

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
BOARD OF VISITORS  
Finance and Land Use Committee Meeting  
February 13, 2025  
Meeting Minutes**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chair Pence; Vice Chair Rosen; Visitor Alacbay; Executive Vice President Dickenson; Faculty Representatives: Shutika, Venigalla

**ABSENT:** Visitor Peterson

**ALSO PRESENT:** President Washington; Rector Stimpson; Faculty Representative Simmons; Staff Representative Spence; Student Representatives: Cuesta, Hoffman

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Pence called the meeting to order at 12:32 p.m.

**II. Approval of Minutes for December 5, 2024 (ACTION ITEM)**

Chair Pence called for any corrections to the minutes for the Finance and Land Use Committee Meeting for December 5, 2024. Hearing no corrections, the **MINUTES STOOD APPROVED AS WRITTEN.**

**III. Financial Matters**

**A. FY 2025 Q2 Financial Report**

Chair Pence turned the meeting over to Deb Dickenson, Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration. Ms. Dickenson noted that the FY26 Tuition and fee recommendations were informed by discussions at the December Finance and Land Use Committee meeting, the Governor's proposed budget, and both House and Senate budget recommendations. Ms. Dickenson highlighted the importance of voting on next year's Room and Board rates now to give parents and students the required information to make important financial decisions. Ms. Dickenson handed off to the Vice President for Finance, Dan Stephens.

Mr. Stephens shared the financial report for the FY25 Q2 Budget and Actuals:

- Year-to-date revenues are trending 10% ahead of prior year and expect to finish the year on a positive note;
- Primary drivers of increased revenue are Enrollment, State Appropriations, Grants & Contracts, and Auxiliary Enterprises;
- Expenses are trending 7% higher than the prior year;
- Largest cost drivers are compensation and contract expenses;
- Operating expenses continue to be monitored and cost reductions sought where possible.

Mr. Stephens reviewed the FY25 Q2 E&G Operating Budget and Actuals:

- Revenues trending 9% higher and expect the next half of the year to trend similarly;
- Primary drivers are State Appropriations and increased Net Tuition and Fees;
- Expenses are trending 2% over the prior year;
- Drivers for the increase are compensation increases and contractual services;
- Expecting to finish the year in a surplus.

## **B. FY 2025 Budget Planning**

Ms. Dickenson continued with an update on the recent Moody's Ratings Affirmation of George Mason's Aa3 issuer rating and GMUF's A1 lease revenue bonds rating with a stable outlook.

Visitor Alacbay and Ms. Dickenson discussed the university's debt, which is currently \$398M in total outstanding debt, noting that Mason currently has debt capacity. Mason also has auxiliary reserves and the Patriot Investment Fund which are used for investment, research, capital, and deferred maintenance.

Ms. Dickenson updated the Board on the Commonwealth's budget development, with the House budget proposing \$10.7M in additional operations funding, while the Senate recommends \$4.6M. President Washington noted the university's positive position, with either scenario exceeding George Mason's \$18M in operating funds request or this biennium.

Mr. Stephens reviewed the three FY26 and FY27 E&G Operating Budget Planning Scenarios.

- The different scenarios include enrollment growth from 0% to 1.5% and tuition increases from 0% to 2.5%.
- 3% salary increases and 30% VMSDEP participation growth are included in all scenarios;
- George Mason is responsible for roughly half the impact of the salary increases approved by the Commonwealth, which is approximately \$10M each year;
- The impacts range from positive \$1M in FY26 and a \$6M deficit in with 2.5% tuition and 1.5% increase each year, to deficits of \$3M and \$22M each year with flat tuition both years and flat enrollment in FY27.

Rector Stimson and Mr. Stephens discussed the 3% salary increase as it relates to CPI and the fiscal impact of the executive orders. Mr. Stephens confirmed the incremental impact reflects budget impact and additional state funding requests indicate offsets to the Incremental Impact in response to Vice Chair Rosen's question.

Chair Pence requested analysis on the net cost of additional enrollment, inclusive of aid and incremental operating expenses. President Washington stated that additional costs are calculated within each scenario showing a net positive value for adding additional students with Ms. Dickenson noting recent JLARC studies had shown Mason's

operations to be extremely lean and efficient, so that when the university grows there is no significant growth in expenditures.

### **C. FY 2026 Room and Board Rates**

Julie Zobel, Interim SVP for Operations and Business Services and Chief Risk Officer, presented the FY26 room and board rate recommendations:

- 1.5% housing rate increase of \$120;
- 4% board rate increase of \$230;
- for a 2.5% total increase of room & board of \$350;
- Compared with peers George Mason is one of the more economical options;
- Students and families benefit from having confirmed rates now while they are making important financial decisions about next year.

Student Representative Hoffman noted the need for affordable housing for graduate and professional students. In response to a question from Student Representative Cuesta, Ms. Zoble noted that the Room and Board increases will impact all students and the revenue generated with these increases goes back into housing and dining and is used for a variety of expenses including maintenance, refreshes, renovations, debt service, and utilities.

Visitor Alacbay asked if there is a point that we raise room and board costs that we are no longer competitive with other housing options in the area. Shannon Jordan, Associate Dean and Chief Housing Officer notes that the housing options are not exactly comparable as the room type offerings are different and Mason offers additional support services and amenities that are not offered at off campus housing locations. Mason housing is currently 98% occupied and that will drop to 92% in the Spring Semester which matches a historical pattern. Chair Pence would like to know the occupancy trends for the last three years.

Chair Pence and Visitor Alacbay voiced their concerns on voting with a reduced committee membership but recognized the importance of providing information to students and families. Vice Chair Rosen agreed, clarifying his view that tuition and room and board are separate issues.

Chair Pence **MOVED** the Committee to approve the Fiscal Year 2026 Room and Board Rates as detailed in the Board Book. Visitor Alacbay **SECONDED** the Motion. The **MOTION WAS CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Chair Pence opened discussion of next steps on the budget and tuition scenarios. Ms. Dickenson noted that there would be additional information in the Commonwealth's budget process with President Washington noting that a 2.5% tuition increase is within the Governor's parameters. Vice Chair Rosen noted his disposition to support a 0% tuition increase and would like to see that scenario thoroughly evaluated, noting that the Board should stay cognizant of the affordability and value Mason offers.

Visitor Alacabay asked for classroom utilization rates as the Board is thinking strategically about campus and facility expansion.

Faculty Representative Simmons noted that, given the current 3% CPI, all of the proposed tuition rates below that are essentially a tuition decrease. President Washington noted that if the Board approved no tuition increase in FY26 along with a 2.5% increase for FY27, that would provide certainty for leadership and enable longer-term planning.

Chair Pence mentioned a recent audit related to student financial aid, noting George Mason had been found to have deficiencies and questioned the adequacy of its response.

#### **IV. Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Pence adjourned the meeting at 1:48 pm.

Prepared by secretary pro tem,

Jessica Holtzman

Public Comments  
Updated 2.13.25 at 4:00 p.m.

