

# Mahmoud Khalil: Columbia U. 'reminiscent' of Assad regime, 'manufactured' antisemitism 'hysteria'

Khalil, who is currently being held at the Central Louisiana ICE Processing Center, instructed students at Columbia to “not abdicate their responsibility to resist repression.”

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Mahmoud Khalil accused Columbia University of laying the “groundwork” for his “abduction” in an op-ed he dictated to the Columbia Spectator on Saturday, addressing his detention for allegedly spreading Hamas propaganda.

Khalil, who is currently being held at the Central Louisiana ICE Processing Center, instructed students at Columbia to “not abdicate their responsibility to resist repression” and “to reclaim the University and join the student movement to carry forward the work of the past year.”

Speaking on the ongoing arrests and deportations of international students accused of spreading Hamas support on campus, Khalil claimed the situation was “oddly reminiscent of when I fled the brutality of Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria and sought refuge in Lebanon.”

The Assad regime is believed to have murdered masses of Syrians in addition to imprisoning large numbers of the population without trial in inhumane conditions, many of whom were subjected to torture, according to a January 2025 UN report.

Student demonstrators watch as others chain themselves to the gates of St. Paul's Chapel at Columbia University to denounce the arrest of Mahmoud Khalil in New York City, US, April 2, 2025. (credit: REUTERS/DANA EDWARDS)

Khalil drew specific attention to the cases of [Ranjani Srinivasan](#), who chose to self-deport to Canada, [Leqaa Kordia](#), a Palestinian student who was arrested for overstaying her F-1 visa which was revoked in 2022 for nonattendance in class, [Dr. Badar Khan Suri](#), accused of having direct ties to Hamas, and [Rumeysa Ozturk](#), a Turkish student accused of carrying out actions in support of Hamas.

In addition to his claims that the university's actions were reminiscent of Assad's oppression, Khalil also claimed that the university's leadership "manufactured public hysteria about antisemitism without once mentioning the tens of thousands of Palestinians murdered under bombs made of your dollars."

Demonstrators attend a protest in support of Mahmoud Khalil outside the court in Newark, New Jersey on March 28, 2025 (credit: Kena Betancur/AFP via Getty Images)

"In the 18 months since the genocidal campaign in Gaza began, Columbia has not only refused to acknowledge the lives of Palestinians sacrificed for Zionist settler colonialism, but it has actively reproduced the language used to justify this killing," Khalil dictated.

"Columbia has suppressed student dissent under the auspices of combating antisemitism," he said. "Last year, Columbia turned over

student disciplinary records to Congress and created the Task Force on Antisemitism that broadly categorized anti-Israel sentiment as hate speech to condemn protests... In a cruel irony, the students who publicize manufactured safety concerns regarding antisemitism are the same ones who repeatedly show up at your events looking for provocation, leaving only disappointed. Some of your classmates work with faculty to run doxxing platforms, submit our names to websites and groups like Canary Mission and Betar, and turn our lives into targets. While they sit comfortably behind their screens, their actions have very real consequences for the rest of us. If I am deprived of my child in the first moments of his life, the people responsible will have been, among others, these students."

"While students were building solidarity at Columbia, some pro-Israel students were participating in the genocide as military personnel during their school breaks, only to return to campus and claim victimhood in the classroom," Khalil said.

He accused the university's partnership with Tel Aviv University.

Khalil also warned students that "your neutrality on Palestine will not protect you," adding that the Trump administration would soon crack down on others highlighting different causes.

"When the time comes for the federal government to target other causes, it will be your names that Columbia will offer on a silver platter, it will be your pleas that fall on deaf ears, it will be your just causes that are stonewalled," he said.

"It is the highest honor of our lives to struggle for the cause of Palestinian liberation. The student movement will continue to carry the mantle of a free Palestine. History will redeem us, while those who were content to wait on the sidelines will be forever remembered for their silence," he added.

Khalil's op-ed was published only a day after a district court judge denied his request for a temporary restraining order against the Education and Workforce Committee's request for disciplinary records from Columbia University.

"This is a victory for credible oversight," Committee chairman Tim Walberg said. "An injunction would interfere with a congressional investigation and handicap the functioning of the legislative branch of government under Article I of the Constitution. The work to investigate antisemitism on our nation's college campuses and develop legislative solutions will continue. Our Committee will not sit by idly as a wave of antisemitic threats flood our colleges and universities and interfere with students' education."

## Who is Mahmoud Khalil?

[Khalil](#) is a senior member of Columbia University Apartheid Divest (CUAD) - a group responsible for outbreaks of vandalism and unrest that has praised the October 7 massacre.

"We support liberation by any means necessary, including armed resistance," CUAD has said in past statements. "In the face of violence from the oppressor equipped with the most lethal military force on the planet, where you've exhausted all peaceful means of resolution, violence is the only path forward."

In a November 7 Substack tribute, CUAD described Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar as a "brave man" who will live in the hearts of many. CUAD praised the October 7 Massacre as "Sinwar's crowning achievement" because the "Al-Aqsa Flood was the very essence of what it is to resist 'with what we have.'"

"The act of Palestinian resistance on October 7, known as the Al-Aqsa Flood, breached Israeli security and made significant military advances. [This is] a day that will go down in history."

Other persons celebrated by the group include Aaron Bushnell, who self-immolated in support of Gaza, PFLP spokesperson Ghassan Kanafani and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.

*Michael Starr contributed to this report.*