



Brooklyn College Students for Justice in Palestine Vindicated After 2-Month CUNY Investigation into BDS Event

April 15, 2013, New York – After a two-month investigation, the City University of New York (CUNY) General Counsel’s office issued a report late Friday vindicating student organizers of a February 7th event at Brooklyn College (BC) from accusations of anti-Semitic discrimination. The students, represented by the Center for Constitutional Rights and Cooperating Attorney Alan Levine, were under intense university and media scrutiny for weeks before the event about the movement for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS). This included [pressure on Brooklyn College](#) from New York politicians condemning the subject matter of the event, from New York City Council Members [threatening to withhold funding](#) from the college, and from others who likened advocacy for BDS as a method for achieving Palestinian rights to anti-Semitic hate speech.

The CUNY investigation stemmed from complaints after the event from two journalists who claimed they were excluded and four students who claimed they were removed from the event because they were Jewish and opposed BDS. Alan Dershowitz claimed that students’ First Amendment rights were violated because they were allegedly removed from the event for having anti-BDS literature. Lawyer Neal Sher, responsible for Title VI civil rights complaints against other universities for allowing Palestinian rights activists to express their views on campus, accused BC of creating an anti-Semitic environment by enabling the event and failing to prevent the alleged discrimination.

Said **Maria LaHood**, CCR Senior Staff Attorney, “Students are bearing the brunt of a nationwide campaign to chill Palestinian rights activism. We are seeing this pattern all over the country, where accusations of anti-Semitism and threats of legal action are pressuring universities to unfairly obstruct and denounce the activities of those expressing one side of an important domestic and international issue. The threats of legal action and the university’s investigation in this case have already had a chilling effect on students and others supporting Palestinian rights. We hope the results of this thorough investigation will allow students to continue their First Amendment activities without undue interference.”

CUNY Counsel's report, after weeks of interviews with over 40 relevant witnesses, rejects the charge that the student organizers were motivated by anti-Semitism. Regarding the removal, the report states that there was no evident intent to discriminate based on the removed individuals' religion, and that the evidence did not justify a conclusion that there was an intent to discriminate based on their viewpoint. With regard to the other charges, namely that the students excluded individuals and members of the media because they were Jewish and opposed BDS, and that they cut off the Q&A session to prevent questions from Jewish opponents of BDS, the report concludes that the students had no intent to discriminate based on political viewpoint or religion in the registration or admissions process, and in the administration of the Q&A period.

Said Brooklyn College Students for Justice in Palestine president Sundus Seif, "It is a relief that CUNY recognizes that we intended for this to be a forum for open dialogue about how to achieve Palestinian human rights, and that it took us by surprise to handle a forum that went from being a normal student event to getting national media attention with hundreds of people trying to get in, and with unprecedented security, that we were not equipped to handle."

To read the report for further details, click [here](#).

The Center for Constitutional Rights is dedicated to advancing and protecting the rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Founded in 1966 by attorneys who represented civil rights movements in the South, CCR is a non-profit legal and educational organization committed to the creative use of law as a positive force for social change. Visit www.ccrjustice.org and follow @theCCR.

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