Full Name:	Mason Affiliation	Written Comment
Joseph jarjourah	Student	Anti-Zionism is not racist in any way. And I would repeat that a million times, Zionism is not related to any religion or race. It is related to a belief that killing Palestinians and being on the oppressive side of a genocide is okay and normal. Being an Anti-Zionist is not in any way causing hatred to a Jewish community but proving a point that Palestinian lives matter. That in fact the idea of proposing that Anti-Zionism is even possibly racist is actually racist towards Palestinians. Because it clearly states that their lives don't matter just because of an incorrect ideology.
Kay Linwood	Community Member	I am deeply disturbed by the pure lack of knowledge an institution holds around an extremist political ideology like Zionism. If you know this as a university and ignore it for financial reasons, remember that no amount of money can buy us out of hell. Condemning students, the ones who pay you for education, for speaking against a humanitarian atrocity is downright atrocious. May you realize the horrible side of history that George Mason University will fall into should it continue to perpetuate violence against students and stand as an institution that upholds the denial of genocide. Shame.
Jane Doe	Faculty	Antizionism is not racism. Antizionism is not racism. Antizionism is not racism.
Fairouz Ouikhlfen	Student	Recommendation for consideration of the alternative, Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism ( <a href="https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/">https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/</a> ) referenced in this explanatory +972 article ( <a href="https://www.972mag.com/ihra-antisemitism-israel-inversion-projection/">https://www.972mag.com/ihra-antisemitism-israel-inversion-projection/</a> ). +972 describes itself as "an independent, online, nonprofit magazine run by a group of Palestinian and Israeli journalists." The university would be committing a fallacy to ignore or override the views of civically engaged Israeli citizens and adjacent reporters such as Democracy Now's Amy Goodman, without careful and unpolitical analysis. Zionism is a political movement involving American Christians in addition to numerous other backgrounds. In aligning it with features students or faculty cannot change about themselves without reasonable distress (ethnic markers, physical appearance, names, ancestry, nationality, or heritage), the university will politicize the fight against hate.
Declan Rees	Student	Conflating criticisms of Zionism as racist will only make the campus less safe. Zionism, unlike the Jewish faith, is an ideology. It is young, only coming into the world stage in the 20th century. It's creation was an attempt to answer the "Jewish Question" and many of its founding members cooperated with known Nazi sympathizers during the holocaust. In its innate principles it pushes for the development and maintenance of Ethno-state in the holy land, an area where many different peoples call to. The subjugation and genocidal aggression to the native Palestinian population sense the Nakba, especially in the past year, has been demoralizing. If you try to make it impossible to criticize the state of Israel or the ideology of Zionism you will be putting countless students in danger. I cannot express it more fervently, do not do this
Robert Zigmund	Staff	I am writing to oppose Jeff Rosen's proposal regarding criticism of Zionism. This proposal is a disgraceful and authoritarian attempt to censor our students in their opposition to genocide.
sara babb	alum	Anti-Zionism is anti-Apartheid. Do not conflate anti-semitism with anti-Zionism. Protect the right to fight for human rights. Reject the proposal of defining anti-

		zionism as racism. The truth is that zionism is racist and led to a genocide of Palestinians.
Laurie B.	Concerned citizen	Anti-zionism is Not racism!
Ryan Nary	Community Member	I am an Arlington resident and thus I share neighborhood space with GMU's Ballston campus. I want to express in the strongest possible terms my opposition to GMU adopting the IHRA definitions of antisemitism, which dangerously conflates criticism of Israel with antisemitism.
Sofia Nicholas	Student	Anti-Zionism is just and necessary. It is resistance to the hegemonic powers trying to steal Palestinian land and life. Anti-Zionism is not antisemitic and conflating the two is dangerous.
Siwar Masannat	Alumnus	The conflation of Zionism with a protected identity, on the one hand, and with Judaism as a religious identity, on the other, is not only erroneous but also dangerous. Zionism is a settler colonial ideology and systematic practice that has resulted in the genocide and successive mass displacement of Palestinians for more than seventy years. Zionism endangers Jewish people and Palestinians alike, and many Jewish people in our GMU community oppose Zionism based on the facts gathered by international agencies and bodies that have found Israel to be guilty of ethnic cleansing, genocide, apartheid, war crimes and torture based on meticulously gathered evidence and verified testimonies. Criminalizing the brave and conscientious actions of students, staff, and faculty who critique and oppose settler colonialism and genocide endangers them, their educational journeys and livelihoods. GMU, this is a shameful and unconscionable measure meant to stifle dissent against genocide and dispossession at a moment of heightened US fascism. Do better.
Stephen D'Alessio	Student	I am writing to oppose the measure from Jeff Rosen to equate all criticism of Zionism with antisemitism. As a George Mason student it is important to me that we oppose antisemitism and make sure that students of all backgrounds are welcomed and empowered. However, all criticism of Zionism is not antisemitic and the rights of students who want to fight for Palestinian rights need to be respected as well. Please oppose this proposal.
Anonymously	Alum and CVPA Board Member	I strongly oppose the proposed adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance(IHRA) Working Definition of Anti-Semitism which conflates Zionism with anti-semitism. Leader across universities and institutions across the country are wary of this definition because of its intention to suppress criticism of Israel. It would shameful and misguided for GMU to adopt a policy which will in turn suppress free speech and any anti-Israel criticism which is not a criticism of Jewishness.
K Hoffman	Community Member	As an institution of higher learning, the inclusion of anti-Zionism in a definition of anti-Semitic activities is a far reach. Please remove all mentions of Zionism in your DEI initiatives. Claiming that Zionism is a Jewish identity is an insult to many Jewish people. That's like saying that all Christians identify as MAGA Republicans. No religion is a political monolith and this argument is exactly why the USA is predicated on the principle that we must separate church and state. GMU should encourage debate about politics and support free speech when bad policies are harming people. Stepping on the free speech of students in the USA in order to defend a foreign state's willful acts of genocide and apartheid is not a smart decision. Do better, GMU.

Anonymous	Staff	Anti-Zionism cannot be equated to racism or anti-semitism. To think so is to be greatly uninformed. Recognizing the livelihood and rights of the Palestinian people is not anti-semitism (see work by scholar Edward Said to learn more). Criminalizing, punishing, or otherwise preventing pro-Palestinian speech is suppression, and it is especially harsh coming from a university that lauds itself for its diversity and inclusion.
Ruby Hayes	Student	Comment regarding the antisemitism resolution: The safety of Jewish people and keeping anti-Semitism off campus is important. However, anti-Zionist beliefs are not inherently anti-Semitic. Being anti-Zionist is to oppose the State of Israel that has been occupying Palestinian land and killing thousands of Palestinians for decades.
Jacqueline Green	Alumna	<p>Hello, I am writing to urge you to vote NO on the resolution brought forward by Jeffrey Rosen to criminalize critiques of Zionism and genocide both on and off GMU campus.</p> <p>This resolution, if passed, would open the door for school officials to harass and persecute students and student organizations with whom they disagree, or based on their race, religion or ethnicity. Based on the violent assault on student peace protests during the 2023-2024 school year, this is likely to embolden further harassment and persecution of peace and human rights activists, and those who oppose genocide and apartheid.</p> <p>Students have the right to freely advocate and express their opinions, particularly in academic settings that are intended for free thought and inquiry. For example, targeting students for supporting Palestinian rights is a serious violation of freedom of speech, as enshrined in the first amendment of the constitution. If passed, this resolution would violate those rights. Historically, resolutions like this have been disproportionately used against minority and marginalized communities, and particularly targeted against Palestinian-American, Arab-American and Muslim-American communities.</p> <p>The ACLU has responded to resolutions like this across the country in the “Open Letter to Colleges and University Leaders: Reject Efforts to Restrict Constitutionally Protected Speech on Campuses.” (<a href="https://www.aclu.org/documents/open-letter-to-colleges-and-university-leaders-reject-efforts-to-restrict-constitutionally-protected-speech-on-campuses">https://www.aclu.org/documents/open-letter-to-colleges-and-university-leaders-reject-efforts-to-restrict-constitutionally-protected-speech-on-campuses</a>).</p> <p>Like the ACLU, I urge you to vote NO on this resolution and protect ALL GMU students' right to free speech both on and off campus.</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p>
Roxanne Freeman	Student	Anti-zionism is not anti-Semitism and the suppression of pro Palestine voices is a violation of our rights to free speech.
Omar Abaza	Student	The definition of Zionism, a noun, “a movement for (originally) the re-establishment and (now) the development and protection of a Jewish nation in what is now Israel.” The same thing is real that is now wanted by the International criminal court for crimes against humanity. This decision alone , by definition, would be considered anti-Zionist. So you gonna be able to talk about the ICC ruling without being called anti-Zionist? They Can’t Criticize Israel without being called anti-Zionist? How is it that students can criticize the American government but not the Israeli one? This is all, besides the fact that Zionism is founded by The British government and the ethnic cleansing of the native people Palestine.

