



Possible Terrorist Ties to U.S. Campus Protests

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The current wave of anti-Israel demonstrations on U.S. college campuses appears to have ties to organizations that might have either received funds from or provided funds to Hamas.

While President Biden was right, if late, to condemn on May 2 the non-peaceful aspects of the demonstrations, he and his administration must recognize and respond to the possible involvement of international and domestic groups connected to Hamas and other terrorist organizations. Similarly, while Congress has initiated important steps to hold university administrators accountable, it should investigate whether and to what extent foreign terrorist groups maintain ties to these demonstrations, particularly any direct organization or funding.

What Happened?

- On May 10, Rep. Mark Green (R-TN), Chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, and Rep. August Pfluger (R-TX), Chairman of the Committee's Subcommittee on Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement, and Intelligence, sent a [letter](#) to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) "requesting information and documents pertaining to any efforts by DHS and FBI to assist law enforcement and other partners in response to the anti-Semitic, pro-Hamas mobs on college campuses."
- On April 17, the day that Columbia University President Minouche Shafik, Law Professor David Schizer, and Board Co-Chairs Claire Shipman and David Greenwald testified before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, a "Gaza Solidarity Encampment" was established on campus. The following day, the New York Police Department (NYPD), arrested over 100 individuals for trespassing, including the daughter of Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN).
 - » The chants of those participating in the encampments featured overtly antisemitic rhetoric not tied to events in Gaza, including ["Go back to Poland! Go back to Belarus!"](#)
 - » In less than a [week](#), over 40 college campuses across the United States and Canada had encampments set up, and university administrators adjusted regular programming due to safety concerns.
 - » Between April 17 and May 2, there were nearly 2,000 [reported](#) arrests or detainments across university campuses.
 - » University administrators have adopted a range of responses, with many working with law enforcement to arrest those who either committed violence, trespassed or damaged property, but many are still considering—or [have acceded to](#)—protestors' demands.

Why Is It Important?

- The encampments established on college campuses since April 17 are notable not only in their pronounced antisemitic rhetoric and support for Hamas and its actions, but also for their potential ties to groups associated with Hamas and other terrorist groups. The Biden administration and Congress must investigate whether any aspect of the protests and their organizers are part of a homeland security threat network and whether there are any ties to foreign terrorist groups.
- Some of the organizations responsible for planning and directing the encampments, particularly the National Students for Justice in Palestine (NSJP) – which has been posting updates about the encampments – and its umbrella organization, American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), appear to have direct ties to groups associated with Hamas.
 - » NSJP and AMP have been active in anti-Israel campus protests across the country since the current wave began.
 - National Students for Justice in Palestine (NSJP), which boasts roughly 250 chapters across the United States, [announced](#) on April 20 on its website and on social media the establishment of the “popular university for Gaza” – the name many of the encampments have taken – “a coordinated pressure campaign against university administrations and trustees to immediately divest from the israeli [sic] state.”
 - The organization, which on October 8 published a “Day of Resistance toolkit” that featured a Hamas paraglider and equated their actions with demonstrations, has been publishing updates on its social media platforms regarding different events surrounding the encampments.
 - American Muslims for Palestine (AMP) describes itself as a “grassroots organization dedicated to advancing the movement for justice in Palestine by educating the American public about Palestine and its rich cultural, historical and religious heritage and through grassroots mobilization and advocacy.”
 - The organization has routinely promoted NSJP’s updates on the encampments and has published statements in support of the demonstrations, including a May 2 [statement](#) “on Biden’s Failure to Protect Students” where the organization claimed the White House was trying to “publicly rewrite the narrative about these students’ peaceful protest, implicating and endangering our communities and our students.”
 - » The two organizations (NSJP and AMP) were founded as off-shoots of [three](#) Hamas-linked charities that shut down after they were unable to pay damages they owed to the family of a victim who was killed in a terrorist attack.
 - The Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF), Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), and the American Muslim Society (AMS) have been found by the United States Government to have provided funds to Hamas and were the defendants in a lawsuit filed by the parents of a victim of terrorism, David Boim. All three organizations shut down claiming to not be able to continue operations due to the financial burden of the damages they owed to the Boim family.
 - In December 2001, U.S. Treasury Department [blocked](#) the assets of HLF over its provision of “financial and material support to the terrorist organization HAMAS [sic].” As part of that action, according to the Treasury Department [press release](#), federal agents “locked down the Holy Land Foundation’s headquarters in Richardson, Texas,

