

## Antisemitism on Campus, Pre-October 7th

Unlike many other universities, Penn's antisemitism problem did not begin on October 7th. The Palestine Writes Festival in September 2023 at Penn was a clear example of this. What was disguised as an off-campus event to showcase the cultural aspects of Palestine were speakers full of hate. Take Roger Waters for example, a white male singer with no connection to the history of Palestine, but yet a deep history of antisemitism. This is the same man who dressed up as a SS Nazi Officer at a concert and spewed hateful and inflammatory remarks such as "go back to Eastern Europe, or the United States, or where you came from" and "religious supremacy, the idea that the Jewish people are somehow superior to everybody else on the planet but particularly the Arabs, the Palestinian Arabs...the Israeli state who believe that the Jewish people are superior, more important than any of those people, those people's lives are worthless". To invite a man who is consistently wrong and consistently antisemitic to an event is dangerous. The University eventually barred Mr. Waters attended the event in person, but the damage was done. Already the press was showcasing the issues that were deeply ingrained at Penn and calling on the leadership to step down. The Penn donors were furious to allow such an event to take place in the very same buildings they had helped build. Many Jewish students did not feel safe to be there that weekend. This was all pre-October 7th massacre. Not to mention many of the speakers at that conference deny the atrocities that took place on October 7th or some even justifying them.

The University of Pennsylvania had tried to distance itself from the event claiming that the organizers are just using their buildings but the event is not sponsored by the university itself. But it is still discouraging and damaging to have this type of hate being allowed on campus. Not to mention that many of the speeches and rhetoric that were said on campus were factually incorrect and

deeply alarming for any Jews or Israelis who attend the university. The Palestine Writes Festival was an embarrassment for Penn which ultimately led to the demise of Penn's former President Liz Magill. It started to showcase the entrenched antisemitism issue on Penn's campus which unfortunately only got worse since. Penn is supposed to be a place of free speech but not hate speech, a place where all students can be respected and feel safe. Unfortunately this festival was all but that.