing statements about Palestinians.”¹²⁹ Despite Bard’s institutional policies protecting students’ free speech and right to protest, the students were accused by the Bard administration of violating institutional policies on discrimination. They faced a four-month-long investigation and were eventually cleared of the charges.¹³⁰

In some cases, student activists have faced interrogation and arrest (Figure 3 shows a 2002 protest at Berkeley which resulted in the arrest of dozens of Palestinian student activists). Palestine Legal and CCR summarize a few notable examples:

[I]n spring 2014, police questioned three Northeastern University students in their homes after an affiliated student group distributed flyers about Israel’s home demolition policies under dorm room doors. Three years earlier, prosecutors in Orange County, California initiated a rare criminal prosecution of students for peacefully protesting a speech by Israel’s ambassador to the United States and

¹²⁶ Palestine Legal and The Center for Constitutional Rights, 6.

¹²⁷ Palestine Legal and The Center for Constitutional Rights, 6.

¹²⁸ Palestine Legal and The Center for Constitutional Rights, 6.

¹²⁹ “Bard Students Exonerated After Protesting Anti-Palestinian Speaker,” *Palestine Legal*, September 22, 2021, <https://palestinelegal.org/case-studies/2021/9/22/bard-students-exonerated-after-protesting-anti-palestinian-speaker>.

¹³⁰ “Bard Students Exonerated After Protesting Anti-Palestinian Speaker.”

obtained guilty verdicts against ten University of California, Irvine and Riverside students on the charge of disrupting a public meeting.¹³¹

In 2022, George Washington SJP members were charged with misconduct for posterizing around campus using wheatpaste. Even though student organizers from Jewish Voice for Peace — a solidarity organization of anti-Zionist Jewish students — took public credit for the posters, George Washington only charged the SJP members. Other students — including members of the Sunrise Movement which protests climate change — “testified that when their club used wheatpaste to affix political posters on university property, the group was not charged, nor did it receive any punishment.”¹³² While the SJP members were eventually exonerated, these examples reveal some of the disproportionate suppression that Palestine solidarity organizations receive from their university administrations and outside legal entities.



Figure 3. Seventy-nine University of California Berkeley Students are arrested at a 2002 protest for Palestine (Source: Photos by Miller and Rahimian from *The Daily Californian*¹³³)

¹³¹ Palestine Legal and The Center for Constitutional Rights, “The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the US,” 7.

¹³² “Success! George Washington SJP Completely Exonerated After Controversial Hearing,” *Palestine Legal*, December 19, 2022, <https://palestinelegal.org/news/2022/12/19/gw-clears-sjp-of-all-charges>.

¹³³ Jonathan Terhorst, “Israeli, Palestinian Backers Clash During Campus Rally,” *The Daily Californian*, April 10, 2002, https://web.archive.org/web/20111222055843/http://archive.dailycal.org/article/8263/israeli_palestinian_backers_clash_during_campus_ra.

Like the 60s student movements and the 70s Iranian student movement, Palestine solidarity organizations are a nucleus of campus activism. Palestine Legal and CCR explain:

SJP groups have succeeded in building relationships with other social justice and human rights student groups, as their views often overlap with various realms of political activism, including immigrants' rights, feminism, LGBTQIA activism, racial justice and student of color organizing, socialism, and environmentalism. Many SJP chapters also regularly partner with other movements for change, including the Occupy and Black Lives Matter movements, to issue joint statements, organize events, and explore connections between their social justice advocacy efforts.¹³⁴

Overall, student Palestine solidarity organizations share the same features of past student movements that have disrupted the university status quo. Palestinian student activists seem to receive universal scorn in the media — whether in liberal or conservative outlets. Their clubs can't escape suppression from the university and even government entities. And finally, the Palestine solidarity movement represents a central meeting space for social justice organizing on US college campuses.

Student Palestine solidarity organizations fit into the chronology of suppressed American student movements — from the Black Campus movement to the anti-Vietnam war movement to the Iranian student movement. Palestine is today's free speech exception.

¹³⁴ Palestine Legal and The Center for Constitutional Rights, "The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the US," 10.

The On-Campus Israel Lobby

In May 1963, the Senate opened the first foreign relations committee hearing on Israeli foreign agents. The 1938 Foreign Agents Registration Act requires American individuals or organizations to declare if they are receiving funds from a foreign government or acting politically on behalf of a foreign government or organization.¹³⁵ The Department of Justice had brought allegations against several American Zionist organizations (with a specific focus on the American Zionist Council), accusing them of acting as foreign agents for the State of Israel.¹³⁶

Over eight years, the Senate investigation revealed that the American Zionist Council received over five million dollars (equivalent to around 50 million in 2023) through the Jewish Agency for Israel — an Israeli-headquartered nonprofit that credits itself with “founding and building the State of Israel.”¹³⁷ The Jewish Agency works to “ensure that every Jewish person feels an unbreakable bond to one another and to Israel no matter where they are in the world.”¹³⁸ The Jewish Agency receives funding from the Israeli government and registered corporations of the Israeli government.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ “Foreign Agents Registration Act,” US Department of Justice, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.justice.gov/nsd-fara>.

¹³⁶ Grant F. Smith, *America’s Defense Line: The Justice Department’s Battle to Register the Israel Lobby as Agents of a Foreign Government* (Washington, DC: Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy, 2008).

¹³⁷ “Who We Are: Meet the Jewish Agency for Israel,” Jewish Agency for Israel, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.jewishagency.org/who-we-are/>.

¹³⁸ “Jewish Agency for Israel,” GuideStar, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/23-7254561>.

¹³⁹ “The Jewish Agency for Israel: 2022 Financial Report” (Jewish Agency for Israel, August 9, 2023), <https://content.jewishagency.org/bp/#/folder/5693013/151476440>.

Armed with the funds from the Jewish Agency¹⁴⁰, the American Zionist Council undertook several secret lobbying and surveillance campaigns. They “cajole[d] and intimidate[d] news media, subvert[ed] open debate about Israel and undermine[d] reporting about key issues of the day.”¹⁴¹ In addition, they surveilled and intimidated American professors who held beliefs critical of Israel.¹⁴² All the while, “the budget for the AZC was...approved directly by the Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem.”¹⁴³ The money the American Zionist Council received from the Jewish Agency was conditioned on the AZC “creat[ing] favorable public opinion in this country [the USA] for Israeli government policies.”¹⁴⁴

As a result of these uncovered connections, the Department of Justice ordered the American Zionist Council to register as a foreign agent.¹⁴⁵ Critically, registered foreign agents cannot make contributions to US public officials.

However, this was far from the end for the burgeoning “Israel lobby.” For the next few years, the American Zionist Council fought the DOJ’s order, releasing only “a partial list of expenditures” and requesting a secret filing.¹⁴⁶ Without ever fully complying with the DOJ’s order, in the late 60s, the American Zionist Council “shut down and shift[ed] operations over [to]

¹⁴⁰ The American Zionist Council specifically received the funds from the American Section of Jewish Agency for Israel, which had been a registered foreign agent in the US since 1943 (“American Section - Jewish Agency for Israel, Inc. Deregisters as a Foreign Agent after the DOJ Orders It to File Secret 1953 Covenant Agreement with the Israeli Government,” in *The Israel Lobby Archive* (The Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy, n.d.), <https://www.israellobbys.org/ja/>).

¹⁴¹ “The AZC’s Internal ‘Information and Public Relations Department’ Reports,” in *The Israel Lobby Archive* (The Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy), accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.israellobbys.org/AZC/>.

¹⁴² “The AZC’s Internal ‘Information and Public Relations Department’ Reports.”

¹⁴³ Nancy Jo Nelson, “The Zionist Organizational Structure,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 85, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2536485>.

¹⁴⁴ “The AZC’s Internal ‘Information and Public Relations Department’ Reports.”

¹⁴⁵ “The AZC’s Internal ‘Information and Public Relations Department’ Reports.”

¹⁴⁶ “American Section - Jewish Agency for Israel, Inc. Deregisters as a Foreign Agent after the DOJ Orders It to File Secret 1953 Covenant Agreement with the Israeli Government.”

the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)” six weeks later.¹⁴⁷ Today, AIPAC is the US’s self-proclaimed “pro-Israel” lobby¹⁴⁸ and has never been registered as a foreign agent.¹⁴⁹

AIPAC claims it has never received foreign funding nor acted on behalf of the State of Israel, but since its formation in the 1960s there have been multiple “efforts to have it register under FARA [Foreign Agents Registration Act] as an agent of the state of Israel.”¹⁵⁰ In addition, throughout this period, AIPAC has been investigated twice for espionage and leaking classified documents to the State of Israel, and one of its employees has been convicted of espionage for passing secret US defense documents to Israeli government officials.¹⁵¹

A former AIPAC employee, M. J. Rosenberg, explains that AIPAC has never registered with the Foreign Agents Registration Act due to a “legal loophole by which AIPAC is defined not as a lobby for a foreign state but [as] Americans who support that state.”¹⁵² Rosenberg says this loophole has been acknowledged and intentionally exploited by AIPAC’s founder (who was also the founder of the American Zionist Council).¹⁵³ Despite AIPAC’s origins from the FARA-registered American Zionist Council, its history of espionage, and its obtuse financial records — AIPAC remains unregistered with FARA.

