

## Civil liberties group sues Columbia University over suspension of pro-Palestinian groups

Anadolu Agency (AA)

March 12, 2024 Tuesday

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**Length:** 448 words

**Byline:** Diyar Gldođan |

### Body

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WASHINGTON

The New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) and Palestine Legal announced a lawsuit Tuesday against Columbia University for the school's suspension of two student groups opposed to the war in the Gaza Strip.

"Universities should be havens for robust debate, discussion, and learning — not sites of censorship where administrators, donors, and politicians squash political discourse they don't approve of," Executive Director of NYCLU Donna Lieberman said in a statement.

The groups were suspended after they organized a Nov. 9 student walkout, which the university said was "unauthorized" and the groups had "repeatedly violated" school policies.

NYCLU said the groups were "unlawfully" suspended for "engaging in peaceful protest" supporting Palestinian rights.

"These student groups were peacefully speaking out on a critical global conflict, only to have Columbia University ignore their own longstanding, existing rules and abruptly suspend the organizations...Students protesting at private colleges still have the right to fair, equal treatment — and we are ready to fight that battle in court," said Lieberman.

Maryam Alwan, an organizer with the school's chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine, said Columbia University has a robust history of peaceful protest, from 1968 to 1985, that "it now champions solely in retrospect and when convenient."

"As a Palestinian-American student, I should have the same right to speak out on my campus as everyone else—and no amount of targeted policy changes or illegitimate suspensions will prevent us from advocating for the Palestinian people," added Alwan.

## Civil liberties group sues Columbia University over suspension of pro- Palestinian groups

Cameron Jones, an organizer with Columbia's chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace, said the university must protect all Jewish students and voices, not just those adhering to a specific political belief.

"The university's decision to suspend a Jewish group sets a concerning precedent for safeguarding free speech on college campuses. It not only took away our rights as a club, but told us that our university does not support or respect anti-Zionist Jews or their beliefs," said Jones.

In February, NYCLU said in a letter to Columbia that the groups were "unlawfully" suspended for "engaging in peaceful protest" supporting Palestinian rights, and urged the school to reinstate Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) chapters by March 1.

While private universities in New York are not bound by the First Amendment, New York's highest court has established that disciplinary actions of any university in the state against students or student organizations must proceed in accordance with the school's rules and guidelines, according to a statement.

## Classification

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** 400

**Subject:** STUDENTS & STUDENT LIFE (93%); CIVIC & SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS (90%); HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS (90%); ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICTS (90%); LITIGATION (90%); NEGATIVE MISC NEWS (90%); PROTESTS & DEMONSTRATIONS (90%); STUDENT ACTIVISM (90%); SUITS & CLAIMS (90%); YOUTH CLUBS & ACTIVITIES (90%); COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (89%); MIDDLE EAST PROTESTS & UPRISINGS (89%); JEWS & JUDAISM (88%); EDUCATION REGULATION & POLICY (78%); STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS (78%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (77%); CENSORSHIP (73%); LAW COURTS & TRIBUNALS (72%); ELECTIONS & POLITICS (71%); EXECUTIVES (71%); SUPREME COURTS (67%)

**Industry:** COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (89%)

**Geographic:** NEW YORK, USA (93%); STATE OF PALESTINE (96%); UNITED STATES (92%); ISRAEL (79%)

**Load-Date:** March 12, 2024

## Elite University Sued Over Suspension Of Two Pro-Palestinian Student Groups

The Daily Caller

March 12, 2024 Tuesday 08:07 PM EST

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**Section:** DAILY-CALLER-NEWS-FOUNDATION; education

**Length:** 491 words

**Byline:** Brandon Poulter, Contributor, brandonp.dcnf@gmail.com

### Body

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[Link to Image](#)

The New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) sued Columbia University over its decision to suspend multiple pro-Palestinian student groups on campus.

Columbia suspended the university's Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) chapters in November for the fall term. The NYCLU alleges that the school violated "its own policies and procedures" when suspending the organizations, according to the lawsuit. **(RELATED: Embattled Ivy League Professor Amy Wax Alleges School Attempting To 'Punish' Her For Conservative Speech)**

"Universities should be havens for robust debate, discussion, and learning - not sites of censorship where administrators, donors, and politicians squash political discourse they don't approve of," Donna Lieberman, executive director of the NYCLU, said in a press release. "These student groups were peacefully speaking out on a critical global conflict, only to have Columbia University ignore their own longstanding, existing rules and abruptly suspend the organizations. That's retaliatory, it's targeted, and it flies in the face of the free speech principles that institutes of higher learning should be defending."

