



Cornell Law School

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Interim President Michael I. Kotlikoff
Cornell University
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Dear Mike,

I am writing to express my deep concern and consternation regarding a course provocatively entitled “Gaza, Indigeneity, Resistance,” ALLS 3500, that is being offered at Cornell next semester. This course would have raised alarm bells at any time, especially since it is being taught by Professor Eric Cheyfitz whose long history of anti-Israel actions and invectives make clear that he intends to use – and will most certainly use – the course as yet another means to propagate his extreme anti-Israel and, in my opinion, antisemitic views rather than to educate. At the present sensitive moment, with the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza still raging, this course will promote and inflame political divisiveness at Cornell and encourage antisemitic manifestations against Israeli and Jewish students.

The course description makes clear that Prof. Cheyfitz starts from the false premise of “settler colonialism in Palestine/Israel,” which blatantly seeks to delegitimize the State of Israel and intends to use that fallacious presupposition to justify Palestinian terrorism against Israel as part of a “global war against an ongoing colonialism.”

It is one thing to be critical of Israel government policies or to support Palestinian national rights. It is quite another to teach students that the State of Israel – which was established pursuant to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 (II) of November 29, 1947, that partitioned British mandatory Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state – is a somehow illegitimate product of “settler colonialism.” But then again, there are those who would argue that a hypothetical Cornell professor could offer a course claiming that Copernicus and Galileo were wrong and that the sun revolves around the earth. The critical difference would be that the latter course, like one espousing a flat earth theory, is harmless quackery while Prof. Cheyfitz’s teachings could spur his students into acts of violence against Israeli and Jewish students at Cornell.

I understand that faculty control the curriculum and provide substantial deference to academic freedom, and that it consequently may not be possible for you to cancel this course. In that case, however, I believe that it is critically important for you to let the Cornell community — and especially its students — know in no uncertain terms that you categorically oppose Prof. Cheyfitz’s unsubtle effort to drag the university into the eye of the geopolitical storm surrounding the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza following the October 7, 2023, pogrom perpetrated

by Hamas terrorists on the Israeli side of the Israel-Gaza border in which close to 1,200 Israelis were savagely murdered, Israeli women and girls were raped and brutalized, and over 200 hostages were taken into captivity in Gaza. It is safe to assume that Prof. Cheyfitz will portray these horrific acts in a positive light rather than condemn their utter depravity.

I know that you find the vitriolic views expressed by Prof. Cheyfitz over the years as reprehensible as I do, and urge you to also categorically condemn their antisemitic essence. Among them – just to list a representative few – are his false and defamatory claims that Gaza “has become an extermination camp, run by Jews;” that Israel was “polluting and poisoning” the Palestinian water supply; and that the senior rabbi of the Israel Armed forces “explicitly advocated the rape of ‘gentile’ women.” Prof. Cheyfitz is also a defender of Hamas which he considers to be a “liberation” movement rather than a murderous terrorist organization – something else that is inconsistent and incompatible with Cornell’s core values.

Respectfully and sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Menachem Z. Rosensaft". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent flourish at the end.

Menachem Z. Rosensaft
Adjunct Professor of Law, Cornell Law School