AIPAC and the American Zionist Council were not the only American organizations investigated for their loyalties to the Israeli government by the Department of Justice. Starting

¹⁴⁷ “American Section - Jewish Agency for Israel, Inc. Deregisters as a Foreign Agent after the DOJ Orders It to File Secret 1953 Covenant Agreement with the Israeli Government.”

¹⁴⁸ “The American Israel Public Affairs Committee,” The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, accessed August 22, 2023, <https://www.aipac.org/>.

¹⁴⁹ “The AZC’s Internal ‘Information and Public Relations Department’ Reports.”

¹⁵⁰ Allan C. Brownfeld, “AIPAC Election Role Raises Question of Foreign Agent Registration,” *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, December 2022, 14–16.

¹⁵¹ “The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC),” in *The Israel Lobby Archive* (The Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy), accessed August 27, 2023, <https://www.israellobby.org/aipac/>.

¹⁵² Brownfeld, “AIPAC Election Role Raises Question of Foreign Agent Registration.”

¹⁵³ Brownfeld.

in 1948, the Department of Justice and other federal entities attempted “to get the Zionist Organization of America to register as a foreign agent seven times.”¹⁵⁴ They accused the Zionist Organization of America of acting as an agent of the World Zionist Organization¹⁵⁵ — an Israeli-headquartered NGO founded by the father of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl. But after modifying its constitution, the Zionist Organization of America was able to escape registration.¹⁵⁶

In the early 1970s, the Department of Justice subpoenaed the American Section of the Jewish Agency for Israel to reveal information on its secret agreements with the Israeli government. The American Section of the Jewish Agency for Israel had been a registered foreign agent since 1943, as it was a branch of the larger Jewish Agency for Israel. But, the DOJ was specifically asking for more transparency on the Jewish Agency’s “Covenant” agreement with the Israeli government, which allowed the Jewish Agency to “review legislation before it went to the Knesset [the Israel Senate].”¹⁵⁷ After the forced filing, the American Section of the Jewish Agency voluntarily shut down, thus supposedly terminating the Covenant agreement. However, simultaneously, a new organization appeared in the same building, running the same operations, and with the same management and staff. Nancy Jo Nelson explains, “[T]he World Zionist Organization-American Section, Inc., ...registered a month earlier, on September 21, 1971, as the foreign agent of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization,

¹⁵⁴ Grant F. Smith, “How Big Is the Lobby and What Does It Do?,” <https://www.wrmea.org/the-israel-lobby-is-it-good-for-the-us-is-it-good-for-israel/how-big-is-the-lobby-and-what-does-it-do.html>.

¹⁵⁵ “ZOA Promised to Reconstitute to Avoid Regulation under the 1938 Foreign Agent Registration Act,” in *The Israel Lobby Archive* (The Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy), accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.israellobby.org/zoa/>.

¹⁵⁶ “ZOA Promised to Reconstitute to Avoid Regulation under the 1938 Foreign Agent Registration Act.”

¹⁵⁷ “The AZC’s Internal ‘Information and Public Relations Department’ Reports.”

Jerusalem, Israel.”¹⁵⁸ The executive directors of both organizations were the same, and they shared the same New York office space — but the new organization was given a clean slate.¹⁵⁹

In 1968, the American organization B’nai B’rith was brought to the Supreme Court under the charge that “the Zionists have used B’nai B’rith, a charitable, religious, tax-exempt American-membership organization, to pursue international political activities contrary to the B’nai B’rith constitution and in violation of federal foreign agent registration and tax laws.”¹⁶⁰ The court eventually ruled that the funds were indeed sent towards “projects of a political or quasi-political nature,” but the organization never registered.¹⁶¹

All of these jumbled legal proceedings and structural shifts reveal the underlying nature of the Israel lobby in the US. The numerous organizations whose names appeared in the original 1963 Senate hearings and subsequent cases — many of which still exist today — formed an impossible-to-trace circuit that occluded the significant financial involvement of the Israeli government in US nonprofits. Nancy Jo Nelson explains that these organizations “were united not only with regard to their aims and functions, i.e., to promote the interests of the State of Israel in the United States in any way possible, but were in fact linked financially in a network whereby funds originating in the United States would be circulated overseas and then return in part to the US to help finance the propaganda activities of the American Zionist establishment.”¹⁶²

This complicated web overlapped perfectly with opaque nonprofit financial disclosure laws. Many nonprofits take funds from foreign sources, but this doesn’t immediately require

¹⁵⁸ Nelson, “The Zionist Organizational Structure,” 90.

¹⁵⁹ Nelson, 90.

¹⁶⁰ Nelson, 89.

¹⁶¹ Nelson, 89.

¹⁶² Nelson, 84–85.

registration with the Foreign Agents Registration Act. In addition, the IRS’s mandatory financial disclosure form for nonprofits — the 990 — doesn’t require nonprofits to disclose the foreign entities that grant them funds.¹⁶³ Nonprofits are even exempted from disclosing information about the foreign organizations they grant money to.¹⁶⁴ In addition, unlike in the US, Israeli charities don’t even have to disclose any of their public financial data.¹⁶⁵ These obtuse laws, compounded with the complicated inter-relationships of American Zionist organizations, obfuscate the connection between American nonprofits and the State of Israel.

Many of the same American organizations that have encountered historical legal trouble with the DOJ are still driving today’s Israel lobby.¹⁶⁶ The American Sections of the Jewish Agency for Israel and World Zionist Organization still have actively-filed foreign agent registrations with the Department of Justice.¹⁶⁷ On their tax returns, they mark each other and their Israeli-headquartered analogues as affiliates.¹⁶⁸ But the lobby has grown far beyond these registered central funds.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶³ Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, “Instructions for Form 990 Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax,” December 7, 2022, <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i990.pdf>.

¹⁶⁴ “Grants to Foreign Organizations by Private Foundations,” Internal Revenue Service, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/grants-to-foreign-organizations-by-private-foundations>; “CharityWatch Calls for Charities to Disclose International Grantees,” *CharityWatch*, July 28, 2011, <https://www.charitywatch.org/charity-donating-articles/charitywatch-calls-for-charities-to-disclose-international-grantees>.

¹⁶⁵ “Giving in Israel,” Jewish Funders Network, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.jfunders.org/giving-israel>.

¹⁶⁶ Grant Smith, *Big Israel: How Israel’s Lobby Moves America* (Washington, DC: Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy, 2016); Smith, “How Big Is the Lobby and What Does It Do?”

¹⁶⁷ “FARA Browse Filings: 17 Active Registrants for ISRAEL as of 08/31/2023,” The US Department of Justice, August 31, 2023, https://efile.fara.gov/ords/fara/f?p=1381:11:19860197622992::NO::P11_CNTRY:IS.

¹⁶⁸ Jewish Agency - American Section, Inc., “Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax” (United States. Internal Revenue Services.), accessed August 31, 2023, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/131919802>; World Zionist Organization American Section, Inc., “Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax” (United States. Internal Revenue Services.), accessed August 31, 2023, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/132686230>.

¹⁶⁹ Smith, *Big Israel: How Israel’s Lobby Moves America*.

Grant Smith tracks “Israel affinity organizations,” which he defines as a group of 350 (as of 2015) US-based nonprofits that declare “unconditional support for Israel as a top priority.”¹⁷⁰ He reports, in 2015, that the total revenue of these organizations was a combined \$3.7 billion¹⁷¹ — which makes up more than 1% of the entire revenue of the US charitable sector as a whole that year. Smith reports that this revenue is rapidly growing as well, at about 5% per year. To put this in perspective, Smith explains, “At present, in aggregate, this sector of 350 organizations with Israel as a top priority are right behind the United Way, the largest tax-exempt organization, and right ahead of the Red Cross.”¹⁷²

Smith explains that the Israeli affinity sector has blossomed over a series of three waves — the first promoting Zionist immigration to Palestine, the second fundraising for the Israeli army and state building efforts, and the third focused on media watch and education. He points to a germinating fourth wave — which encompasses “campus monitoring” and “Israeli activity on campus.”¹⁷³

Smith is not the only one to suggest the campus is becoming the bedrock of the Israel lobby. Palestine Legal has identified universities as “ground zero in the clash between advocates for Palestinian human rights and the counter-campaign to silence criticism of Israel.”¹⁷⁴ In 2014, 89% of the activists they defended were students and scholars¹⁷⁵, which suggests the efforts of the Israel lobby are transitioning towards the college campus. *The Forward* — an American

¹⁷⁰ Smith, “How Big Is the Lobby and What Does It Do?”

¹⁷¹ Smith.

¹⁷² Smith.

