

# [***Billionaire Leon Cooperman Cutting Off Donations To Columbia Over Student Protests Of Israel-Hamas War***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:69GS-1G91-JBCM-F3TX-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 786 words

**Byline:** Molly Bohannon, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** Speaking on a Fox Business show Wednesday, billionaire hedge fund founder Leon Cooperman said he thinks college students have sh\*\* for brains.

**Body**

**Topline**

Billionaire hedge fund founder and Columbia University graduate Leon Cooperman said Wednesday he would no longer donate to the Ivy League school after students held protests critical of Israel during its war with militant group Hamas marking the latest billionaire to denounce student demonstrations and withhold donations over it.

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Speaking on a Fox Business show Wednesday, billionaire hedge fund founder Leon Cooperman said he thinks college students have sh\*\* for brains. (Photo by: Adam Jeffery/CNBC/NBCU Photo Bank/NBCUniversal via Getty Images)

NBCU Photo Bank/NBCUniversal via Getty Images

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**Key Facts**

Cooperman criticized the pro-Palestinian protests held by Columbia students while speaking on Fox Business s**The Claman Countdown**on Wednesday,sayinghe thinks college students have sh\*\* for brains.

Unless he sees a change, Cooperman said he will suspend my giving and donate to other organizations, adding Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East and only reliable American ally in the Middle East.

Hundreds of students at Columbia participated in a walk-out Wednesday to protest Israel amid its war against Hamas, including a blockade of the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, weeks after several student groups urged Columbia tocut tieswith Israel, according tostudent newspaperthe**Columbia Spectator**.

Cooperman also called for the firing of Professor Joseph Massad, whoteachesmodern Arab ***politics*** and intellectual history andpublished an articleon October 8 describing Hamas deadly attack on Israel as awesome and astounding.

There is currently a student-startedpetitioncirculating calling for Massad s firing from Columbia that has garnered more than 59,000 signatures.

Earlier this week, Columbia announced it was postponing its annual Giving Day fundraiser amid the Israel-Hamas conflict, saying we decided that this is not the appropriate time to move forward with Columbia Giving Day, CNNreported.

**Forbes**has reached out to Columbia and Massad for comment.

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Pro-Israel demonstrators sing a song during a protest at Columbia University, Thursday, Oct. 12, 2023, in New York, shortly after the early October Hamas attack. (AP Photo/Yuki Iwamura, File)

Associated Press

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**Big Number**

About $50 million. That s how much Cooperman told Fox Business he has donated to Columbia in the years since he graduated from its business school in 1967.**Forbes**has reached out to Columbia University to see if it could verify Cooperman s donations.

**Tangent**

At least two other billionaires have vowed to stop giving money to elite universities or caused other stirs over similar controversies. At the University of Pennsylvania, billionaire Apollo Global Management CEO Marc Rowan accused the university of antisemitism andcalledon donors to close their checkbooks until the school s president and board chair resign. Specifically, Rowan expressed frustration that Penn hosted a Palestinian literature festival in September, saying speakers at the festival advocated ethnic cleansing of Jews. At Harvard University, billionaire Bill Ackman publicly criticized a group of students who released a letter blaming Israel for Hamas attack earlier this month,calling fortheir names to be released so they don t get hired. Former Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan also announced he would no longer participate in fellowships at Harvard due to the school s response, or lack thereof, to what hecalled dangerous anti-Semitism by students. More than a dozen large Harvard donorstoldthe**New York Times**they had a right to weigh in on the school s response to the Israel-Hamas conflict.

**Forbes Valuation**

**Forbes**estimates Cooperman to be worth$2.8 billionas of Thursday, making him the 1,056th wealthiest person in the world. Cooperman worked in Goldman Sachs' asset management division and founded hedge fund Omega Advisors in 1991. He has said he plans to give most of his fortune away and has been moving his assets into his charitable foundation.

**Key Background**

Israel and Hamas have been at war since the Gaza-based militant group attacked Israel in early October, killing about 1,400 Israelis and taking hundreds of hostages. Since the start of the war, more than 6,000 Palestinians have been reported dead by the Hamas-run Health Ministry though there aredoubts around that numberas it is provided by the militant group and thousands more have been injured. As of Thursday, Israel was reportedly still preparing for a ground invasion into Gaza, though officialsagreed to delaythe invasion for several days to allow for more time to recover hostages and so the U.S. military can move defenses to the region, the**Wall Street Journal**reported.

**Further Reading**

**Load-Date:** October 28, 2023

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