Anonymous	Alumni	It is unacceptable to criminalize free speech on any US campus. We have the right to a voice and we the right to be heard, please don't let your decision betray the values and foundational principles of our beautiful university.
Jude Schroder	Community Member	I advise the board to swiftly reject Jeffrey Rosen's proposed resolution regarding "antisemitism." Anti-Zionism is not antisemitism, and yet this resolution dangerously equates the two. This resolution will not make GMU safer. In fact, it will silence and exclude anyone in support of Palestinian liberation and autonomy. Furthermore, there are many, many Anti-Zionist Jewish people, however, this resolution mischaracterizes "Jewish identity" as Zionist. If this resolution passes, it would solidify GMU's institutional stance that it is in support of genocide and willing to punish anyone who dares to question the atrocities committed against the Palestinian people. This resolution hides behind language of DEI. I urge the board to consider the students, faculty, and community members it would be silencing and excluding with this resolution.
Jill DeWitt	Alumni	This resolution is a violation of free speech. The board should be ashamed of even considering an anti-human rights restriction on the freedom of students, faculty, and staff to support a free Palestine. This action would make me ashamed to be an alumni and I will never donate to any institution that restricts free speech.
Janet Freeman	Alumni	It is unconstitutional to bar free speech. Please reject Rosen's proposal.
Kristin Samuelian	Faculty	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>
S Hamdani	Faculty	Discussing policies of any state is fundamental to the principles of free speech and intellectual inquiry fundamental to society and to any university mission. Doing so does not constitute racism of any kind, or antisemitism. I therefore oppose this resolution for censoring any discussion of the state of Israel's policy with regard to the human rights or right to self-determination of Palestinians.



Michael Chang	Faculty	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p> <p>Thank you, as always, for taking action. As we just learned from our victory blocking three additional partisan extremists from the BOV, we have a lot of power when we join together and fight!</p>
Eli Nguyen	Staff	<p>Forbidding any criticism of Zionism is a flagrant disregard for our right to free speech. In the current political climate protecting our fundamental rights should be of the utmost importance. No ideology is above critique, no ideology warrants being held away from any discussion. Who does it benefit to prohibit critique of an ideology? What other ideologies are given this same privilege?</p> <p>As a student of the Jimmy and Roslyn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution I think it's imperative that we are able to have open discussion about political ideologies and their geopolitical consequences. Restricting this by prohibiting anything that may be construed as criticism of Zionism as a political ideology is reckless, and a restriction on the academic study being done at Mason. It's alarming to me that GMU, a school which prides itself on its diversity and open mindedness would consider a resolution that so clearly seeks to negate its own core values.</p>
Samirah Alkassim	Faculty	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. This resolution must be rejected, and I urge all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Once this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry is behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>
Angelica Zayid	Student	<p>Antisemitism and Zionism are not the same. Supporting Palestinians is about advocating for equality, not discrimination. No matter their faith—Jewish, Muslim, Christian, atheist, or otherwise—people should treat each other with love and respect. There is nothing antisemitic about expressing concern for the thousands of innocent children caught in the crossfire.</p>

Benjamin Steger	Faculty	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>
Rose Cherubin	Faculty	<p>I strongly reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I strongly support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. Criticism of the current state of Israel is not equivalent to criticizing the idea of a Jewish state, for the idea of a Jewish state does not imply adherence to the current state's policies, and can include the recognition of a Palestinian (also a semitic group) state alongside it. Indeed, many Israelis support the idea of a Jewish state and a Paletstinian state coexisting, and strongly oppose their own government's policies.</p> <p>In its current form, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can move ahead to crafting just and effective language that include ethnic identity and shared heritage in Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>
Alexander Monea	Faculty	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>
Ella Duncan-High	Student	<p>Anti-Zionism is not racism. Protect free speech. How dare you try and silence students on campus.</p>

Carlin Decker	Staff	On the Topic of the recent resolution proposed by Jeffery Rosen, to criminalize criticism of Zionism, this resolution should be struck down. Being critical of a nation or a political philosophy it practices is a form a free speech protected under the First Amendment. Limiting the community's freedom of speech is a direct violation of their First Amendment rights.
Ellen Gurung	Alumni	I am writing to express my frustration about the recent GMU Board of Visitors Resolution regarding the condemnation of students who engage in anti-Zionist language, behavior, and activism. Zionism is not an integral part of Jewish identity nor should be considered antisemitic as explained by numerous Jewish activists. Israel is a colonial project that is currently responsible for an ongoing genocide against Palestinian people, and with GMU having such a large West Asian/Middle-Eastern population I would hope that GMU would consider the many students whose family and friends are deeply impacted by the atrocities that Israel is committing. As an alumni I will not financially support GMU in any donation or fundraising activities if this resolution is put in place. This is not the first time that GMU has worked to shut down leftist student activism efforts and I am ashamed to call GMU my alma mater.
Anonymous Staff Member	Staff	I would like to put forth a condemnation of Jeffrey Rosen's resolution to classify criticism of Israel as hate speech. Israel and Judaism are not one and the same. Judaism is a beautiful and ancient faith. Israel is a nation, which should not be exempt from the same criticisms other nations face. Jewish people do not unilaterally support Israel, and for the university to criminalize the discussion of the topic is to decide for those people what is acceptable speech from Jews. The university also runs the risk of having to enforce penalties for "antisemitism" on community members who are Jewish. This initiative is such a misstep from the University, please do not try to prevent our university from being a forum for such important conversation.
Mackenzie Liu	Student	As a Jewish individual, Israel is a key part of my identity. The prayers I say everyday mention Israel and its people. I'm a proud Zionist who believes that the Jewish people have the right to live in Israel. The harassment I have received on campus for the past year and a half has been nonstop. Often acts of anti-semitism like calling the Star of David offensive is stated to be anti-Zionist by people on this campus. My friends and I have been called countless names that are inappropriate and harmful. Again they were disguised under the name of anti-Zionism. I was left in tears one day after painting the star on one of Wilkins Plaza paintable walls. Six people yelled and circled around me, but claimed they were anti-Zionist and not anti-Semitic. The student government DEI committee has shown clear bias and refuses to acknowledge anti-semitism. Instead their meeting notes consist of anti-Zionist and anti-Israel rhetoric. The chairs of the committee even labeled a presentation on antisemitism as something that didn't involve them. Being a Zionist goes beyond the Jewish community. I have friends who are not Jewish and have received anti-Semitic harassment for supporting Israel. This further proves that the Jewish people and Zionism are linked. The climate on campus has been extremely hostile for Jewish and Zionist students. Our voices are being silenced by people who think we shouldn't exist or that a Jewish student born in Israel is a colonizer. We have been left out of student government meetings and communications about anti-Zionist legislative decisions.