¹⁷³ Smith.

¹⁷⁴ Palestine Legal and The Center for Constitutional Rights, “The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the US,” 16.

¹⁷⁵ Palestine Legal and The Center for Constitutional Rights, “The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the US.”

magazine covering Jewish life — has even mentioned a shift in which American Jewish organizations “have grown more comfortable with the notion of taking Israeli government funds”¹⁷⁶, quickly giving a nod to Hillel, a national organization of on-campus clubs for Jewish student life. In fact, even former Israeli prime minister Naftali Bennet announced, “The activities on campuses throughout the world are the real answer to the growing anti-Semitism and the delegitimization of Israel.”¹⁷⁷

In the past five years, investigative journalists have exposed several questionable partnerships between on-campus organizations and Israeli-government-affiliated organizations. But efforts to systematize these findings have been met with harsh backlash and censorship. In 2018, *Al Jazeera* planned to release a documentary series which supposedly revealed Israeli-government-funded organizations that were spying on and publicly slandering American citizens, especially student activists. Ali Abuminah reports, “Some of the activity revealed in the film could include US organizations acting as front operations for Israel without registering as agents of a foreign state as required by US law.”¹⁷⁸ This documentary series, however, was canceled after only two episodes under the suspicion that *Al Jazeera* faced pressure from the international Israel lobby.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Josh Nathan-Kazis, “Jewish Groups Reject Israel Funding For Fear Of Being Branded Foreign Agents,” *The Forward*, May 29, 2018, <https://forward.com/news/401876/israeli-ministrys-repeated-efforts-to-fund-american-jewish-groups-rejected/>.

¹⁷⁷ J. J. Goldberg, “Is Israel Trying To Turn American Jews Into Orthodox Right-Wingers?,” *The Forward*, August 19, 2016, <https://forward.com/opinion/348004/is-new-israeli-initiative-trying-to-turn-american-jews-into-orthodox-right/>.

¹⁷⁸ Ali Abunimah, “Israel Fears Exposure of Its Dirty Tactics against BDS,” *The Electronic Intifada*, June 26, 2018, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/israel-fears-exposure-its-dirty-tactics-against-bds>.

¹⁷⁹ Abunimah.

The following sections attempt to systematize the organizations that operate on US college campuses that are acting with significant direct financial support of the Israeli government or Israeli political organizations.

A variety of organizations make up the on-campus Israel lobby — from student clubs operating within the college campus to external organizations centering their activities on the college campus. These groups’ activities fall into several, often overlapping categories — including mobilizing support for Israel and monitoring and targeting critics of Israel as antisemitic. Some of these organizations simultaneously participate in activities — such as fostering on-campus Jewish student life — which exist in contradiction with their pro-Israel and anti-Palestinian projects.

Jewish student life organizations

The most popular on-campus Jewish student life organizations are a critical nexus of Israeli political activity on campus. Specifically, three organizations — Hillel, Chabad on Campus, and Olami — are the “largest providers of Jewish life on campus around the world”¹⁸⁰, reportedly “responsible [for] 80% of activities for Jewish students on campuses.”¹⁸¹

Hillel in and of itself is “the largest Jewish campus organization in the world.”¹⁸² There are 873 Hillel branches in the US alone — which constitutes around 86% of all Hillel branches worldwide. Forty-nine of the US News’ top fifty American universities have a Hillel on-campus

¹⁸⁰ “Our Pillars,” Mosaic United, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://mosaicunited.org/pillars/#campus>.

¹⁸¹ “Campus Pillar,” Mosaic United, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://mosaicunited.org/pillars/campus/>.

¹⁸² Kenneth L. Marcus, *Jewish Identity and Civil Rights in America* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 35.

(the only exception is Illinois's University of Notre Dame, which explicitly promotes a Catholic education and only allows student-run Jewish associations).¹⁸³

While Hillel is the most popular on-campus Jewish life organization, many campuses are home to Chabad on Campus or Olami groups, right-wing Jewish organizations which have Hasidic leadership (but serve a non-denominational Jewish population).¹⁸⁴ Chabad on Campus has over 260 locations on worldwide campuses¹⁸⁵, and Olami has over 320 on- and off-campus groups for students and young professionals.¹⁸⁶ Like Hillel, a majority of both their locations are in the US.¹⁸⁷

Each of these three organizations express an explicit commitment to the State of Israel. *The Jerusalem Post* — Israel's most-read English newspaper — explains Hillel “is intrinsically Zionist.”¹⁸⁸ Hillel's website states, “Israel is at the heart of Hillel's work. Our goal is to inspire every Jewish college student to develop a meaningful and enduring relationship to Israel and to Israelis.”¹⁸⁹ Hillel also lists a number of guidelines for how its members and invited guests can speak about the State of Israel. Hillel forbids students who “delegitimize, demonize, or apply a double standard to Israel” or “support boycott of, divestment from, or sanctions against the State of Israel,” among other limitations of speech.¹⁹⁰ Hillel's page of Israel guidelines begins

¹⁸³ This information was gathered from Hillel's public “Find a Hillel,” Hillel International, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.hillel.org/find-a-hillel/>. interface.

¹⁸⁴ Ben Sales, “6 Surprising Findings about Chabad on Campus,” *The Times of Israel*, September 20, 2016, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/6-surprising-findings-about-chabad-on-campus/>.

¹⁸⁵ “About,” Chabad on Campus, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://chabadoncampus.org/about/>.

¹⁸⁶ “Organizations Map,” Olami, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://web.archive.org/web/20230602124809/https://olami.org/organizations-map>.

¹⁸⁷ “Annual Report 2022-2023: Chabad on Campus International” (Chabad on Campus, 2022), <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/384940120/6/>; “Organizations Map.”

¹⁸⁸ Elliot Jager, “Protecting the Prime Target of Campus Anti-Zionist Campaigners,” *The Jerusalem Post*, March 25, 2017, <https://www.jpost.com/jerusalem-report/where-the-jews-are-482198>.

¹⁸⁹ “Hillel and Israel,” Hillel International, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.hillel.org/hillel-and-israel/>.

¹⁹⁰ “Israel Guidelines,” Hillel International, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.hillel.org/israel-guidelines/>.

with the statement: “Hillel is steadfastly committed to the support of Israel.”¹⁹¹ These policies in fact led a coalition of Jewish students — who refused to let their Jewish life and identity be conflated with support for a foreign government — to form an alternative on-campus Jewish life organization called Open Hillel, which allows open conversation about the Israeli State while still providing a safe space for Jewish student life.¹⁹²

Chabad on Campus is also regarded “as a safe haven” for “pro-Israel students.”¹⁹³ While Chabad on Campus does not explicitly pledge allegiance to Israel in its mission statement, Chabad has a well-known “political role in Israel, where many of its rabbis and leaders are prominent in far-right, pro-settlement and anti-compromise activism.”¹⁹⁴ Similarly, Olami is committed to support of the Israeli state. Olami offers activities that ensure “Israel will hold a special place in your heart and mind.”¹⁹⁵

Many Jewish students have complained that Hillel, Chabad on Campus, and Olami co-opt Jewish student life and have turned their opportunity for lifelong connection into a political project. While surveys of Jewish students have shown students’ interested in social and cultural topics far outranks their interests in politics (in fact, politics was ranked last on a list of twelve topics)¹⁹⁶, former Hillel students and leaders have complained that being “pro-Israel” is a requirement of Hillel membership.¹⁹⁷ Gordon Gladstone — a former director of UC Berkeley

¹⁹¹ “Israel Guidelines.”

¹⁹² Mimi Kirk, “Open Hillel: A New Campus Politics on Israel,” *Middle East Research and Information Project* 280 (Fall 2016), <https://merip.org/2016/10/open-hillel/>.

¹⁹³ Mark I. Rosen et al., “The Hertog Study: Chabad on Campus” (Hertog Foundation, 2016), 15, https://www.bjpa.org/content/upload/bjpa/c__c/Hertog%20Study%20-%20Chabad%20on%20Campus%20-%20Executive%20Summary.pdf.

¹⁹⁴ Goldberg, “Is Israel Trying To Turn American Jews Into Orthodox Right-Wingers?”

¹⁹⁵ “Olami Explore Israel,” Olami, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://olami.org/trips/olami-explore-israel/>.

¹⁹⁶ Eitan Hersh, “Jewish College Students in America” (The Jim Joseph Foundation, August 2022), 39, https://www.eitanhersh.com/uploads/7/9/7/5/7975685/hersh_report_11.1.22.pdf.

¹⁹⁷ Batya Ungar-Sargon, “How the Israel Lobby Captured Hillel,” *Foreign Policy*, November 23, 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/23/how-the-israel-lobby-captured-hillel-international-college-campus/>.