- as well as its three other offices in Bridgeview, Illinois, Patterson, New Jersey, and San Diego, California, securing their offices and taking custody of relevant business records.”
- In 2004, the parents of David Boim – a teenager killed in the West Bank – sued the three organizations, and [won](#) \$156 million in damages.
 - In 2008, after a 15-year long investigative effort by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, HLF and five of its leaders [were](#) “convicted of funneling more than \$12 million to the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas.”
 - In 2009, HLF and five of its leaders were [sentenced](#) in a federal court in Dallas “on charges of providing material support to Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization.”
 - Not having received the damages owed to them by the three organizations from the earlier lawsuit, in 2021, Boim’s parents sued AMP on the basis of the assertion that the organization and its financial backer, Americans for Justice in Palestine Educational Foundation (AJP) was continuing the work of IAP and AMS – a lawsuit that in 2022 a federal judge in Chicago [allowed](#) to proceed, explaining that “the pertinent factors identified by the Seventh Circuit and discussed by the parties support the Boims’ claim that entity defendants are liable for the *Boim I* judgement as alter egos of Holy Land and AMS/IAP.”
 - According to the 2021 [lawsuit](#), when it was time for HLF, IAP and AMS to pay the Boim family due to the outcome of the 2004 lawsuit, the organizations “claimed to be out of business and to have ceased operations.”
 - The lawsuit further describes that although it seemed that “the *Boim Action* brought an end to these organizations and their ability to continue raising money” that “that was not the case,” since “At the end of 2005, after a short quiet period, a purportedly new organization emerged under a new name, ‘American Muslims for Palestine,’ or ‘AMP,’ but with the same fundamental mission and purpose of IAP/AMS.”
 - The lawsuit [alleges](#) that “AMP/AJP ended up with largely the same core leadership of IAP/AMS” and that “[u]tilizing and attaching this former IAP/AMS leadership was critical to AMP moving forward and achieving success.”
 - Salah Sarsour, a national board member of AMP, is according to the Boims’ 2021 lawsuit “deeply connected to Hamas figures in the Middle East and has a background as a Hamas operative and founder. He was imprisoned in Israel on October 14, 1994 for activities on behalf of Hamas.”
 - » At least one AMP member who had previously belonged to the Hamas-linked charities has been involved in post-October 7 agitation, including appearing as a ringleader in current demonstrations.
 - Osama Abuirshaid, the Executive Director and board member of AMP, was according to the Boims’ 2021 lawsuit “on the board of IAP/AMS through 2004 and was the editor of IAP’s newspaper, *Al-Zaytounah*.”
 - In October 2023, Abuirshaid [participated](#) in a protest in front of the Capitol and criticized President Biden’s remarks calling for

opposing both antisemitism and Islamophobia. Abuirshaid said, “Mr. President, you have failed the test. You broke your promise to restore America’s moral authority.”

- Abuirshad was [reported](#) to have participated in campus encampments.
- » On May 1, a [lawsuit](#) was filed on behalf of “nine American and Israeli victims” of the October 7 attack against both NSJP and AMP/AJP for “participating in the terrorist’s propaganda to justify its appalling brutalities” and alleges that the organizations “knowingly provide continuous, systematic, and substantial assistance to Hamas and its affiliates’ acts of international terrorism.” The lawsuit alleges that AMP “serves as Hamas’s propaganda division in the United States.”
- Protestors and organizations involved in the protests have also received assistance, including financial support and training, from groups alleged to have ties to terrorist networks.
 - » The Attorney General of Virginia opened an [investigation](#) in October of 2023 into AJP/AMP over allegations “that the organization may have used funds raised for impermissible purposes under state law, including benefitting or providing support to terrorist organizations.”
 - » On May 3, *The Wall Street Journal* [noted](#) a March “Resistance 101” training held at Columbia with Vancouver-based Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network, which was founded as part of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and which Israel [designated](#) as a terrorist organization in 2021, and the German government banned in November 2023.
 - *The Wall Street Journal* notes that Samidoun “celebrated the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel.”
 - On May 9, Jerusalem-based NGO Monitor [published](#) a report noting that PFLP “has had a strong presence at encampments, demonstrations, and riots on American college campuses” which has included students “carrying PFLP posters, flying the PFLP flag, hosting PFLP-linked speakers, and reading PFLP publications.”

What Should the United States Do Next?

- The president should direct law enforcement authorities to investigate potential ties between organizations involved in the campus protests and foreign terrorist networks, including Hamas.
- Congress should invite the Director of National Intelligence and representatives from other relevant national security agencies for closed door briefings to understand the known scope of connections between Hamas and other terrorist organizations, if any, with these demonstrations.
 - » Given the fact at least 33 Americans were killed in the October 7 terrorist attack and many still are being held hostage by Hamas in Gaza, Congress should insist law enforcement agencies devote additional resources to fully enforce all statues aimed at preventing material support for Hamas and other terrorist organizations.
 - » Congress should consider potential legislation to increase transparency into foreign funding sources of universities and create mechanisms to coordinate with major banks regarding instances of foreign adversary funds being transferred to these universities.

- The House Oversight and Accountability Committee and other relevant oversight committees should conduct aggressive oversight into organizations reported to be leading, financing, and participating in the pro-Hamas protests that have engaged in illegal conduct.
 - » Congress and the Executive Branch should develop new initiatives for working with universities and local and federal law enforcement to better identify and share information about the scope of the post-October 7 threats to Jewish students on campuses to better ensure student safety.