Elizabeth DeMulder	Faculty	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>
Betty Aquino	Community Member	<p>I've heard that Mason is considering a proposal to criminalize the criticism of Zionism on campus and I am deeply concerned by this proposal as it infringes on the students right to free speech.</p>
Grace Larsen	Student	<p>Please pass it, I often don't feel safe on campus because I am an open Zionist. I have received antisemitic messages, snide remarks, and have been given long glares at GMU.</p>
Laura Buckwald	Faculty	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee meeting.</p> <p>I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. However, this resolution is not about protecting students and faculty from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing and blocking free speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. The policies of any nation need to be open to free discussion and debate. Any criticisms of Israeli state policies have nothing to do with antisemitism, just as criticisms of U.S. policy do not make one anti-American.</p> <p>As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate free speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
Hannah Landsberger	Alumni	<p>I am deeply concerned about the antisemitism resolution and urge the committee not to approve it. The conflation of all Jewish people with the state of Israel is a dangerous and incorrect assumption to codify into policy on campus, and will be used to restrict free speech and students' rights to protest. As a Jewish descendant of Holocaust survivors, I can testify to the fact that the duty to protest injustice, including against governments that are executing a genocide not dissimilar to the one that my grandparents survived, is a critical part of Judaism. Students, including Jewish students, must not have their right to protest curtailed.</p>

Ana	Student	<p>Mason is suppressing Arab and Palestinian students, prohibiting them from criticizing Zionism, which is a belief system that is accountable for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. This complacency in conflating Zionism with racism will tarnish Mason's already tumultuous history. Students should have the right to oppose a system that negatively impacts their homes as well as work towards disclosure and divestment. George Mason has praised itself for its diversity and consistently brands students of color on its websites; however, it appears to lack the resources and commitment to support these students adequately. This proposal, even being considered, highlights how Mason falls short in its alleged pursuit of genuine equity; approving it will only further isolate students. Regardless of administrative decisions, students will persist in making their voices heard.</p>
Elizabeth Ann Kelly	Community Member	<p>Zionism is an idea, not an identity. Just as criticizing our own government is a basic part of freedom of speech, criticizing another government or the actions of another nation is a basic part of freedom of speech. Students must be free to criticize the philosophy of Zionism and the actions of the government and nation of Israel (and the actions of all other governments and nations).</p>
Emily Haines	Community Member	<p>I am writing to express concern and opposition to the proposal before the Board of Visitors that suggests adding Zionism protection to university policy as part of the University's protections from antisemitism.</p> <p>I personally have family and friends who are Jewish and who have even been harassed, so I am completely sympathetic to the desire to protect Jewish students and community members from antisemitic attacks. However, Zionism is very specifically a political ideology, not an identity, and it must be open to debate on a college campus where difficult ideas are meant to be discussed. Zionism is an ideology that can be extremely harmful, and has inherent racist and colonial roots, asserting that Jewish people have an absolute right to land that Palestinian people already owned before they arrive, and even that violence is acceptable to secure that land. The University's place in such debate, if it has one, is only to ensure all sides are respectful and that discussion is around beliefs and actions, not ad hominem attacks on who someone is that cannot be changed- Zionism is not unchanging, it is a political position. The assertion that Zionism is central to many Jewish people's identity, therefore Zionism must be protected, is a false equivalence. Many Catholics believe deeply that abortion is murder and define themselves as pro-life, but we do not consider pro-choice rhetoric, even against the Catholic Church establishment, to be anti-Catholic hate speech no matter how deeply held those beliefs may be. Zionism is the same. Just because it uses religious reasoning does not place it above reproach.</p> <p>It may be uncomfortable to allow such discussions on campus, but it doesn't make them less important to have, and groups that are already being silenced elsewhere such as Arabs and Palestinians, and even pacifists like Quakers, need academic spaces to be protected venues for free speech.</p> <p>The University, in specifically protecting Zionism, would be taking a racist and biased position itself under the guise of protecting one group from another. Please, reject this proposal, and use other methods to protect your Jewish students and faculty from direct antisemitism, without silencing legitimate criticism of a foreign government's ideology.</p>

Laura Dempsey	Community Member	It's come to my attention that this board is considering criminalizing the criticism of Zionism. This nationalistic movement should not be above criticism, just like we love and honor our country enough to criticize if we should be able to do so for a foreign country too.
Kieron Rust	Community Member	<p>It's dangerous when institutions of knowledge put guardrails on intellectual criticism. It goes against the very essence of your mission and purpose as a university.</p> <p>I am deeply concerned by the proposal to ban criticism of Israel and Zionism from campus. Students are expressing legitimate concerns about the actions of a state's government, and their conduct in war, which led to an arrest warrant in the ICC. This is vastly different from hatred based on religion, which we all condemn. These two things are not the same.</p> <p>Countries can still be criticized even when they are deeply tied to religious minorities. We spoke out against Saudi Arabia over the Khashoggi murder, which was not only protected speech, but encouraged. Calling out Israel's deeply immoral conduct is no different.</p> <p>Protect student's right to protest. Protect free speech.</p>
Pua Ali'i Lum	Community Member	There is no greater disservice to humanity than to conflate lies about antisemitism. Regardless of how many lies, court cases, threats and removing/revoking visas of students standing with Palestinians', human beings, rights. In some cases, they are Palestinians who are constantly suffering at the hands of Zionism Yt supremacy. You can't make a lie the truth. Shame on you.
Jackie Jones	Community Member	The least Jewish thing you can do is not share opinions and argue the points of founding principles of Zionism. Withholding love is a form of abuse and not caring about the rights and humanity of other's is anti-Jewish. We all should be standing tall in solidarity with Palestinian's.
Anne Komer	Community Member	I'm of Jewish descent and I do not support the genocide and lands stolen from the Palestinian people. There's a difference between antisemitism and anti-Zionism, and that distinction is a very important one. It is of utmost importance that we do not swing from no hate speech against a people who Hitler tried to ethnically cleanse to no hate speech against a government that is ethnically cleansing another people.

Concerned  
Community  
Member

Community  
Member

To the Board of Visitors at GMU,

I am writing as a concerned local community member and family member of a GMU alum about the proposal to revise University Policy Number 1201 (“Non-Discrimination Policy”) to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on and off campus. I think that the proposal should not be approved on the basis of protecting GMU students’ 1st Amendment right to freedom of expression. To me, this proposal to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism seems concerned about protecting a specific political position and not at all about protecting Jewish students, faculty, and staff.

For example, indeed it would be antisemitic to “[a]ccus[e] the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust,” as stated in the IHRA examples of antisemitism. It also would indeed be antisemitic to “[hold all] Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.” Accusing Jews as a people or Israel as a state of making up the Holocaust are examples of antisemitism because they show exaggeration and stereotyping of the entire Jewish community.

However, there are several contemporary examples listed in the IHRA definition of antisemitism that are notably not antisemitic. It is extremely alarming to hear that GMU might implement a rule to punish students who are actually exercising their 1st Amendment right to freedom of expression by adopting this definition and its examples. For instance, it would NOT be antisemitic or denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination to “[claim] that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.” The State of Israel does not represent Jewish people as a whole, so it would not be antisemitic to criticize Israel as a racist endeavor. Students, faculty, and staff raising concerns about Israel, for example about Israel being a modern colonialist state or “a racist endeavor”, would not be antisemitic because it does not attack Jewish people, and instead is criticizing the government and history of Israel. It’s conveniently vague that another IHRA example of antisemitism is “[a]pplying double standards [to Israel] by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.” Who or what decides what is a double standard, and what is or is not expected of “any other democratic nation”? This does not seem like something that can be objectively enforced.