Hillel explains, “My experience is, the vast majority of students who walk through the doors of Hillel are not there because they are interested in Israel as a political issue...They’re looking for community. They didn’t sign up to fight the BDS war,” that is, to fight against Palestinians and anti-Zionists who advocate for the boycott of, divestment from, and sanctions of Israel.¹⁹⁸ Gladstone explains, however, that “there’s clearly a class of donors who very much think that should be the role and that should be the business...you realize the degree to which these donors have influence on the policy and behavior of the organization.”¹⁹⁹

The formation of Open Hillel is also a testament to this dynamic. An Open Hillel at Guilford University released a public statement explaining why it chose to break with the larger Hillel organization: “On our campus, it is an imperative that Hillel be a place that is for all Jewish students, irrespective of their political ideology. As an open Hillel, we believe that Jewish students should be supported in expressing their Jewish identity and values in the way that is most meaningful to them. ... To be an open Hillel is to welcome all perspectives on Israel-Palestine.”²⁰⁰ Only four Hillels, however, have ever succeeded in declaring themselves “open”²⁰¹, and, two of them have since re-affiliated with the larger Hillel organization.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Ungar-Sargon.

¹⁹⁹ Ungar-Sargon.

²⁰⁰ Jewish Telegraphic Agency, “Guilford College Hillel Declares Itself ‘Open,’” *The Forward*, April 2, 2015, <https://forward.com/news/breaking-news/217916/guilford-college-hillel-declares-itself-open/>.

²⁰¹ Helen Chernikoff, “Despite Withdrawal of Hillel Support, Jewish Students Hold Nakba Commemoration Event,” *The Forward*, May 11, 2016, <https://forward.com/news/340488/jewish-students-hold-nakba-commemoration-event-despite-hillel-organization/>.

²⁰² Nicole Zelniker, “How Guilford Hillel Became Guilford Chavurah,” *New Voices*, May 5, 2015, <https://newvoices.org/2015/05/05/how-guilford-hillel-became-guilford-chavurah/>; Jesse Bernstein, “Why Doesn’t Hillel List Swarthmore Or Wesleyan In Its College Guide?,” *The Forward*, August 11, 2017, <https://forward.com/news/379377/why-doesnt-hillel-list-swarthmore-or-wesleyan-in-its-college-guide/>; “Religious and Spiritual Life and Contemplative Practices,” Vassar College, n.d., <https://offices.vassar.edu/religious-and-spiritual-life/>; Ben Sales, “Eric Fingerhut Served in Congress. He Says Leading Hillel Was a Harder Job,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, June 17, 2019, <https://www.jta.org/2019/06/17/united-states/eric-fingerhut-served-in-congress-he-says-leading-hillel-was-a-harder-job>.

Hillel, Chabad, and Olami participate in multiple, contradictory projects: building Jewish spiritual life, building solidarity with Israel, and targeting critics of Israel. Their many partnership programs (which will be explored below) are focused on forging solidarities with Israel and building on-campus support for the Israeli state. Simultaneously, these organizations also engage in activities that target critics of Israel — such as Hillel’s strict pro-Israel speaker rules that precipitated the formation of Open Hillel. Yet these activities often come into conflict with their mission of promoting Jewish student life — isolating Jewish students who are not interested in politics or who have dissenting views about Israel.

But why have these large Jewish organizations made support of Israel one of their core tenants? These groups’ commitment to Israel is likely motivated by the tens of millions of dollars they receive annually from organizations directly connected to the Israeli government.

Beginning in 2016, Hillel, Chabad on Campus, and Olami partnered with an organization called Mosaic United. Mosaic United provided the groups with a combined 66 million dollars in funding over two years, from 2016 to 2018.²⁰³ Each organization received an equal sum of 22 million dollars in funding over that period. It’s unclear if or how this money is reported on each organizations’ tax returns and how it is funneled between different campus branches. But, to put the funds into perspective, in 2016, Hillel had a total revenue of 35 million dollars. This suggests that Mosaic’s contribution to Hillel (\$22 million dollars, distributed over two years) provided a significant additional portion to their funds — equivalent to about a third of their total revenue of the entire year.²⁰⁴ In an even more extreme comparison, Chabad on Campus

²⁰³ Jewish Telegraphic Agency, “US Students Urge Hillel to Reject Funding from Israeli Minister,” *The Times of Israel*, November 4, 2016, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/open-hillel-urges-hillel-to-reject-funding-from-israeli-minister/>.

²⁰⁴ Hillel the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, “Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax” (United States. Internal Revenue Services., 2016), <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/521844823>.

only declared about four million dollars in revenue in 2016²⁰⁵, and Olami declared about eight million.²⁰⁶ Mosaic’s support of Chabad on Campus and Olami (which was equivalent to \$22 million dollars each) was three to five times their typical revenue.

Mosaic’s partnership with Hillel, Chabad, and Olami seems to have extended far past 2018. At the end 2021, Mosaic renewed their partnership with Hillel, Chabad, and Olami. Mosaic’s press release celebrated the renewal of this partnership “for the sixth consecutive year” (suggesting they had remained partners consistently from 2016 and donated the same \$22 million to each organization per year).²⁰⁷ Mosaic pledged 23 million more dollars in funding for its partners, and the partnership still seems alive and well as of 2023.²⁰⁸

Mosaic is not an independent actor. *The Jerusalem Post* explains, “The Israeli government and Mosaic United reached an agreement whereby Jewish philanthropists would contribute \$2 for every dollar donated by the Israeli government. To date [2021], Mosaic United has invested \$165 million in educational programs around the world, \$55 million of which has been contributed by the Israeli government.”²⁰⁹ This means Hillel, Chabad on Campus, and Olami received a third of their combined Mosaic funds from 2016 to 2018 (i.e. 22 million dollars) directly from the Israeli government.

²⁰⁵ Chabad on Campus International, Inc., “Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax” (United States. Internal Revenue Services., 2016), <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/200078855>.

²⁰⁶ Olami, “Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax” (United States. Internal Revenue Services., 2016), <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/813451968>.

²⁰⁷ Mosaic United, “Infusion of \$23M for Jewish Identity Programs across 400 College Campuses Worldwide,” *Mosaic United Blog* (blog), October 4, 2021, <https://mosaicunited.org/infusion-of-23m-for-jewish-identity-programs-across-400-college-campuses-worldwide/>.

²⁰⁸ Mosaic United.

²⁰⁹ Alan Rosenbaum, “Mosaic United, the Most Significant Jewish Org You Don’t Know,” *The Jerusalem Post*, November 25, 2021, <https://www.jpost.com/judaism/mosaic-united-the-most-significant-jewish-org-you-dont-know-686992>.

The Mosaic United mission page says the goals of its program include “strengthen[ing] the connection of young Jews to their Jewish identity and Israel”²¹⁰ and “forg[ing] stronger bonds with Israel.”²¹¹ On Israel’s official government website, there is a page which explains the intentions of the Israeli government’s partnership with Mosaic. The government explains that through the Mosaic program, students at Hillel, Chabad, and Olami can discuss “avenues of action for the State of Israel” in campus meetings.²¹² Former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett is credited with founding the Mosaic United program, when he served as the Israeli minister of Diaspora Affairs.²¹³ Chairman of the Mosaic United steering committee, Gary Torgow, was quoted explaining that Mosaic’s financial contributions would cause Hillel, Chabad, and Olami to “be encouraged to add greater Jewish and Israel-related content to the programming that they were involved in.”²¹⁴ He explained, “More Jews will feel connected to Israel, will love Israel, and will identify with it” as a result of the partnership.²¹⁵

Mosaic has used its funds to expand its campus presence in the US. In the first two years of the program, funds from the Mosaic partnership were used to build sixteen new Chabad and Olami centers on US college campuses.²¹⁶ As of 2020, the Israeli government reported that seventy new Mosaic Campus Pillar programs had been established on campuses where there was no such program before.²¹⁷ In 2017, Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* quoted a Hillel spokesman who

²¹⁰ “Mosaic United,” Mosaic United, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://mosaicunited.org/>.

²¹¹ “About Mosaic United,” Mosaic United, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://mosaicunited.org/about-us/>.

²¹² “Mosaic Campus Pillar,” Government of Israel: The Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism, September 27, 2020, https://www.gov.il/en/Departments/General/mosaic_campuses.

²¹³ Rosenbaum, “Mosaic United, the Most Significant Jewish Org You Don’t Know.”

²¹⁴ Rosenbaum.

²¹⁵ Rosenbaum.

²¹⁶ Judy Maltz, “Controversial Israeli Program Helps Finance 13 New Orthodox Centers on U.S. Campuses,” *Haaretz*, July 20, 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/2017-07-20/ty-article/.premium/israeli-program-funds-13-new-orthodox-centers-on-u-s-campuses/0000017f-f570-ddde-abff-fd7545cd0000>.

²¹⁷ “Mosaic Campus Pillar.”

