



The Sabra Report

Lawmakers Lash NYC College System Over 'Antisemitic' Graduation Speech

Luke Tress, Times of Israel, May 31st, 2023

Recap:

US lawmakers, local politicians and Jewish groups blasted the City University of New York (CUNY) for hosting a commencement ceremony featuring a keynote speaker condemning Israel.

The Context:

- ✦ CUNY graduate Fatima Mohammed used her commencement speech to accuse the law school of "train[ing] Israeli soldiers to carry out violence globally" and urged her classmates to join in a "revolution" against Israel [1]. Mohammed went on to accuse Israel of "indiscriminately murdering the old, the young, attacking even funerals and graveyards." [2]
- ✦ A statement from CUNY's Board of Trustees said the speech "fall[s] into the category of hate speech" [3] and Congressman Ritchie Torres declared that "hate speech has no place in our public schools." The speech marked the second consecutive year that the law school's commencement speaker dedicated much of their address to anti-Israel rhetoric and comes amid a years-long battle over alleged widespread antisemitism in the CUNY system.
- ✦ The address is indicative of the law school's support for the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. In December 2021 and May 2022, student and faculty associations voted in favor of supporting BDS [4] and recently adopted a resolution that officially calls on the institution to divest from Israel, end all Israeli student exchanges, and cut ties with any groups that "repress Palestinian organizing [5]."
- ✦ The CUNY system has 25 colleges around New York's five boroughs, with 260,000 students and 20,000 faculty. CUNY is currently being investigated by the US government for allegedly allowing violations of Jewish students' civil rights [6].

Conversation Points:

- ✦ Is there difference between antisemitism and anti-Zionism?
- ✦ How can universities navigate the balance between promoting freedom of speech and preventing hate speech?
- ✦ What is the difference in being an anti-Israel movement vs. a pro-Palestinian movement?

Notes:

1. [CUNY graduate slammed over anti-Israel, antisemitic remarks](#), Jerusalem Post, May 31st, 2023.
2. ['Hate Speech': CUNY Chancellor Condemns anti-Israel Law School Graduation Speech](#) Haaretz, May 31st, 2023.
3. [CUNY graduate slammed over anti-Israel, antisemitic remarks](#), Jerusalem Post, May 31st, 2023.
4. ['Hate Speech': CUNY Chancellor Condemns anti-Israel Law School Graduation Speech](#) Haaretz, May 31st, 2023.
5. [CUNY graduate slammed over anti-Israel, antisemitic remarks](#), Jerusalem Post, May 31st, 2023.
6. ['Expression of Hate': CUNY Condemns Commencement Speech Which Demonized](#), Algemeiner, May 31st, 2023.

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