I also have concerns about the language used in the proposal. It’s interesting that instead of Jewish people being explicitly the center of the intended expanded protections, the word “Zionist” is used. While white supremacists do use phrases like “Zionist” to spread antisemitism (for example, “Zionist-controlled government”), Zionist does not equal Jewish. There are many Zionist Christians in the world who are not Jewish. There are many Jewish people in the world who do not identify as Zionist. There are many Jewish people around the world, but especially here in the DC area, who are critical about Israel who would be labelled as antisemites by this change. Again, this proposal seems concerned about protecting a specific political position and not at all about protecting Jewish students, faculty, and staff on and off campus from actual antisemitism.

I urge the Board of Visitors to reject this proposed change. There are better ways to protect Jewish students, faculty, and staff that do not need to revolve around the idea of protecting “Zionists” more than the Jewish community as a whole.

Allan Gluck	Community Member	Evaluating whether an act is genocide is objective. Applying the definition of the act of genocide to what Israel has done is objective, affirmed by the international criminal court and numerous other organizations and countries. Thus, to say that Israel is undertaking genocide is in no way antisemitic, and in fact denying this is antisemitic for it is antisemitic to think that Jews condone genocide.
Mariam C	Alumna	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>As an alumna of GMU, I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>From my years at the university, both in and off campus, I know that George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>



Nezha Selloum	Community Member	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>
Kelby Gibson	PhD candidate and GTA	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>

Terri Ginsberg	Community Member	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>
Community Member	Community Member	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>

James H.  
Finkelstein

Emeritus  
Professor of  
Public Policy

I'm Jim Finkelstein, Professor Emeritus of Public Policy and was the founding Vice Dean of the School of Public Policy, now part of the Schar School.

According to the Association of Governing Boards (AGB), the first Principle of Trusteeship is to "Embrace the full scope of your responsibilities." The foremost of these responsibilities is to "Fulfill your fiduciary responsibilities. As a fiduciary, you are charged with acting on behalf of the public to further the best interests of the organization on whose board you serve." I am concerned that at least one member of the Board of Visitors (BOV) may not be upholding this responsibility.

On February 11, 2025, Dr. Lindsey Burke reposted a multipart tweet by her Heritage Foundation subordinate, Jay Greene, in which he strongly advocated for reducing the NIH indirect cost recovery rate. Earlier, she shared a February 7, 2025, tweet by Elon Musk:

"Can you believe that universities with tens of billions in endowments were siphoning off 60% of research award money for 'overhead'? What a ripoff!"

Dr. Burke's engagement with these posts suggests support for a policy that would significantly cut Mason's federal funding—a conservative estimate places the loss at over \$2 million per year if such changes were enacted. It is difficult to see how advocating for such cuts aligns with Mason's best interests.

This is not the first time Visitor Burke has used X to express views that, in my view, conflict with her duty of care and fiduciary responsibility as a member of the Mason BOV and chair of its Academic Programs, Diversity, and University Community Committee.

I urge Dr. Burke to step down from the BOV to uphold the integrity of the board and protect the university. This move would serve the best interests of Dr. Burke, the university community, the Commonwealth, , and even the Heritage Foundation.

Respectfully,

James H. Finkelstein, Ph.D.  
Professor Emeritus of Public Policy  
Schar School of Policy and Government

Bethany Letiecq	Faculty	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>As the president of the GMU chapter of the American Association of University Professors and a Professor in CEHD, I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting. This resolution is an overreach of the BOV and threatens both free speech and academic freedom.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling if not repressing critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians.</p> <p>As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration. Bethany Letiecq, President, GMU-AAUP</p>
Sammy Alqasem	MD resident	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>

Natalie Johnson	Community Member	Protect freedom of speech. Do not adopt Jeff Rosen’s proposal to ban all anti-Zionist speech. Zionism is a racist colonial ideology that is predicated on the genocide of Palestinians. Anti-Zionism is NOT anti-Semitism. If you ban anti-Zionist speech, then you are trampling free speech and making all students less safe, especially Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students.
Nora Mona	Community Member	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>

Alison OConnell	Alumni	<p>Dear Board of Visitors,</p> <p>The IHRA definition of antisemitism is flagrantly untrue, racist, seeks to suppress free speech, and is in itself antisemitic.</p> <p>Kenneth Stern, who drafted it, says he regrets creating it because of how it has been weaponized by the right to suppress free speech, especially on college campuses: <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/13/antisemitism-executive-order-trump-chilling-effect">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/13/antisemitism-executive-order-trump-chilling-effect</a></p> <p>Many Jewish organizations, including but not limited to, J-Street, T'ruah, Diaspora Alliance, Jewish Voice for Peace and Partners for Progressive Israel oppose this definition.</p> <p>Conflating all Jewish people with Zionism and the state of Israel is both inaccurate and antisemitic. The first anti-Zionists were Jewish people, long prior to 1948. Many Jews today are anti-Zionist and seeking to suppress their voices does not make this any less true. Yes, even Jewish people with family in Israel, who have lived in Israel, visited Israel - many of them also conclude the state of Israel is committing apartheid and genocide, and therefore oppose it.</p> <p>It is also appallingly racist and very transparent to try to suppress Palestinian students and professors from speaking honestly about their own experiences of colonization, racism and oppression.</p> <p>This Resolution is a shameful move on the part of Mason, and as an alumni I strongly encourage you to vote against it.</p>
Michael Beer	spouse is alumni. I am also a Virginia taxpayer	<p>As a person of Jewish heritage, and relatives who were killed and hostaged on Oct 7, as well as the descendant of Holocaust victims, I ask you to oppose the proposal by Jeff Rosen to criminalize and/or stigmatize criticism of Zionism on campus. Many many Jews are critical or oppose Zionism. Are you seriously going to equate (or link) antisemitism with anti-zionism? And please don't refer or promote the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which also equates criticism of Zionism with Judaism. Academic freedom is coming under attack by the Trump administration. LGBTQ, immigrants, gender studies, racism/ethnicity studies, people with disabilities and DEI. The issue of Israel and Palestine is a canary bird in the coal mine. Stand firm for academic freedom and the universal right to free speech and assembly as guaranteed under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.</p>
Anonymous	Student	<p>Restricting students' free speech against the genocide against thousands of innocent Palestinians is a deeply disturbing proposition by a body meant to reflect the student voice. The IHRA's Definition of Antisemitism has a prominent history of being weaponized to silence criticism of Israel, and it's profoundly disappointing to see this institution do the same.</p>