“said more than 100 campus centers it runs have participated this past year in programs partially sponsored by Mosaic United.”²¹⁸ According to the Mosaic website, the fund has been used to equip every participating campus with “a Senior Jewish Educator or a Senior Israel Educator” and “provide each student with experiences focused on Jewish and Israel-related topics.”²¹⁹ An Israeli government official reported that “20,000 students on 300 campuses around the world took part in programs promoted by Mosaic United during its first year of operation.” As of 2021, that number has jumped to 115,000 students.²²⁰

Mosaic’s financial support of America’s largest on-campus Jewish organizations is concerning. In the past seven years, significant portions of the funding for Hillel, Chabad on Campus, and Olami have come from the Israeli government through Mosaic — conditional on adding activities and programming that support the State of Israel. All of the intended targets of the funds are young students.

In addition to the substantial amount of core funding they receive from the Israeli government, Hillel, Chabad, and Olami offer programs in partnership with the Israeli government and Israeli government-funded organizations. While the exact financial nature of these partnerships is unclear, the partnerships imply several core relationships between Hillel, Chabad, and Olami and their partner organizations. For one, the partners agree on a mission and purpose for any funds that are spent such that there is a mutual endorsement of any of the programs the partners work on together. In addition, the partnerships involve some flow of money between the partnered organizations. For example, many campus branches of Hillel,

²¹⁸ Maltz, “Controversial Israeli Program Helps Finance 13 New Orthodox Centers on U.S. Campuses.”

²¹⁹ “Campus Pillar.”

²²⁰ Rosenbaum, “Mosaic United, the Most Significant Jewish Org You Don’t Know.”

Chabad, and Olami hire specific employees to help coordinate their partnership programs. They also all declare expenses for these various programs on their tax returns. But, they do not have to declare if or how these expenses are reimbursed as part of the partnership, or if they receive any other financial rewards for their organizational contributions.

Hillel has several “longtime” public partnerships with Israeli-government funded organizations, one of which is Masa Israel Journey.²²¹ Masa Israel Journey was co-founded by the Prime Minister’s Office of the Government of Israel and is co-chaired by the Government of Israel Cabinet Secretary.²²² It reportedly “receives half of its budget from the Israeli government and half from the Jewish Agency.”²²³ Recall, the Jewish Agency is an Israeli-headquartered nonprofit that credits itself with “founding and building the State of Israel.”²²⁴ The Jewish Agency’s constituents “provide[] 20 percent of the representatives on the [Israeli] Board of Governors and the Assembly.”²²⁵ In short, Masa Israel Journey not only receives funding directly from the Israeli government — every one of its funders is directly affiliated with the Israeli government. *Haaretz* reports Masa’s typical annual budget is \$58 million.²²⁶

The Masa Israel Journey program provides a fully-funded trip to Israel covering expenses from your visa to your flights to your accommodations.²²⁷ Through Masa, students can partake in over 200 different programs²²⁸ that range from volunteer opportunities to paid internships

²²¹ “Immersive Israel Experiences with Masa,” Hillel International, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.hillel.org/masa-israel/>.

²²² “FAQs,” Masa Israel Journey, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.masaisrael.org/about-us/faqs/>.

²²³ Judy Maltz, “Israel to Stop Subsidizing Yeshiva and Seminary Programs for Students From North America, Britain,” *Haaretz*, June 24, 2020, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2020-06-24/ty-article/.premium/israel-halts-subsidies-to-yeshiva-programs-for-students-from-n-america-and-u-k/0000017f-f4d0-d460-afff-fff6d8cd0000>.

²²⁴ “Who We Are: Meet the Jewish Agency for Israel.”

²²⁵ “Keren Hayesod - United Israel Appeal (1920 -),” Jewish Virtual Library, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/keren-hayesod>.

²²⁶ Maltz, “Israel to Stop Subsidizing Yeshiva and Seminary Programs for Students From North America, Britain.”

²²⁷ “FAQs.”

²²⁸ “Immersive Israel Experiences with Masa.”

with Israeli companies, Israeli nonprofits, and the Israeli government.²²⁹ Every student who participates in the program is required to attend training seminars while in Israel.²³⁰ But, once you are on the trip, you are under the wing of Masa Israel Journey — who will provide you with trainings as well as “educational trips and content” about Israel.²³¹ The scope of Masa’s educational and training content is limited by its political directives as an Israeli-government-funded entity.

Hillel also partners with Taglit-Birthright, which provides Jewish students aged 18 to 26 with free trips to Israel.²³² Taglit-Birthright receives 27% of its funding from the government of Israel and 6% from the government-affiliated Jewish Agency and Jewish Federations.²³³

Birthright Israel trips are known to be saturated with Israeli government propaganda. Leila Ettachfini reports, “Birthright is big on its ‘educational core,’ which involves visiting institutions and businesses devoted to Israeli statehood, arts, and more. ‘Every trip includes a multi-day Mifgash (encounter) with your Israeli peers’...These peers are almost always young IDF [Israeli Defense Forces] soldiers.”²³⁴ As part of its “packed 10-day itinerary”²³⁵, Birthright takes young Jewish students to land that is occupied by Israelis against international law

²²⁹ “Find Your Program in Israel,” Masa Israel Journey, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.masaisrael.org/our-programs/>.

²³⁰ “FAQs.”

²³¹ “How It Works,” Masa Israel Journey, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.masaisrael.org/about-us/how-it-works/>).

²³² “Taglit Birthright Israel,” Taglit Birthright Israel, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.birthrightisrael.com/>.

²³³ “Our Supporters,” Taglit Birthright Israel, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://birthrightisrael.foundation/our-supporters/>. The Jewish Federations of North America is another constituent of the Jewish Agency and has Jerusalem offices to “connects (sic) Israeli leaders and government officials with the North American community” (“In Israel and Around the World, Keeping Jewish Life Strong,” Jewish Federations of North America, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.jewishfederations.org/about-jfna/israel-overseas.>).

²³⁴ Leila Ettachfini, “What Is Birthright and Why Is It So Controversial?,” *VICE*, August 15, 2019, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/j5yqd8/what-is-birthright-israel-why-controversial>.

²³⁵ Ettachfini.

(including the Golan Heights in occupied Syria and illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank).²³⁶

Birthright’s educational materials contain misinformation and propaganda. Students have noticed “the programme’s map includes the occupied West Bank as part of Israel.”²³⁷ *972 Magazine* quotes a former Birthright tour guide who admits, “At the end of the day, we Israelis always have been less than truthful about where those lines and boundaries are for tourists.”²³⁸ *Jewish Currents* explains the effects of Birthright’s manipulative tactics: “Birthright has served as one of the most effective propaganda campaigns on behalf of the Israeli government and its occupation of the Palestinian territories...[visitors] hear a narrative largely in line with the perspective of the Israeli government, and are denied access to Palestinian perspectives.”²³⁹ In fact, since 2017, Birthright has banned visitors from even meeting with Palestinian citizens of Israel.²⁴⁰ Palestinian and anti-Zionist Jewish activists have long criticized Birthright’s obfuscation of Israeli human rights crimes. Aaron Freedman explains, “Birthright Israel pretends the occupation does not exist and manipulates Jewish heritage and identity into support for an apartheid state.”²⁴¹ Thirty-five of the US News’ top fifty universities (70%) have a Birthright program on campus, administered by the campus Hillel.²⁴²

²³⁶ Ahmed Al-Bazz and Edo Konrad, “How Israel’s Road Projects Are Ensuring Apartheid Is Here to Stay,” *972 Magazine*, December 31, 2020, <https://www.972mag.com/israel-settler-roads-apartheid/>; “Birthright Israel Sample Itinerary,” Taglit Birthright Israel, n.d., <https://birthrightisrael.foundation/itinerary/>.

²³⁷ “US Jew: Birthright Tours Erase Existence of Palestinians,” *Middle East Monitor*, June 30, 2023, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230630-us-jew-birthright-tours-erase-existence-of-palestinians/>.

²³⁸ Al-Bazz and Konrad, “How Israel’s Road Projects Are Ensuring Apartheid Is Here to Stay.”

²³⁹ “Roundtable: The Ethical Response to Birthright,” *Jewish Currents*, n.d., <https://jewishcurrents.org/roundtable-the-ethical-response-to-birthright>.

²⁴⁰ Jewish Telegraphic Agency, “Birthright Cuts out Encounters with Arab Israelis,” *The Times of Israel*, November 3, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/birthright-cuts-out-encounters-with-arab-israelis/>.

²⁴¹ Aaron Freedman, “American Jews, Don’t Go on Birthright,” *Jacobin*, August 27, 2019, <https://jacobin.com/2019/08/birthright-israel-palestine-not-just-a-free-trip-american-jews>.

²⁴² This information was gathered from Hillel’s public “Find a Hillel.” interface.

