

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1402

November 6, 2023

Sherri Charleston
Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear Dr. Charleston,

As you may know, on October 7, 2023, terrorists led by Hamas unleashed a wave of barbaric attacks in Israel. It was the deadliest single day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust, with more than 1,400 killed, more than 4,500 injured, and more than 200 taken hostage. Our fellow Americans are among the dead, wounded, and hostages. Hamas deliberately targeted civilians and children, subjecting them to unspeakable war crimes, including beheading, burning alive, rape, torture, and kidnapping.

A global convulsion of antisemitism has followed closely in the wake of this massacre, and, sadly, America's university campuses have not been immune.

Israeli and Jewish students and faculty across the country have expressed concern at the current climate on campuses. There are too many examples of threats or acts of physical violence, verbal harassment, intimidation, graffiti, stalking, and other menacing actions directed at Israeli and Jewish students and faculty. Some have even been forced to barricade themselves in rooms for safety.

This crisis of antisemitism on college campuses has reached such levels as to draw condemnation from President Joe Biden. A recent White House statement noted "an extremely disturbing pattern of antisemitic messages being conveyed on college campuses...that call for the annihilation of the state of Israel; for genocide against the Jewish people." The statement added, "Delegitimizing the State of Israel while praising the Hamas terrorist murderers who burned innocent people alive, or targeting Jewish students, is the definition of unacceptable — and the definition of antisemitism."

As the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer at Harvard University, you appear to be the individual principally responsible for advancing the ideal of inclusion, ensuring that all students and faculty, regardless of nationality or faith, feel accepted in the campus environment and student body. However, at least one or more incidents on your campus in recent weeks raise questions about the climate of inclusion fostered by the Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging for Israeli and Jewish students and faculty.

As such, I request a written reply to the below questions by December 8, 2023:

1. Does the Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging maintain an official, written definition of antisemitism?
 - If yes, how does this definition compare with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism?¹
 - If no, why not? How does the Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging evaluate allegations of antisemitism and any potential need for education and awareness about antisemitism?
2. For each of the below statements: Does the Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging classify it as antisemitic? Do you believe that it increases or decreases feelings of inclusion and belonging among Israeli and Jewish students and faculty?
 - "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free."
 - "Globalize the Intifada."
 - "One solution, intifada, revolution."
 - "Glory to our martyrs."
 - "Zionism hands off our universities."
 - "Decolonization is not a metaphor."
 - "We don't want Israel to exist. We don't want these Zionist counter-protesters to exist."
 - "Zionism has no place on our campus."
3. For each of the below descriptions of images: Does the Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging classify it as antisemitic? Do you believe that it increases or decreases feelings of inclusion and belonging among Israeli and Jewish students and faculty?
 - A trash can with the Star of David in it, captioned, "Keep the world clean"
 - An invitation or a poster with a paraglider, hang glider, or paratrooper, which were employed by Hamas as it engaged in the mass slaughter of Israeli civilians on October 7
4. There have been many incidents of students or faculty tearing down posters of men, women, and children believed to have been kidnapped on October 7 or who are otherwise still missing. Does the Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging believe that such actions increase or decrease feelings of inclusion and belonging among Israeli and Jewish students and faculty?
5. How many full- or part-time employees are in the Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging and affiliated entities overall? Of those, how many full- or part-time employees are dedicated to educating and raising awareness about antisemitism, handling allegations of antisemitism, and/or promoting inclusion of Israeli and Jewish students and faculty?
6. Please describe specific actions taken by the Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging to educate and raise awareness about antisemitism since October 7, 2023.
7. Please describe the resources the Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging is providing to Israeli and Jewish students and faculty to ensure they feel included and safe in the campus environment and student body.
8. Please describe resources you are providing to Israeli or Jewish students and faculty to ensure they do not face threats of physical violence, verbal harassment, intimidation, and other actions that directly or indirectly encourage exclusion from the campus environment, including any mechanism to report such incidents should they occur.

¹ <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism>

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter, and I look forward to your responses.

Sincerely,



RUDY YAKYM III
Member of Congress