Anonymous	Community Member	<p>Zionism, the idea that Jewish people have a right to all land that exists in a certain part of the Levant is highly damaging to not only to all non-Jewish people but as well as all Jewish people all over the world. By trying to legitimize this claim you are legitimizing all claims of old lost land, are we supposed to go back to the borders of the 16th century and entertain such nationalism? I think not.</p> <p>Even worse, if you were to legitimize such claims you are condemning the people that live in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to being ethnically cleaned and removed from where they live, which will result in lives lost and extreme unnecessary agitation.</p> <p>Also, in suppressing the freedom of speech of people against Zionism is against human rights, especially the right of freedom of speech. To be against Zionism is not to be against Jewish people, in fact it's a standpoint that is rooted in creating a better world, as validating nationalistic claims to ethnically cleanse and settle land is highly anti-human.</p>
Q Garcia	Community Member	<p>Freedom of speech and expression is a foundational right in this country, and should be upheld by our collegiate institutions. Of course hate speech should not be tolerated, but trying to broaden the definition of "hate speech" for political purposes is an insult to all of us, and threatens our right to speak up against injustice. We are not claiming that Jewish community members should be attacked for their identity and beliefs, hate speech should continue to be banned. But broadening the definition of hate speech to include all good faith critiques of Israel as a settler-colonial nation, is not only false, but immoral and a threat to our freedoms.</p> <p>Many Jewish community members and leaders have differing views and opinions around Israel, and to reduce the Jewish community to one stance is anti-Jewish and hateful in itself.</p> <p>A commitment to honest and open dialogue about the issues of our time is desperately needed on our college campuses, and I urge you to rethink your assertions and definitions of hate speech and anti-semitism. Your current plans do not reflect American or Jewish values and instead threaten other groups of people being directly impacted by ongoing wars and displacement. This move seeks to divide us further, by silencing and forcing out voices that you don't agree with, further marginalizing already intentionally marginalized groups.</p> <p>It is your responsibility to advance truth and honesty in your rules and policies, not to punish students for views you disagree with.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p>
Grace Nina	Community Member	<p>Freedom of speech Freedom of assembly</p> <p>Respect our rights</p>
Anonymous	Faculty	<p>Please do not double down on policies that conflate criticism of Israel or Zionism with antisemitism. Almost every Jewish person I know feels less safe because of ISRAEL's actions over the last 15+ months, not because of Palestinians'. Equating antizionism and antisemitism makes Jews LESS safe, not more safe. The IHRA definition of antisemitism is counterproductive and compromises Jewish safety. Never again means never again for anyone.</p>

Jessica Schwalb	Student	None
Quinn Chapman	Community Member	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>
Evelyn Rose Johnston	Staff	<p>As a member of the now protected identity of "Zionist", and a member of the GMU SSI board, I am happy to see that anti Israel hatred will not be tolerated. Students Supporting Israel at GMU fully supports this decision by the Board of Visitors, and will make SURE we are accepted into every space on campus. This prestigious university should no longer allow the violence that stems from the palestinian community to prosper on our campus. palestinians and pro palestinians are EXTREMELY violent, and full of terror and hatred. I personally am glad to see that they are no longer allowed to spread their filth and their lies about a FAKE genocide. They started a war, and now they cry because they can't finish it. Ban kuffiyehs next. Those rape rags are a filthy symbol for terrorism.</p>
Zahra Hilmi	Community Member	<p>This is an extremely dangerous motion that not only violates free speech, but censors hundreds of students, faculty, staff, and more. GMU claims to be an institution that values its students and diversity, while simultaneously suppressing those it promises to uplift. GMU only cares about its image, and if this motion passes, GMU will be forever remembered as an institution that sides with the oppressor, only using its power to uplift itself and that takes advantage of its students.</p>



Sara Sallaj	Community Member	Everyone in the United States has the right of free speech. Calling out complicity in genocide is in our rights and shame on George Mason University for trying to take that away from us. Shame on you George Mason, I would never want to represent a University as disgusting and dishonest as this one.
Susu e	Student	GMU needs to ACKNOWLEDGE the Palestinian community at gmU and support the movement for the HUMAN RIGHTS of Palestinians  DONT PROTECT people who call for VIOLENCE towards Palestinians
Ashley	Faculty	GMU needs to ACKNOWLEDGE the Palestinian community at gmU and support the movement for the HUMAN RIGHTS of Palestinians  DONT PROTECT people who call for VIOLENCE towards Palestinians
Chad	Staff	GMU needs to ACKNOWLEDGE the Palestinian community at gmU and support the movement for the HUMAN RIGHTS of Palestinians  DONT PROTECT people who call for VIOLENCE towards Palestinians
Alex	Community Member	GMU needs to ACKNOWLEDGE the Palestinian community at gmU and support the movement for the HUMAN RIGHTS of Palestinians  DONT PROTECT people who call for VIOLENCE towards Palestinians
President	Student	GMU needs to ACKNOWLEDGE the Palestinian community at gmU and support the movement for the HUMAN RIGHTS of Palestinians  DONT PROTECT people who call for VIOLENCE towards Palestinians
Fear God	Staff	GMU needs to ACKNOWLEDGE the Palestinian community at gmU and support the movement for the HUMAN RIGHTS of Palestinians  DONT PROTECT people who call for VIOLENCE towards Palestinians
Sheima Amara	GMU Alumna	Removing students' abilities to critique government and political organizations is terrifying. This is a public institution that prides itself on diversity, encourages political dialogue and criticism, and understands the sanctity of protecting our constitutional rights. This would be a disastrous mistake for the university and university students of all backgrounds and ideologies.

Conner Moses Student

I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.

George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.

I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.

Elisabeth Bodin Student

These ongoing resolutions are not what will protect Jewish students on campus. As a part-Jewish student on campus, I have witnessed a rise in anti-semitism with deep concern - and yet I think there are better ways to address the issue. Criminalizing certain discourse surrounding Israel and its policies to "protect" against this does not just go against free speech, it unfairly conflates all Jews with the decisions made by a state that they may or may not have ever stepped foot in, and may even lead to condemnation of Palestinian students practicing their own cultural identity or discussing concerns for their people if the rules are made too vague. Jewish and other students should be permitted the capacity to engage with Zionism critically; as a modern political ideology, it is just as applicable for discourse - positive or negative - as any other belief. It is of course inappropriate to harass Jewish students for their views on what is happening in Palestine - and it is also inappropriate to bar Jewish students from stating views that may descent from the popular on notions of Zionism.

It is also odd to me that to protect Mason's student body, more is not being done to combat certain perceivable threats to the Jewish student population here at GMU. I specifically refer to an incident of a student dressing a nazi, something that makes me and others feel unsafe, but the university decided was "protected" under free speech. How come to dress and present one's self as those who would kill us is protected by free speech, but diverse discussion on a political belief from the 19th century is not? There are several other incidents I can think of where hate speech was left protected by the university - from anti-Trans protestors to some certain missionary folk with a history of harassing non-Christian students on campus.

		<p>George Mason tries to present itself as an institution where any can be whoever they want, and discuss what they must to make the world a better place; what does it mean for the university when political speech is controlled, but dangerous symbolism and hate speech are allowed to flourish?</p>
Denise Albanese	Faculty	<p>I write to enter my objection to Visitor Rosen's resolution, due for consideration at the meeting on the 13th of February.</p> <p>It is demonstrable that anti-semitism is a real danger and that, horrifyingly, it is on the rise in the US: as I do with all forms of discrimination, I want to register my detestation of it. However, the proposed resolution risks obscuring this real danger by eliding it with a legitimate (if, to some, unpalatable) position concerning the rights of Palestinians. There is real work to do at Mason concerning myriad forms of anti-discrimination. This resolution, however, does nothing to advance that work. I urge you to vote no.</p>
Sojourner Davidson	Community Member	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. The proposal is an assault on free speech and a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the negative effects this proposal would pose to freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>