Finally, Hillel has partnered directly with the Israeli-government-affiliated Jewish Agency for Israel. Their partnership pays for “Israel Fellows” — whose role is “promoting Israel advocacy” — to come to US college campuses.²⁴³ The Israel Fellows are Israeli college graduates who are required to have served in the Israeli army.²⁴⁴ The Jewish Agency explains, “The Fellow’s job is to confront attitudes toward Israel, substituting education for ignorance, while giving students a chance to develop a personal relationship with Israelis and learn what Israel is really all about.”²⁴⁵ Thirty-one of *US News*’ top fifty colleges (62%) have an Israel Fellow stationed on campus.²⁴⁶

Hillel’s Israeli-government funded activities have considerable reach. “A 2016 survey found that 80 percent of Jewish students in the US and former Soviet Union participated in at least one Hillel activity a year.”²⁴⁷

Chabad on Campus and Olami — while less influential organizations serving a smaller population — engage in many of the same questionable partnerships as Hillel. Chabad offers many of the same opportunities — such as Birthright Israel trips — through the same partnerships with agencies like Taglit-Birthright and its departments.²⁴⁸

Olami offers over twenty different partially- or fully-subsidized trips to Israel that serve as follow-up trips to Birthright, and they are all purportedly “educational” in nature.²⁴⁹ Some of

²⁴³ “Campus Israel Fellows: Strengthening Jewish Students and Their Connection to Israel,” Jewish Agency for Israel, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.jewishagency.org/campus-israel-fellows/>.

²⁴⁴ “Campus Israel Fellows: Strengthening Jewish Students and Their Connection to Israel.”

²⁴⁵ “Campus Israel Fellows: Strengthening Jewish Students and Their Connection to Israel.”

²⁴⁶ This information was gathered from Hillel’s public “Find a Hillel.” interface.

²⁴⁷ Jager, “Protecting the Prime Target of Campus Anti-Zionist Campaigners.”

²⁴⁸ “IsraelLinks,” Chabad on Campus, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://chabadoncampus.org/israelinksmain/>;

“Programs: Birthright Israel,” Chabad House on Campus, accessed August 14, 2023, https://www.chabadpgh.org/templates/articlecco_cdo/aid/3768158/jewish/Birthright-Israel.htm.

²⁴⁹ “Welcome to Olami Inspire,” Olami, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://olami.org/inspire/>.

these trips are offered in partnership with Aish HaTorah — an Israeli-based nonprofit organization with a number of “right-wing pro-Israel projects” that has been closely affiliated with Olami for years.²⁵⁰ Aish HaTorah is headquartered in Jerusalem — on a “a coveted piece of land” that was a gift from the Israeli government.²⁵¹ *The Forward* reports, “Though the precise relationship between Olami and Aish is unclear, the executive director of Olami, Rabbi David Markowitz, previously served in several senior positions at Aish, including head of its New York office.”²⁵²

Israel advocacy organizations

Jewish student life organizations are far from the only campus-based institutions whose activities have received Israeli government support. Several national campus-based Israel advocacy organizations receive Israeli-government-affiliated funding. These include the Israel on Campus Coalition and the national Students Supporting Israel organization.

Israel on Campus Coalition (henceforth, ICC) was co-created by Hillel in 2002.²⁵³ Since then, the ICC’s budget has grown to almost ten million dollars per year.²⁵⁴ It remains a close collaborator of Hillel, and Hillel frequently donates to its activities.²⁵⁵

The ICC’s mission statement is unambiguous. They declare, “Our mission is to inspire American college students to see Israel as a source of pride and empower them to stand up for

²⁵⁰ Goldberg, “Is Israel Trying To Turn American Jews Into Orthodox Right-Wingers?”

²⁵¹ “Yeshivat Aish Hatorah,” Root Funding, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://rootfunding.com/causes/831748>.

²⁵² Goldberg, “Is Israel Trying To Turn American Jews Into Orthodox Right-Wingers?”

²⁵³ “Hillel: Cut Ties with the Israel on Campus Coalition,” Action Network, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/hillel-cut-ties-with-the-israel-on-campus-coalition>.

²⁵⁴ Israel on Campus Coalition, “Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax” (United States. Internal Revenue Services.), accessed August 14, 2023, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/300664947>.

²⁵⁵ “Hillel: Cut Ties with the Israel on Campus Coalition.”

Israel on campus.”²⁵⁶ The ICC offers microgrants to any students who want to organize an event on their campus spreading pro-Israel sentiment.²⁵⁷ According to their website, they have built a network on over 200 different campuses in the US.²⁵⁸

In addition to mobilizing support for Israel on campuses, the ICC has been accused of “using its \$9 million budget to fund bullying and intimidation of Jewish and non-Jewish students alike on college campuses” who are critical of the Israeli state.²⁵⁹ In 2016, *ProPublica* and *The Forward* uncovered an ICC-funded Facebook campaign against a Palestinian-American poet Remi Kanazi who was visiting US colleges per the invite of Palestine solidarity organizations.²⁶⁰ Kanazi’s website explains he uses “his art to bring attention to systems of oppression in Palestine.”²⁶¹ The ICC paid for Facebook ads to appear on profiles near the colleges Kanazi was visiting that painted Kanazi as hateful and antisemitic.²⁶² In 2018, *The Forward’s* Josh Nathan-Kazis exposed how the ICC paid for anonymous websites attacking Palestinian activists at George Washington University who were advocating for the school government to pass a resolution demanding the boycott of, divestment from, and sanctions of the State of Israel.²⁶³

²⁵⁶ “About Us,” Israel on Campus Coalition, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://israelcc.org/about-us/>.

²⁵⁷ “Microgrants,” Israel on Campus Coalition, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://israelcc.org/microgrants/>.

²⁵⁸ “About Us.”

²⁵⁹ “Hillel: Cut Ties with the Israel on Campus Coalition.”

²⁶⁰ Justin Elliott and Josh Nathan-Kazis, “D.C.-Based Pro-Israel Group Secretly Ran Misleading Facebook Ads to Target Pro-Palestinian Activist,” *ProPublica*, September 12, 2018, <https://www.propublica.org/article/dc-pro-israel-group-ran-facebook-ads-to-target-pro-palestinian-activist>.

²⁶¹ Remi Kanazi, “Facebook Profile: Remi Poet,” Facebook, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/RemiPoet/>.

²⁶² Elliott and Nathan-Kazis, “D.C.-Based Pro-Israel Group Secretly Ran Misleading Facebook Ads to Target Pro-Palestinian Activist.”

²⁶³ Josh Nathan-Kazis, “A New Wave Of Hardline Anti-BDS Tactics Are Targeting Students, And No One Knows Who’s Behind It,” *The Forward*, August 2, 2018, <https://forward.com/news/407127/a-new-wave-of-hardline-anti-bds-tactics-are-targeting-students-and-no-one/?attribution=author-article-listing-4-headline>.

Later that year, Nathan-Kazis exposed how the ICC monitored a dozen progressive Jewish students at Wesleyan University as they gathered for an Open Hillel conference.²⁶⁴

In late 2018, leaked clips from a mysteriously-canceled *Al Jazeera* documentary series on the USA's Israel lobby revealed that ICC executives in fact seem to collaborate with the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs on their organizational strategy.²⁶⁵ But covert collaboration is not the only way the Israeli government exerts influence on the ICC. Around eight percent of the ICC's total budget (almost a million dollars) comes from the Jewish National Fund²⁶⁶ — an Israeli organization which owns approximately 13 percent of Israel's total landmass²⁶⁷ and has a long history of close collaboration with the Israeli government.

Students Supporting Israel (henceforth, SSI) is another organization with roots at over 180 US universities.²⁶⁸ SSI proudly announces its commitment to the Israeli State. They explain, "Our mission is to be a clear and confident pro-Israel voice on college campuses, and to support students in grassroots pro-Israel advocacy."²⁶⁹ SSI hosts over five hundred events each year, often inviting delegates from the Israeli government and former soldiers from the Israeli Defense Forces.²⁷⁰ In addition to forging on-campus support of Israel, SSI boasts of its harassment of Palestine solidarity organizations. In 2022 and 2023, SSI has hosted what they call "Palestinian apartheid week"²⁷¹, in response to Palestine solidarity organizations' decades-

²⁶⁴ Josh Nathan-Kazis, "Campus Pro-Israel Group 'Monitored' Progressive Jewish Students," *The Forward*, September 25, 2018, <https://forward.com/news/410757/campus-pro-israel-group-monitored-progressive-jewish-students/>.

²⁶⁵ Alain Gresh, "How Israel Spies on US Citizens," *The Nation*, August 31, 2018, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/how-israel-spies-on-us-citizens/>.

²⁶⁶ "Israel on Campus Coalition," Cause IQ, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.causeiq.com/organizations/israel-on-campus-coalition,300664947/>.

²⁶⁷ "JNF FAQs," Jewish National Fund USA, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.jnf.org/menu-3/faqs>.

²⁶⁸ "Welcome to SSI," Students Supporting Israel, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.ssimovement.org/>.

²⁶⁹ "Welcome to SSI."

²⁷⁰ "Welcome to SSI."

