

# Columbia's Mahmoud Khalil: 'We Couldn't Avoid' Committing October 7 Massacre

Anti-Semitic activist says Hamas 'had to' commit the massacre

[Matthew Xiao](#) August 6, 2025

Mahmoud Khalil (Free Beacon)

Mahmoud Khalil, a leader of the anti-Semitic protests that have rocked Columbia University, made excuses for Hamas's bloodthirsty Oct. 7, 2023, terrorist attack on Israel during a Tuesday interview with the *New York Times*.

"It felt frightening that we had to reach this moment in the Palestinian struggle," Khalil [told](#) *Times* columnist Ezra Klein. "We couldn't avoid such a moment."

Hamas committed the attack "to break the cycle, to break that Palestinians are not being heard," Khalil went on. "That was my interpretation of why Hamas did the October 7 attacks on Israel."

Khalil in the interview also mentioned his work for the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, which last year fired nine staffers for participating in the October 7 attacks. He hid his work for the agency from his U.S. green card application, prosecutors [say](#).

Khalil, a longtime anti-Semitic activist, last year emerged as a prominent leader of anti-Israel protests, which were organized by the student group Columbia University Apartheid Divest (CUAD). The Trump administration [detained](#) Khalil, an Algerian national, in March after revoking his visa and

green card. A federal judge ordered his release in June, after which the activist [blamed](#) a spike in anti-Semitism on U.S. support for Israel.

During the Oct. 7, 2023, terrorist attack, Hamas killed more than 1,200 Israelis and kidnapped at least 251 people, including Americans, in the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust. Survivors have reported that terrorists tortured and raped victims before murdering or kidnapping them, with a U.N. report last year finding that Hamas [subjected](#) victims to "rape and/or gang rape and then killed" them.

Israeli intelligence estimates that around 20 hostages are still alive in Gaza, along with the bodies of up to 50 others killed in captivity.

Khalil's Tuesday remarks echo recent comments by senior Hamas official Ghazi Hamad, who on Saturday [hailed](#) Canadian, British, and French plans to recognize a Palestinian state as "the fruits of October 7."

The Columbia Jewish Alumni Association blasted Khalil's decision to defend Hamas's terrorist attack, including his use of the phrase "we couldn't avoid such a moment."

"'We'? Who is we? Hamas? All Palestinians? CUAD alums with a taste for bloodshed?" the association [asked](#) in an X post. "After 4 years at Columbia, Khalil is taking the position that Palestinians had no possibility of relevance through innovation, diplomacy, or peace—only through mass murder."

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