[Link to Image](#)

NEW YORK, NEW YORK - NOVEMBER 20: Caps and gowns are seen on a gate as people gather to protest the banning of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) at Columbia University on November 20, 2023 in New York City. (Photo by Michael M. Santiago/Getty Images)

"Columbia University has a robust history of peaceful protest, from 1968 to 1985, that it now champions solely in retrospect and when convenient," Maryam Alwan, an organizer for the school's Students for Justice in Palestine chapter, said in the press release.

The groups accused the university of holding an "unauthorized event" in November, which "included threatening rhetoric and intimidation." The "unauthorized event" in question was a walkout on Nov. 9, according to the Columbia Spectator.

Multiple student organizations at colleges and universities held pro-Palestinian rallies on campus following the Oct. 7 terrorist attacks on Israel, some of which used violent anti-Israel slogans. Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis

## Elite University Sued Over Suspension Of Two Pro-Palestinian Student Groups

ordered two state universities to shutdown campus SJP chapters, and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) sued, arguing the organizations were being unfairly punished for statements made by the national organization.

Columbia did not immediately respond to the Daily Caller News Foundation's request for comment.

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## Graphic

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NEW YORK, NEW YORK - FEBRUARY 02: Protestors demonstrate near Columbia University on February 02, 2024 in New York City. (Photo by Alexi J. Rosenfeld/Getty Images)

## Classification

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Web Publication

**Subject:** STUDENTS & STUDENT LIFE (94%); CIVIC & SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS (90%); COLLEGE STUDENTS (90%); EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES (90%); HUMAN RIGHTS & CIVIL LIBERTIES LAW (90%); PRESS RELEASES (90%); SUITS & CLAIMS (90%); YOUTH CLUBS & ACTIVITIES (90%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (89%); COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (89%); HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS (89%); NEGATIVE MISC NEWS (89%); PROTESTS & DEMONSTRATIONS (89%); CENSORSHIP (78%); COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (78%); FREEDOM OF SPEECH (78%); LITIGATION (78%); STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS (78%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (78%); BIPARTISANSHIP (76%); NEGATIVE NEWS (76%); POLITICS (75%); ELECTIONS & POLITICS (74%); TERRORISM & COUNTERTERRORISM (74%); NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN RELATIONS (71%); EXECUTIVES (69%); TERRORIST ATTACKS (60%); TERRORISM (50%); columbia-university (%); education (%); students-for-justice-in-palestine (%); newsletter-none (%); uncategorized (%)

**Company:** GETTY IMAGES INC (54%)

**Organization:** COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY (94%)

**Industry:** NAICS518210 COMPUTING INFRASTRUCTURE PROVIDERS, DATA PROCESSING, WEB HOSTING, AND RELATED SERVICES (54%); NAICS541430 GRAPHIC DESIGN SERVICES (54%); NAICS541922 COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHY (54%); SIC7336 COMMERCIAL ART & GRAPHIC DESIGN SERVICES (54%); SIC7374 COMPUTER PROCESSING & DATA PREPARATION & PROCESSING SERVICES (54%); COLLEGE STUDENTS (90%); COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (89%); COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (78%); EDUCATIONAL SERVICES (73%)

## Elite University Sued Over Suspension Of Two Pro-Palestinian Student Groups

**Person:** RON DESANTIS (79%)

**Geographic:** NEW YORK, NY, USA (92%); NEW YORK, USA (94%); STATE OF PALESTINE (94%); ISRAEL (79%); UNITED STATES (79%)

**Load-Date:** March 12, 2024

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## NYCLU AND PALESTINE LEGAL SUE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY OVER STUDENT GROUP SUSPENSION

Targeted News Service

March 13, 2024 Wednesday 8:40 AM EST

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**Length:** 797 words

**Byline:** Targeted News Service

**Dateline:** NEW YORK

### Body

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New York Civil Liberties Union issued the following news release on March 12, 2024:

The New York Civil Liberties Union and Palestine Legal today announced a lawsuit against Columbia University for the unlawful suspension of its chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) for engaging in peaceful protest.

"Universities should be havens for robust debate, discussion, and learning -- not sites of censorship where administrators, donors, and politicians squash political discourse they don't approve of," said Donna Lieberman, Executive Director of the New York Civil Liberties Union. "These student groups were peacefully speaking out on a critical global conflict, only to have Columbia University ignore their own longstanding, existing rules and abruptly suspend the organizations. That's retaliatory, it's targeted, and it flies in the face of the free speech principles that institutes of higher learning should be defending. Students protesting at private colleges still have the right to fair, equal treatment -- and we are ready to fight that battle in court."

