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Barnard College expels students involved in anti-Israel class disruption

Columbia University, of which Barnard is an affiliate, suspended a third student involved in the incident last month



ALON LEVIN

Columbia SJP protest, Barnard campus, Dec. 11, 2023

By [Haley Cohen](#) · February 23, 2025

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Barnard College has expelled two second-semester seniors who last month disrupted a History of Modern Israel class, banged on drums, chanted “free Palestine” and distributed posters to students that read “CRUSH ZIONISM” with a boot over the Star of David, *Jewish Insider* has learned, according to a source familiar with the matter.

During the demonstration, which occurred on Jan. 21 — the first day of the spring semester — two Barnard students, a Columbia student and a fourth person who remains unidentified also tried to plaster the walls of the classroom with a sign featuring an illustration of Hamas terrorists pointing guns and the words “THE ENEMY WILL NOT SEE TOMORROW.”

Columbia University suspended the Columbia participant on Jan. 23, “pending a full investigation and disciplinary process,” according to the university. The investigation remains ongoing. Students have the right to appeal suspensions under the guidelines to the Rules and the Anti-Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment Policies and Procedures for Students. Barnard College is an affiliate of Columbia University.

In a statement to *JI*, Barnard President Laura Rosenbury declined to provide details about the expulsions. “Under federal law, we cannot comment on the academic and disciplinary records of students,” Rosenbury said.

“That said, as a matter of principle and policy, Barnard will always take decisive action to protect our community as a place where learning thrives, individuals feel safe, and higher education is celebrated,” Rosenbury continued.

“This means upholding the highest standards and acting when those standards are threatened. When rules are broken, when there is no remorse, no reflection, and no willingness to change, we must act. Expulsion is always an extraordinary measure, but so too is our commitment to respect, inclusion, and the integrity of the academic experience. At Barnard, we always fiercely defend our

values. At Barnard, we always reject harassment and discrimination in all forms. And at Barnard, we always do what is right, not what is easy.”

As of Sunday, the expulsions had not been announced campus-wide. Upon learning of the crackdown from JI, Lishi Baker, a junior studying Middle East history and a student in the History of Modern Israel course, said he was “extremely happy” about Barnard’s decision and called for Columbia to do the same.

“Accountability is the most important way to make sure that these kinds of disruptions that go against the university’s purpose — that threaten and intimidate Jewish students and undermine the learning environment — cannot go unpunished,” Baker said.

Since the Oct. 7, 2023, terrorist attacks in Israel, lawmakers and Jewish students and faculty have frequently scrutinized Columbia University for what they called a slow, or nonexistent, response to the frequent antisemitism occurring on campus. The expulsions, Baker said, were “the most positive step that I’ve seen to date.”

“I’m hoping that this indicates turning the tides in terms of the level of accountability that the school is willing to enforce, but if we’ve learned anything from the past year, we have to expect almost nothing,” he said. “The amount of accountability that we’ve seen has not been nearly as high as it should be.”

Brian Cohen, executive director of Columbia Hillel, applauded Barnard for “taking decisive action.”

Cohen said in a statement that he hopes “Columbia follows suit with the other perpetrators who have infringed on student rights in the past year — from the encampments to the takeover of Hamilton Hall. This will send a clear message that the harassment of Jewish students and faculty will not be tolerated at Columbia.”

“When students have their right to get an education trampled on by masked protesters who burst into their classroom, those protestors need to be held accountable,” Cohen said.

On Sunday, Columbia University Apartheid Divest doubled down by calling for more disturbances in Israel-related courses.

“Students disrupted a Zionist class, you should too!” the coalition of student organizations — including Columbia’s suspended chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine — wrote on Instagram. “Every academic paper, course, interview, or book that legitimizes the Zionist entity necessarily cosigns the genocide and occupation of Palestinians and necessitates disruption. They are the grease that keeps the war machine killing.”

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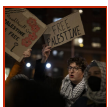
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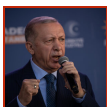
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