Anonymous	Community Member	<p>I strongly disapprove of any attempt whatsoever to criminalize the criticism of Zionism. This is a reprehensible thing to do.</p> <p>I'd like to draw to your attention that numerous credible human rights and humanitarian organizations have cited, using primary sources, countless human rights violations committed by Israel, in the name of Zionism. Here are two particularly powerful, in-depth, primary-resource-filled reports that I read through, and that you should also read through:</p> <p>280-page report from Amnesty International: "Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel system of domination and crime against humanity" - <a href="https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/">https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/</a></p> <p>296-page report from Amnesty International: "'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman': Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza" - <a href="https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/8668/2024/en/">https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/8668/2024/en/</a></p> <p>While there are articles floating around out there that try to argue against these points, keep in mind that QUALITY matters over QUANTITY. A high-quality, in-depth, primary-source-filled report is exponentially more valuable than a false claim repeated numerous times. And as a higher education institution, you should know and understand this very well.</p> <p>Criminalizing the criticism of Zionism will disproportionately hurt some of the most marginalized members of the GMU community who care deeply about human rights &amp; social justice.</p>
Anonymous	Alumnus	<p>As an alumnus of George Mason University, one of the things I most appreciated about GMU in my time as a student was the space it gave to Students Against Israeli Apartheid, empowering it to speak out freely against the genocide of Palestinians and the racist, colonial ideology of Zionism. That this proposal to ban such speech is even being considered is utterly disgusting to me, and makes me ashamed to have attended this university.</p>
Grace Venes-Escaffi	Alumna	<p>After 16 months of publicly broadcasted genocide, it disappoints me as a George Mason alumna to think that my alma mater would contemplate passing such a harmful resolution based on protecting supremacist ideology. Anti-Zionist Jewish people from around the world have been saying for decades that association with Zionism is a desecration of their faith. This resolution posits that for many Jewish people support Zionism and Israel are integral part of their identities and that those identities will be protected under anti-discrimination policy - "many" is first arbitrary and second not representative of any majority. By the logic of "many" as stated in this resolution, if a sizable number of students identified as white supremacists this too should be protected ideology. I think we can all agree supremacy of any kind is not conducive to the progress we hope to see and facilitate in our educational environments.</p> <p>Anti-Zionism is Anti-Racism. Israel is a genocidal apartheid state, the global audience has seen it with their own eyes. To silence its criticism is to silence truth, and minimize the severity of the many human rights violations which make up Israel's history.</p>

M S	Community Member	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors to adopt the IHRA’s definition of anti-semitism that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>
Catherine Saunders	Faculty	<p>To the APDUC Committee:</p> <p>I am writing to express concern about the Antisemitism Resolution that you will be considering during your meeting today. While I appreciate that antisemitism, along with islamophobia and other forms of stereotype-based discrimination, is currently increasing in the United States, I worry that this resolution will have the unintended effect of suppressing academic inquiry and free speech, including the speech of Jewish faculty, students, and staff who are critical of the policies of the present Israeli government. There is also a very real possibility that curtailing opportunities for civil, in-depth, discussion of all the issues and ideas surrounding Israel, Palestine, and American policy toward the conflicts in that region will ultimately increase conflict and expressions of antisemitism by forestalling the possibility of difficult dialogue that could lead to greater understanding and decreased instances of stereotyping. While I’m sure the proposed resolution is well-intentioned, it ultimately strikes me as antithetical both to the university’s mission and to its intended purpose.</p>
Anonymous	Alumni	<p>I am concerned that this policy would prohibit any criticism of the Israeli government’s actions against the Palestinian people. While antisemitism should be condemned, this should not be done in a way that excludes the plight of Palestinians.</p>
.	Community Member	<p>Don't support the IHRA definition</p>

.	Student	Anti-Zionism is not Racism in the same way DEI is not anti-white
Ellie Fox	Student	<p>I'm president of Jewish Voice for Peace at George Mason University, and I urge against the adaptation of the APDUCC Antisemitism resolution.</p> <p>First, insisting that Zionism is an integral part of Jewish identity plays into the antisemitic trope that Jews have split loyalty between the United States and Israel. This is an unacceptable basis for University policy, and the Board of Visitors should be ashamed.</p> <p>Any antisemitism that happens to overlap with anti-Israel rhetoric (example: the usage of the term Zionist Occupied Government) could be taken care of with an antisemitism policy that doesn't equate antizionism with antisemitism by default. The examples of antisemitism to be given in the IHRA fact sheet, are far too broad and will be weaponized exclusively against the Palestine solidarity movement at George Mason University. I know this because the University has not taken action on actual examples of antisemitism from evangelical Christian protestors and Nazi cosplayers, being protected under free speech. I ask, what about our free speech? Will Jewish Voice for Peace be prosecuted for hurting the feelings of Zionists by calling out Apartheid conditions in Israel?</p> <p>This resolution must rejected, and we must shift away from the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism to policies that will serve jews and the rest of the student body.</p>
Sara van der Horst	Alumni	<p>As an alumna of George Mason University, I would like to register my opposition to the proposed anti-semitism resolution. To conflate Jewish identity with the state of Israel is a reductive and false assertion that is offensive to many Jews who do not feel an affiliation with Israel or the project of Zionism. While I am opposed to harassment based on identity, that is not the same as criticism of Israel as a state. To stifle criticism of a state and its actions seems to me to be contrary to the university's stated commitment to upholding the first amendment rights of its community members. I strongly urge the board to uphold its commitment to free speech by voting against this resolution.</p>

Wonmai  
Punksungka

Student

Dear APDUC Committee Members,

I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.

Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.

Thank you, as always, for taking action. As we just learned from our victory blocking three additional partisan extremists from the BOV, we have a lot of power when we join together and fight!

Also - hot off the GMU-AAUP presses - we want to call to your attention a two-part article we just published in Academe, the AAUP's blog, entitled "The Transformation of George Mason University's Board." Part 1 provides some historical context and focuses on the Antisemitism resolution. Part 2 discusses the University of Chicago's "Shils Report" and how the BOV's fascination with this report could affect GMU professors, particularly with regard to the report's recommended (and, in our view, exceedingly narrow and rigid) criteria for tenure and promotion. Indeed, the Board's upcoming discussion of this report is an ominous sign that visitors may soon try to exert influence over GMU's tenure process. We urge you to read both of our Academe blog posts when you have time.

Sincerely,  
The GMU-AAUP Executive Committee

Norma Rantisi	Professor, Concordia University	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Norma Rantisi</p>
Madeline Portnoy	Staff	<p>As a Jewish staff member at this institution, I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>This resolution is not about protecting Jewish students, staff, and faculty from discrimination - it is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. This policy will be used to discriminate against anyone critical of the state of Israel, even Jews like myself. This policy also uses arbitrary examples of antisemitism, rejecting the lived experiences of Jews in modern, historical, and societal contexts.</p> <p>This resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th.</p>