"Columbia University has a robust history of peaceful protest, from 1968 to 1985, that it now champions solely in retrospect and when convenient," said Maryam Alwan, an organizer with Columbia's chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine. "Ivy League institutions should not attract students who value justice and equality if they do not want to be held accountable for the ideals that they claim to uphold. As a Palestinian-American student, I should have the same right to speak out on my campus as everyone else--and no amount of targeted policy changes or illegitimate suspensions will prevent us from advocating for the Palestinian people."

"Columbia must protect all Jewish students and voices, not just those adhering to a specific political belief," said Cameron Jones, an organizer with Columbia's chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace. "The university's decision to suspend a Jewish group sets a concerning precedent for safeguarding free speech on college campuses. It not only took away our rights as a club, but told us that our university does not support or respect anti-Zionist Jews or their beliefs. This suspension has not and will not hinder our organizing efforts, though -- as Jews, we acknowledge the significant privilege we hold regarding this issue and are committed to exerting every effort to maintain pressure on our institution until they enact the concrete changes we need."

## NYCLU AND PALESTINE LEGAL SUE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY OVER STUDENT GROUP SUSPENSION

"For decades, Columbia students have been at the forefront of speaking out against segregation, war and apartheid and SJP and JVP sit squarely in this tradition," said Radhika Sainath, Palestine Legal Senior Staff Attorney. "It is precisely because these principled students pose a threat to the status quo that they are being targeted for McCarthyist censorship, but the law does not allow it. Universities must abide by their own rules and may not punish student groups speaking out for Palestinian rights in the moment when they are most essential - even if donors and lobby groups complain."

This action follows the NYCLU's letter (<https://www.nyclu.org/en/press-releases/nyclu-threatens-sue-columbia-university-over-student-group-suspension>) to Columbia University administrators sent on February 29th, calling on them to reinstate both SJP and JVP chapters immediately after singling out and unlawfully suspending both groups for participating in a peaceful student demonstration and temporary art installation in support of Palestinian rights.

While private universities in New York are not bound by the First Amendment, New York's highest court has established that the disciplinary actions of any university in New York against its students or student organizations must proceed in accordance with the university's own rules and guidelines. There were several instances in which the university violated its own policies in order to punish SJP and JVP, as well as baselessly and irresponsibly accusing the groups of threats and intimidation -- raising grave concerns that its actions were improperly motivated by the student groups' political stance in support of Palestinian rights.

NYCLU attorneys bringing the challenge include Veronica Salama, Camara Hudson, Lourdes Chavez, Lupe Victoria Aguirre, and Christopher Dunn. Attorneys from Palestine Legal include Radhika Sainath and Sabiya Ahamed.

Visit the case page (<https://www.nyclu.org/en/cases/columbia-students-justice-palestine-jewish-voice-peace-v-columbia-university>) for additional materials.

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Original text here: <https://www.nyclu.org/en/press-releases/nyclu-and-palestine-legal-sue-columbia-university-over-student-group-suspension>

[Category: Law/Legal]

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## Classification

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newswire

**Subject:** CIVIC & SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS (90%); EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES (90%); HUMAN RIGHTS & CIVIL LIBERTIES LAW (90%); HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS (90%); LITIGATION (90%); NEGATIVE MISC NEWS (90%); PROTESTS & DEMONSTRATIONS (90%); STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS (90%); STUDENTS & STUDENT LIFE (90%); SUITS & CLAIMS (90%); YOUTH CLUBS & ACTIVITIES (90%); COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (89%); JEWS & JUDAISM (89%); PRESS RELEASES (78%); NEGATIVE NEWS (77%); STUDENT ACTIVISM (77%); CENSORSHIP (76%); LAWYERS (75%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (72%); EXECUTIVES (71%); ELECTIONS & POLITICS (70%)

**Company:** NEW YORK RESTAURANT GROUP INC (91%)

# NYCLU AND PALESTINE LEGAL SUE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY OVER STUDENT GROUP SUSPENSION

**Organization:** COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY (94%)

**Industry:** SIC5812 EATING PLACES (91%); COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (89%); LAWYERS (75%)

**Geographic:** NEW YORK, USA (94%); STATE OF PALESTINE (95%); UNITED STATES (79%)

**Load-Date:** March 13, 2024

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