

# [***Jewish Professor Says Columbia Barred Him From Campus***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BVS-6RF1-DY68-104B-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** Suzanne Blake

**Highlight:** Shai Davidai, an assistant professor in the management division of Columbia Business School, claims he has been banned from campus.

**Body**

A Jewish professor at Columbia University says he has been barred from campus after criticizing the university's response to [*antisemitism in the rise of Free Palestine protests.*](https://www.newsweek.com/columbia-protest-antisemitism-allegations-1892698?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)

Shai Davidai, an assistant professor in the management division of Columbia Business School, said he has been banned from campus after being vocal against the Free Palestine movement on campus and the lack of protection from the university for Jewish members of the community.

"I have not just a civil right as a Jewish person to be on campus," Davidai is shown saying in a video released by @UESpeeps on X, formerly [*Twitter*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/twitter?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships). "I have a right as a professor employed by the university to be on campus."

Columbia's chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine first started a petition on April 9 asking the university to fire Davidai over his "bully(ing) pro-Palestine students of color." The petition has now surpassed more than 8,000 signatures.

"Under the guise of fighting antisemitism, he uses his Twitter and [*Instagram*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/instagram?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) accounts to incite harassment and violence against these students," the petition read. "Shai's usage of his social media platform to harass students is a clear violation of university policy and an abuse of power from a faculty member."

Davidai has grown prominent across the Columbia campus after a video went viral showing him criticizing the university's response to the October 7 attack by [*Hamas*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/hamas?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

"I want you to know one thing. We cannot protect your child," Davidai said at a vigil just weeks after the Hamas attack. "I'm speaking to you as a dad, and I want you to know, we cannot protect your children from pro-terror student organizations, because the president of Columbia University will not speak out against pro-terror student organizations."

*Newsweek* has reached out to Davidai and Columbia University for comment.

"The truth is not up for election," Davidai previously told [*the Columbia Spectator*](https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2024/04/17/sjp-petition-calls-for-termination-of-business-school-professor-shai-davidai/). "Just because you get 7,000 people to sign up on your lies doesn't make it the truth. If you get 700,000 people to sign a petition about lies, doesn't make it the truth. ... But unfortunately, we have some people, they care for hatred of me and of Israel and of Jews is stronger than their love of the truth."

The petition refers to several policies from the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, including one that advocates against "treating members of a protected class less favorably because of their membership in that class or having a neutral policy or practice that adversely impacts the members of one protected class more than others constitutes discrimination."

A separate petition from Zionist group We Are Tov went live in March after Davidai shared that the university was investigating his social media posts. So far, it has more than 30,000 signatures.

"This is a clear act of retaliation and an attempt to silence me," Davidai said on X last month.

Rabbis at Columbia University have called for Jewish students [*to leave campus*](https://www.newsweek.com/columbia-university-jewish-students-protests-passover-1892747?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) as Free Palestine protesters created an encampment on campus.

"The events of the last few days, especially last night, have made it clear that Columbia University's Public Safety and the [*NYPD*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/nypd?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) cannot guarantee Jewish students' safety in the face of extreme antisemitism and anarchy," Rabbi Elie Buechler, director of OU-LJIC at Columbia/Barnard, said in a WhatsApp message to hundreds of students.

"It deeply pains me to say that I would strongly recommend you return home as soon as possible and remain home until the reality in and around campus has dramatically improved."

He also added: "It is not our job as Jews to ensure our own safety on campus. No one should have to endure this level of hatred, let alone at school."

Since the [*Free Palestine protests*](https://www.newsweek.com/full-list-universities-staging-pro-palestinian-protests-1833807?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) started, there have been reports of activists calling for violence against Israel, which was targeted in the October 7 attack by Hamas that killed 1,200 people. Since then, Israel has undertaken a widespread military operation in Gaza, killing more than 34,000 Palestinians, according to the Associated Press.

Video footage from Columbia has shown protestors holding a sign reading "Al-Qasam's next targets," looking at a group of Jewish students who were counter-protesting and waving Israel's flag. Al-Qassam refers to terrorist group Hamas' military units.

Demonstrators have also been heard chanting "Al-Qassam you make us proud, kill another soldier now," and "We say justice, you say how. Burn Tel Aviv to the ground," [*Fox News*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/fox-news?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) reported.

More than 100 protesters were arrested last week as a result of their involvement with the encampment on campus.

"Yesterday, what we saw is that the pro-terrorist student organizations have crossed the line to being an actual terror organization," Davidai previously told Fox News.

Davidai added that the university permits faculty to support the encampment on campus.

"All the faculty that were named in the congressional hearing, and more, are not just egging them on, not just cheering them on, but they have been repeatedly showing up in the illegal encampment of terrorists and telling them to keep going and encouraging them to fight until the end, no matter what," Davidai said.

"And finally, they are being encouraged by the administration, who did a big show on Thursday of bringing in the NYPD, arrested 108 students for trespassing, and like a turnstile, brought them back on campus."

Since Davidai has lost professor privileges to enter Columbia, other faculty have come out in support of him at the highly-charged university.

"As far as I can tell, he only has voiced complaints that Columbia has not done enough to protect Jewish students from harassment on campus," Paul Beck, a professor emeritus of political science at The Ohio State University, told *Newsweek.*

"Seems to me, if that is all it is, to be an exercise in free speech that should be protected as academic freedom. It is a sad spectacle indeed when extremists on both sides of this controversial issue are targeting individuals rather than sticking to the facts about the situation in Israel and Gaza.

"Speech is one thing, but hate speech goes too far, and Columbia has a responsibility to repudiate it and to take action when speech degenerates into physical violence."

Universities across the country have been grappling with how to balance ensuring freedom of speech while keeping campuses safe for Jewish students and professors. Still, many believe that calling the pro-Palestine demonstrations antisemitic is a false notion.

"What we see broadly is a weaponization of accusations of antisemitism that are grounded on false assumptions that equate Israel with Jews and confuse and conflate the ***politics*** of a nation-state with Jewish people," Atalia Omer, a professor of religion, conflict, and peace studies at the University of Notre Dame, told *Newsweek.*

"I do not think the Free Palestine protests are unsafe for Jews," Omer added. "There are many Jewish activists in those spaces. Many Jewish American Palestine solidarity activists are outraged by what is happening in their name and are screaming, 'Never again for anyone.'"

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2381771/palestine-protest.jpg)

**Graphic**

Palestine protest

Andrew Lichtenstein/Corbis via Getty Images

For the fifth day, pro-Palestinian students occupy a central lawn on the Columbia University campus, on April 21, 2024 in New York City. Earlier in the week over 100 students were arrested by the police and suspended by the university for demonstrating against the war in Gaza and demanding the University divest from Israel.

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