Anonymous	Student	<p>Greetings to the board,</p> <p>I am a student and TA at GMU. But first and foremost, I am a Jew who loves her culture, religion, and is not ashamed of her ethnicity. I am a proud Zionist. I fear that many of my peers do not know much about Jewish people or Zionism. I know some of these students very well and yet they never ask me anything about Zionism or even about Israel. These students claim to be fighting for peace but refuse to do the hard work that peace entails. Communication, compassion, reevaluation and understanding. But I am committed to the work because I truly wish to see a day where Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Arabs see themselves as friends, as family who recognize just how much we both have in common. History shows us that Jews are indigenous to the land but that we aren't the only ones! By protecting the rights to include Zionists in this discussion of peace you protect peace itself. You give others the opportunities to learn, to ask questions. You give me the opportunity to learn, to coexist, to grow! Thank you for protecting your Jewish students and thank you for protecting peace. I encourage you to ask more questions. To learn more about the side you don't understand. I beg of my fellow TA's and faculty on campus to be a role model for your students. You know what it means to cross reference. You know the importance of concession, of an open mind. Show your students this. Do your research talk to real people, real Jews, real Zionists in person. Zionism is inherit to Jewish people. It is a part of us. Israel is a part of us. Zionism does not mean war nor does it mean evil. It is our indigenous right to live on the land that we come from. The land that our ancestors dreamed of in the diaspora. To discriminate against any other indigenous people would not be tolerated on a liberal college campus. Why do you make an exception for Jews? Why have you not talked to us? What are you afraid you'll learn?</p> <p>Peace is not one sided.</p> <p>Thank you</p>
Martha Molinaro	Student	<p>I am in the Arabic department. Many of the people here are Palestinians. Over the past year, some of them have pretty much had their bloodlines wiped out and all of them have lived their entire life under the oppressive chokehold of Zionism in all its real world applications. It is absurd to say that they cannot criticize or protest the very ideology that has been used to systemically oppress their entire people and kill their families and community members. It is also absurd to say that allies of all faiths and ethnicities and nationalities cannot criticize an ideology (Zionism), which is separate from an identity. With such large Palestinian, Arab and Muslim populations on your campus, it is your job to protect them instead of marginalizing them further in this environment where their rights and even some students' visa and immigration statuses are under attack. The defense of this policy seems to be that it is fighting anti-semitism, which not only equates Judaism with Zionism, but erases the very people most impacted by Zionism, Palestinians. Their voices should be THE center of conversations about Zionism, as its victims. Prohibiting them from voicing their own struggles only succeeds in cutting productive conversation entirely. Additionally, the school already has policies against discrimination based on identity or religion, including anti-semitism. Instead of enforcing those policies, you are changing the definition of anti-semitism in order to target another vulnerable community whose genocide Mason has helped fund for 15 months, essentially scapegoating them and their allies for the scourge of anti-Jewishness in this country while simultaneously promoting negative stereotypes of the Arabs as hostile Jew-haters. That is so deeply wrong I don't even know where to begin with it. Even if you don't name Palestinians in this policy to obscure its intentions, we know what you are doing because it is obvious who will be realistically most affected by this, and who is being targeted by policies like these being adapted at schools across the</p>

nation. We in the Mason community must keep the Heritage Foundation, Project Esther, and other anti-democratic, anti-immigrant, and anti-DEI policies off of our campus.

Serena  
Abdallah

Student

I am writing to you regarding the proposed resolution to change the definition of antisemitism, which will include critiques of Zionism. This is a very concerning matter, as the ability to critique and analyze governments, ideologies, and ways of thinking is part of an academic environment, and this resolution will impact academic integrity and freedoms at our university.

Last year, President Washington sent us an email that claimed hate speech is also free speech, and that people have differing opinions and beliefs, and I sent an email back that hate speech can incite real acts of violence against people and should be addressed as such. Hatred towards Jewish people and targeting someone simply because they are Jewish is wrong. Zionism is separate from this, especially as it is used as a means to punish and control people, not just Palestinians, but people all over the world who do not agree with a Zionist ideology.

Freedom of speech is not speech without consequences - just as prejudice towards Jewish people is wrong, so is the admonishing of a person's character by labeling them as an antisemite because they speak out against or debate the treatment of people by the Israeli government and their military. Just because some people conflate Judaism with Zionism, does not mean they always coexist in the same spaces or conversations. Unless you want to tell me that just because some people conflate Islam with terrorism, it means the two must always be banded together? That is something that I'm sure many members of the student body would not be pleased to hear.

While I would have loved to take this opportunity to argue my own politics, I assure you, that is not my intention. Because if it starts with conflating critiquing Zionism with antisemitism, then where does it end? This will spread into other areas of knowledge and discussion, and people who may support this resolution could realize it has seeped into something that now silences and demonizes them as well. Again, I reiterate that it is true that freedom of speech is not speech without consequences - but are you leaving us with freedom?

Evan Belcher	Mason Alumnus	<p>As a proud Mason alum who is passionate about the stated values of the university, particularly its protection of free speech and diversity, I vehemently oppose this proposed resolution.</p> <p>By adopting the overbroad IHRA definition of anti-semitism, this University would knowingly have a chilling effect on productive and vital conversations regarding Israel and Palestine. In its breadth, the definition obscures and trivializes the very real problem of anti-semitism, conflating it with mere criticism of the state of Israel. Criticism of the government of Israel is no more inherently anti-Semitic than criticism of the US government is anti-Christian or criticism of Saudi Arabia's government is islamophobic. We can — and must — allow discourse critical of any government to stand at face value, without assuming or inventing ulterior motive. Adopting this resolution would align this University with a dangerous double-standard.</p> <p>In addition, it would materially oppress Palestinian-Americans in the student body, faculty, and wider community, whose lived experience over the past year and a half — not to mention the 75 years prior — have been filled with deep personal loss and cultural trauma. They should share the rights enjoyed by all others, to speak about their trauma (and indeed, name its cause) without fear of official reproach or retaliation. In the same vein, other pro-Palestinian advocates (many of them Jewish) should be able to express their views without fear.</p> <p>Finally, as the arc of history bends towards justice with the recent ceasefire deal and issuance of ICC arrest warrants for both Hamas and Israeli leaders for their respective atrocities, it is important that Mason leadership take a strong stance towards free and open debate rather than one-sided sanctions. Mason should position itself as an impartial champion of civil liberties, freedom, and diversity in this time.</p> <p>As a proud and active member of the Mason community, I ask that you thoroughly consider the above and reject this resolution.</p>
Christopher Lowder	Faculty	<p>In regards to the Antisemitism Resolution, board members often said "not intended" with the reading of the text. However, it has been interpreted by a large number of faculty, staff, and students that it might indeed impact speech. This would be a chilling effect on speech. First Amendment and 14th amendment protections not only protect the intention, but the real world impact. If enough folks read this resolution as prevention speech, even if not intentional, this chilling effect is unconstitutional. With the current writing of the text, this chilling effect would be unconstitutional and could open the university up to legal action in regards to suspension and termination of faculty.</p>
Hannah Wing- Bonica	Alumni	<p>As a GMU Alumnus, I am concerned about antisemitism and do not want students to experience discrimination for being Jewish. However, I believe that this resolution should not be approved as it prevents students from protesting against the state of Israel. A recent investigation by Amnesty International concluded that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. Students should not have their right to protest against Israel's war crimes taken away.</p>

Hannah Landsberger	Alumni	<p>I want to address Visitor Rosen's assertion that the antisemitism resolution will not restrict free speech on campus. The equation of criticism of the government of Israel with antisemitism will absolutely be used to restrict the free speech of students who are advocating for Palestinian rights. He claims that Anti Zionism sentiment will be allowed as long as it is not being used to target Jewish students. Who will make this distinction? Who will decide if a protest against the government of Israel is actually antisemitism? The definition is so vague as to allow any acts of free speech critical of Israel to be labeled as antisemitic. This will be used to shut down peaceful protest, academic debate, curriculum that features Palestinian history, and funding for student organizations that support Palestinian students. It is very clear to me that this resolution is actually an anti-Palestinian resolution in disguise as an antisemitism resolution. In addition, the proposed "wordsmithing" he is asking for will take up valuable time and energy from the board and from the DEI offices that are under so much stress because of the current executive orders. I do not see a productive definition of antisemitism arriving from such "wordsmithing"; in fact I worry that this will be used simply to create loopholes that will allow anti-zionism and support of Palestinian rights to be more restricted on campus. I would urge the board to not pass this resolution in any form.</p>
Anonymous	Alumnus	<p>Criticizing a government (no matter the religion of the country itself) does not ever equate to hate speech towards a religion or ethnicity. Those are separate things. We should be able to criticize the actions of a government. Criticizing the government of Pakistan has never meant "hating Muslims" or Islamophobia. It's the same idea here. Students on campus should be able to speak up for the rights of Palestinians and not be punished for it. Do no encroach on their first amendment right.</p>