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25 Kislev 5782, 1st Day of Chanukah
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Vincent Price, President
Sally Kornbluth, Provost
Duke University
207 Allen Building
Box 90001
Durham, NC 27708-0001
transmitted via email

Dear Dr. Price and Dr. Kornbluth,

Please permit us to both thank you for your expression of [concern](#) regarding a recent incident of [antisemitic discrimination](#) at your university, and to insist that concrete steps be taken to address it.

The Coalition for Jewish Values represents 2,000 traditional, observant rabbis in matters of public policy. We are acutely familiar with the classic tropes and stereotypes of what scholar Robert Wistrich correctly described as "[the longest hatred](#)." Recent actions by the Duke Student Government are true to form and pattern.

Animus against the Jewish People is a particularly subtle form of bigotry; it routinely hides behind a socially and academically acceptable façade. In Germany it was the untenable "anti-semitism," applicable only to Jews but not to Semitic Arabs, and today it is the equally untenable "anti-Israel," when no other country faces an anti-movement.

Recently, a student at Duke referred to Jews returning to their homeland as "settler colonialism." This not merely reflects abysmal ignorance of history—it cultivates racial and religious bias. Denouncing every Jew who maintains the classic yearning to return to Zion, expressed thrice daily in our prayers, as a "colonialist" is a convenient way to slander faithful Jews and traditional Jewish theology while avoiding condemnation for fomenting Jew-hatred. Yet that is precisely what she did. Given recent European history, it sends the straightforward message that there is no place where Jews are welcome, including at Duke.

Against this display of open bigotry against basic Jewish belief and all its adherents, Students Supporting Israel (SSI), the targeted group

whose charter had just been approved by the student senate, simply and correctly responded: “please allow us to educate you on what ‘settler colonialism’ actually is and why Israel does not fall under this category whatsoever.”

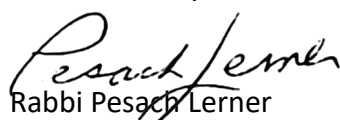
Unconscionably, the President of the Duke Student Government used SSI’s offer to engage in dialogue as a pretext to veto its charter. She inverted reality, claiming it was SSI’s post that was “unacceptable” and “singled out an individual student”—referring, again, to a student who had just incited hatred against all Jews. The student senate then reprehensibly voted to support the President’s veto.

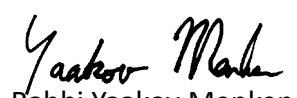
Sadly, this is not the Duke Student Government’s first endorsement of Jew-hatred. Duke provides funding for a chapter of “Students for Justice in Palestine,” which exclusively honors murderers, terrorists, and those who spread classic antisemitic tropes. To reject SSI while supporting the pro-terror SJP hate group reflects a blatant and despicable double-standard, accepting demonization of Jews while silencing Jewish voices. It is entirely consistent with millennia of Jew-hatred. We, as rabbis, know where this leads. So do you.

This has offered a teachable moment. Regardless of the active Jewish organizations at Duke, your next actions will clearly reflect whether your Administration welcomes a Jewish presence in your corner of the academic world. Will Duke risk its reputation on a student government whose president and senate demonstrate classic anti-Jewish hostility, or will there be serious consequences for this breach of basic decency?

History will judge your response.

Yours Sincerely,


Rabbi Pesach Lerner
President


Rabbi Yaakov Menken
Managing Director