²⁷¹ "Palestinian Apartheid Week," Students Supporting Israel, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.ssimovement.org/palestinianapartheidweek.html>.

long tradition of hosting an annual Israeli apartheid week to shed light on Israeli human rights abuses.²⁷²

While it claims to be a “grassroots” movement, SSI receives grants totaling to hundreds of thousands of dollars per year²⁷³ — some of which are from the Israel on Campus Coalition (ICC), the aforementioned national organization with ties to the Israeli government.

Student fellowships and funding

American students do not even need to join one of these many on-campus clubs to become subject to the Israeli government’s financial influence. Multiple organizations offer funds to opportunistic young Zionists to mobilize support for Israel within their student communities. In 2012, *The Electronic Intifada* (and later *The Associated Press* and *Huffington Post*) reported about an initiative with the Israeli government that offers students \$2,000 “to post pro-Israel messages online for five hours a week”²⁷⁴ — without needing to declare any affiliation with the Israeli government.²⁷⁵ Former CIA officer Philip Giraldi explains, “Students use different names and IP addresses, which enable them to make multiple posts.”²⁷⁶

A related program, called the Hasbara Fellowships, offers American students the chance to be paid to travel to Israel and receive “an intensive 2-week training program in pro-Israel

²⁷² “Israeli Apartheid Week,” BDS Movement, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://bdsmovement.net/iaw>.

²⁷³ Students Supporting Israel, “Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax” (United States. Internal Revenue Services., n.d.), <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/465347153>.

²⁷⁴ Lucy Sherriff, “Israel To Pay Students For Pro-Israeli Social Media Propaganda,” *The Huffington Post*, August 14, 2013, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/08/14/israel-pay-students-propaganda_n_3755782.html.

²⁷⁵ Ali Abunimah, “Israeli Students to Get \$2,000 to Spread State Propaganda on Facebook,” *The Electronic Intifada*, January 4, 2012, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/israeli-students-get-2000-spread-state-propaganda-facebook>; Associated Press, “Israel to Pay Students to Defend It Online,” *USA Today*, August 14, 2013, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/08/14/israel-students-social-media/2651715/>.

²⁷⁶ Philip Giraldi, “Finding the Foreign Agents,” *The American Conservative*, January 30, 2015, <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/finding-the-foreign-agents/>.

activism.”²⁷⁷ Israeli charity Aish International (Olami’s close affiliate) reports that this fellowship program was a response to a 2001 “challenge” from the Israel Foreign Ministry. The Foreign Ministry commanded, “Israel is losing the PR battle on campus...Come up with a program and we’ll be your partners.”²⁷⁸ *The Forward* reports, “In 2020 alone, Hasbara Fellowships gave out over half a million dollars to students engaging in on-campus Israel advocacy.”²⁷⁹ The Hasbara website claims to have had 3,000 trip participants — with 200 yearly active fellows on 95 college campuses.²⁸⁰

Anti-Palestinian dossiers

Not all Israel advocacy organizations operate from within the campus. Several organizations — which compile blacklists of Palestinian activists — have a history of taking funds from the Israeli government. StandWithUs — an organization whose mission statement is “supporting Israel and fighting antisemitism around the world”²⁸¹ — produced one of these blacklists. In 2014, *Mondoweiss* reported that StandWithUs had been compiling “secret dossiers on pro-Palestinian speakers” in the US.²⁸² StandWithUs amalgamated the dossiers in a website — Stand4Facts.org — which had the stated purpose of helping “Israel advocates respond to and counter anti-Israel speakers who come to your campus.”²⁸³ The website had profiles on over 100

²⁷⁷ “Programs,” Aish International: Connecting Jews to Their Heritage and to Each Other, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://aish-international.com/programs/>.

²⁷⁸ “Programs.”

²⁷⁹ Hannah Lebovits, “I Teach on a Campus without Hillel or Chabad. My Jewish Students Yearn for Connection, Not Politics,” *The Forward*, February 6, 2023, <https://forward.com/opinion/535100/campus-without-hillel-jewish-students-israel/>.

²⁸⁰ “Hasbara Fellowships: Empowering Advocates for Israel,” Hasbara Fellowships, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://hasbarafellowships.org/>.

²⁸¹ “StandWithUs,” StandWithUs, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.standwithus.com/>.

²⁸² Alex Kane, “Israel Lobby Group Compiles Secret Dossiers on Pro-Palestinian Speakers,” *Mondoweiss*, February 25, 2014, <https://mondoweiss.net/2014/02/compiles-palestinian-speakers/>.

²⁸³ Kane.

speakers who had visited college campus — accusing them of endorsing terrorism and being antisemitic. The profiles included many well-known academics and scholars such as human rights attorney and Rutgers professor Noura Erakat and California State University professor Asad Abu’Khalil. The profiles of female activists had ratings of their attractiveness.²⁸⁴

StandWithUs has previously gotten into trouble for failing to declare its funding from the Israeli government. In 2019, StandWithUs was granted funds from Kela Shlomo (also known as Concert) — a company whose donations are matched one-for-one by the Israeli government.²⁸⁵ Kela Shlomo was formed as a “buffer” through which the Israeli government could pass funds to American nonprofits.²⁸⁶ When this funding was revealed, StandWithUs rejected the grant, at risk of being subject to an investigation under the Foreign Agents Registration Act.²⁸⁷ Previously in 2015, StandWithUs had been hired by the Israeli Prime Minister’s office (for the equivalent of about 250 thousand dollars) “to help it [the PM’s office] push the government’s political line this year [2015] via social media.”²⁸⁸

StandWithUs’s blacklist is no longer accessible, but a larger and more extensive blacklist is being compiled by Canary Mission. Canary Mission is a notorious website that has compiled over 1,000 student, faculty, and activist profiles in an effort to “ensure that today’s radicals are not tomorrow’s employees.”²⁸⁹ For the most part, the website is “[d]edicated to blacklisting

²⁸⁴ Kane.

²⁸⁵ Aiden Pink, “U.S. pro-Israel Groups Failed to Disclose Grants from Israeli Government,” *The Forward*, August 31, 2024AD, <https://forward.com/israel/453286/us-pro-israel-groups-failed-to-disclose-grants-from-israeli-government/>.

²⁸⁶ Aiden Pink, “U.S. pro-Israel Groups Failed to Disclose Grants from Israeli Government,” *The Forward*, August 31, 2024AD, <https://forward.com/israel/453286/us-pro-israel-groups-failed-to-disclose-grants-from-israeli-government/>.

²⁸⁷ Pink.

²⁸⁸ Haaretz, “Prime Minister’s Office Hires Israel Advocacy Group StandWithUs for 1 Million Shekels,” *Haaretz*, January 13, 2015, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2015-01-13/ty-article/prime-ministers-office-hires-israel-advocacy-group-standwithus-for-1-million-shekels/0000017f-dbef-db5a-a57f-dbef24d10000>.

²⁸⁹ Alex Kane, “‘It’s Killing the Student Movement’: Canary Mission’s Blacklist of Pro-Palestine Activists Is Taking a Toll,” *The Intercept*, November 22, 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/11/22/israel-boycott-canary-mission-blacklist/>.

students involved in Palestine solidarity activism, intimidating them and denigrating their public reputations.”²⁹⁰ It mainly attacks Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students as well as students from other minority groups.²⁹¹ Fifty-two percent of the professors (full and associate) in Columbia University’s Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies are on the blacklist.²⁹² Canary Mission accuses many of the individuals in its profiles of antisemitism due to their support for Palestine and criticism of Israeli human rights abuses.²⁹³ Echoing many other major critiques, the chair of an American Association of University Professors committee on academic freedom has explained, “Canary Mission is a blacklist, pure and simple. It echoes the long-discredited and horrific blacklists of the McCarthy era.”²⁹⁴

Canary Mission’s blacklist has grave effects on its targets. Palestine solidarity organizers have explained that being featured on Canary Mission’s blacklist led them and their families to receive death threats and racist attacks. It has caused others to lose out on job opportunities and has taken a toll on familial and business relationships. Many students featured on the blacklist experience anxiety and step back from activism altogether. One person was even

²⁹⁰ Hamzah Raza and Max Blumenthal, “Who Is behind Canary Mission’s Anonymous Anti-Palestinian Blacklisting Website?,” *The Grayzone*, August 22, 2018, <https://thegrayzone.com/2018/08/22/meet-the-owner-of-canary-missions-anonymous-anti-palestinian-blacklisting-website/>.

²⁹¹ Raza and Blumenthal.

²⁹² Compiled from Canary Mission site and Columbia MESAAS faculty page.

²⁹³ Kane, “‘It’s Killing the Student Movement’: Canary Mission’s Blacklist of Pro-Palestine Activists Is Taking a Toll.”

²⁹⁴ Committee on Affirmative Action and Diversity and Committee on Academic Freedom, “Committee on Academic Freedom and Committee on Affirmative Action and Diversity: Resolution on Canary Mission, 2019” (University of California, Santa Cruz, May 3, 2019), <https://senate.ucsc.edu/archives/Past%20Issues/resolutions-page/1934---caf-and-caad-resolution-on-canary-mission.pdf>.

denied a bank account.²⁹⁵ Horrifyingly, it has been revealed that the Israeli government uses Canary Mission to deny American visitors entry at the Israeli border.²⁹⁶

The funding of Canary Mission has remained incredibly elusive. Canary Mission is not a registered non-profit even though it solicits donations on its website. It does not publicly declare any of its funding sources. Despite Canary Mission's efforts to hide its financial backing, investigative journalists have uncovered clues about Canary Mission's financial and organizational structure.²⁹⁷ Nora Barrows-Friedman reports, "Tax filings led reporters to an Israeli company named Megamot Shalom... 'that operates or operated Canary Mission.' Their address is an abandoned office west of Jerusalem."²⁹⁸ These few uncovered donations likely reveal only a small portion of the funds it takes to run Canary Mission (and we can only confirm donations that originate from American sources). But, what is clear is that an Israeli company has served as an intermediary for Canary Mission for at least some period. These recorded transfers of funds inherently link Canary Mission with a foreign organization.

²⁹⁵ Kane, "It's Killing the Student Movement': Canary Mission's Blacklist of Pro-Palestine Activists Is Taking a Toll."

²⁹⁶ Noa Landau, "Official Documents Prove: Israel Bans Young Americans Based on Canary Mission Website," *Haaretz*, October 4, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2018-10-04/ty-article/.premium/official-documents-prove-israel-bans-young-americans-based-on-canary-mission-site/0000017f-e5c4-df2c-a1ff-ffd5b4150000>; Josh Nathan-Kazis, "Canary Mission's Threat Grows, From U.S. Campuses To The Israeli Border," *The Forward*, August 3, 2018, <https://forward.com/news/407279/canary-missions-threat-grows-from-us-campuses-to-the-israeli-border/>.

²⁹⁷ Raza and Blumenthal, "Who Is behind Canary Mission's Anonymous Anti-Palestinian Blacklisting Website?"; Asa Winstanley and Ali Abumimah, "Censored Film Names Adam Milstein as Canary Mission Funder," *The Electronic Intifada*, August 27, 2018, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/censored-film-names-adam-milstein-canary-mission-funder/25356>; Nora Barrows-Friedman, "Jewish Community Federation Admits It Secretly Funded Canary Mission," *The Electronic Intifada*, October 5, 2018, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/nora-barrows-friedman/jewish-community-federation-admits-it-secretly-funded-canary-mission>.

²⁹⁸ Nora Barrows-Friedman, "Listen: Michigan Professor Punished for Supporting Boycott," *The Electronic Intifada*, October 16, 2018, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/nora-barrows-friedman/listen-michigan-professor-punished-supporting-boycott>.

Millions of dollars are funneled into US college campuses from the Israeli government each year. The campus organizations that are the recipients of these funds are not registered as foreign agents under FARA. These organizations masquerade as student-run groups — luring new members, many of whom are just looking for social connection, into a foreign-funded propaganda trap during the most impressionable years of their life. They use their millions of dollars of funding in explicit projects to spread Israeli political messaging and suppress any resistance from grassroots Palestine solidarity organizations.

David vs. Goliath

Unlike the multi-million-dollar Israel campus advocacy industry, there is no national nonprofit organization which encompasses the Palestine solidarity campus network or does fundraising on its behalf. While there are several organizations that periodically bring together Palestinian activists from around the country in nationwide events (among them, the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights and American Muslims for Palestine), the only national network that attempts to foster collaboration between the campus-wide Palestine solidarity organizations is the National Students for Justice in Palestine.

The National Students for Justice Palestine (henceforth, NSJP) consists of a group of organizers that, according to their website, “support” Palestine solidarity organizations and aim to become a “reference point” for student clubs.²⁹⁹ Their listed activities include “creating a platform for collaboration, providing organizational and educational support, developing accessible resources for student organizers, and connecting student Palestine solidarity organizations with the broader global movement for justice in Palestine.”³⁰⁰ NSJP is known for hosting an annual conference for interested Palestine solidarity organizations. NSJP claims no administrative or financial influence over any local Palestine solidarity branch — explaining each organization is independently founded.³⁰¹ Nowhere on the NSJP website does it mention providing any kind of funding to local Palestine solidarity chapters. Nor is there a way for local Palestine solidarity branches to request any sort of funds through the NSJP website.

²⁹⁹ “About Us.”

³⁰⁰ “About Us.”

³⁰¹ “About Us.”

NSJP’s activities are listed to be “supported by our fiscal sponsor, WESPAC”³⁰² — a self-identified “peace and justice action network” in Westchester, NY that contributes to a large number of political education causes. WESPAC’s mission is “educating, agitating and organizing for a more just and peaceful world, an end to militarism and racism and a more fair economy that works for all.”³⁰³ Their annual revenue is about 400 thousand dollars³⁰⁴ (less than any single one of the organizations in the previous section) and is divided over a significant amount of programs and causes. Individuals can donate to NSJP through WESPAC on NSJP’s donation page.³⁰⁵ WESPAC has never listed any contribution or grant to any local Palestine solidarity organization in the history of its tax returns.

The only corporation that has ever reported a donation to an on-campus Students for Justice in Palestine is Pacifica Foundation — a NY-based nonprofit that operates several small radio broadcasting stations. Pacifica Foundation provided Brown University Students for Justice in Palestine with a one-time \$1,650 grant in 2014.³⁰⁶

Like many other student clubs, most student Palestine solidarity organizations are funded by standard, annual university grants to student organizations. While they do not receive financial support from a larger organizational network, the on-campus branches stay connected through shared educational materials and matriculating student activists. NSJP’s national conference — which brings together hundreds of student activists from national student

³⁰² “Donate to National Students for Justice in Palestine,” National Students for Justice in Palestine, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://www.nationalsjp.org/donate>.

³⁰³ “WESPAC,” WESPAC, accessed August 14, 2023, <https://wespac.org/>.

³⁰⁴ WESPAC, “Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax” (United States. Internal Revenue Services., 2020), <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/133109400>.

³⁰⁵ “Donate to National Students for Justice in Palestine.”

³⁰⁶ Pacifica Foundation, “Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax” (United States. Internal Revenue Services., 2014), <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/204733627/201402629349100500/IRS990PF>.

Palestine solidarity organizations — is a testament to the connections between disparate campus branches. While the student movement for Palestine may be robust in its solidarity network and organizational learning, the scope of funds provided to on-campus Israel advocacy organizations is quite literally incomparable to the nonexistent financial support network for student Palestine solidarity organizations.

Conclusion

When MIT professor Gang Chen failed “to disclose Chinese affiliations in grant proposals to U.S. funding agencies”³⁰⁷, he was arrested and “treated like a spy”³⁰⁸ — even though he was later exonerated.³⁰⁹ When Juan Lazaro taught courses at a New York college critical of US foreign policy, he was investigated and convicted for failing to register as a foreign agent of Russia.³¹⁰ Financial manipulation by foreign governments is not tolerated in the United States. If Russia or China were secretly funding student clubs to promote on-campus support of Russia and China, those organizations would be forced to register as foreign agents — and media outlets and the public would be in uproar. Even if US political allies — say, the UK — were secretly funding on-campus clubs to influence and control student opinions and target dissenters of UK policy — it would not be tolerated.

We can look back at the radical movements of the 60s and the Iranian student movement with the privilege of hindsight. Suppression efforts may not look exactly the same in our modern era. Campus suppression has evolved from firehoses and barricades, to foreign intelligence agents surreptitiously gaining access to student protestors, to overt foreign funding through backdoor channels. As the campus Palestine solidarity movement has become a central

³⁰⁷ Ellen Barry and Katie Benner, “U.S. Drops Its Case Against M.I.T. Scientist Accused of Hiding China Links,” *The New York Times*, January 20, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/20/science/gang-chen-mit-china-initiative.html>.

³⁰⁸ Ellen Barry, “‘In the End, You’re Treated Like a Spy,’ Says M.I.T. Scientist,” *The New York Times*, January 24, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/24/science/gang-chen-mit-china.html>.

³⁰⁹ Barry and Benner, “U.S. Drops Its Case Against M.I.T. Scientist Accused of Hiding China Links.”

³¹⁰ James Barron, “Curiosities Emerge About Suspected Russian Agents,” *The New York Times*, June 29, 2010, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/30/nyregion/30suspects.html>.

point in the overarching national conversation about the Palestinian struggle, forces of suppression have infiltrated through university loopholes.

Foreign intervention in student life is a far cry from the corporate money that goes into getting students to rush frats or join Effective Altruism. While we may not be anywhere close to undoing the corporatization of universities that has built up the billion-dollar student life industry, Israel's foreign financial influence campaigns of indoctrination and suppression on US college campuses are a different beast. This campaign has the express purpose of promoting the interests of the Israeli government and attacking American students. We would not tolerate this if any other country — whether enemy or ally — were to do the same.

Why have we made an exception for Israel?

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