



Dear President Eisgruber,

We at American Jewish Committee (AJC) and Academic Engagement Network (AEN) are writing to express our profound moral objections and grave concern regarding the invitation extended to the notorious provocateur Mr. Mohammed el-Kurd to deliver the prestigious Edward Said Memorial Lecture at Princeton's English Department on February 8th. While our organizations stand firmly behind the principle of free speech on campus and affirm the importance of academic freedom, we also feel compelled to explain why the invitation to this speaker, a non-academic with a long track record of engaging in antisemitic canards, was so deeply offensive to the vast majority of Princeton's Jewish community. We also take the opportunity to elaborate below some of the steps that we encourage you to take in order to effectively address and combat anti-Jewish hatred while continuing to affirm the principles of open inquiry and unfettered intellectual exchange at Princeton.

Mr. el-Kurd's reputation as a Palestinian activist has been marked by an insistent use of graphic antisemitic conspiracies in his writing and talks. He has [accused Israeli soldiers of harvesting the organs of Palestinians](#), rehearsing note-for-note the medieval blood libel in which Jews stood accused of consuming the flesh of their enemies. He had invoked a false analogy between Israelis and Nazis in his description of Zionists, whom he refers to as "[sadistic barbaric neonazi pigs.](#)" He has unapologetically glorified the Second Intifada, a period of violence between 2000-2005 during which over seven hundred Israeli civilians were murdered, referring to those who undertook the killing of innocent Israelis as "[martyrs.](#)" Disturbingly, this dehumanization of Israelis and vilification of Zionism, a central component of Jewish identity for a majority of Jews, continues to be a persistent feature of el-Kurd's written materials and social media profile. As has been well-documented, when he has been called out for his appalling rhetoric at prior campus events, el-Kurd has taken to mocking and insulting Jewish students in the audience.

While we understand that Princeton firmly supports the principles of free speech, we want to emphasize that extreme and hateful rhetoric can often result in real-world bloodshed. Calls for violence against Israel and Israelis have resulted in acts of [violence against American Jews](#), as was seen during the May 2021 conflict between Israel and Hamas. Hostile anti-Israel and anti-Zionist rhetoric leaves many Jewish students feeling demoralized and marginalized. AJC's recently released [survey](#) of American antisemitism makes clear that young Jewish students are

increasingly hesitant to self-identify as Jewish on campus in no small part because antisemitic attitudes have become increasingly normalized as a result of polarizing and inflammatory anti-Zionist activism. An event like El-Kurd's lecture, sponsored by an academic department, only exacerbates this situation, making many Jewish students feel unwelcome and isolated on their own campus while normalizing extreme, distorted perceptions of Jews' complex relationship to Israel.

In light of the negative impact that the English Department's recent hosting of el-Kurd has had on the campus climate, we urge you to find ways to demonstrate that you are committed to inclusivity for Jewish, Zionist, and all students. We encourage you to work with other campus stakeholders, including Princeton Hillel-the Center for Jewish Life, to develop a robust action plan with measurable benchmarks to better educate the campus community about contemporary antisemitism, Jewish identity, and Israel. AEN and AJC will be happy to provide you with educational resources, such as AEN's [Guide and Resource Book for Faculty and University Leaders](#), which covers the topics of antisemitism, Jewish identity, and freedom of expression on campus. Each of our organizations also has [initiatives](#) and programs designed to help administrators better understand the needs and concerns of the campus Jewish community, including academic delegation [trips to Israel](#), which AJC will be inviting your DEI and VPSL administrators to attend. We would also be happy to provide a joint professional development opportunity for you and your administrative team as you continue to strategize how to effectively address these important issues on your campus.

We encourage you and the members of your administrative staff to contact us directly (at [coodins@ajc.org](mailto:coodins@ajc.org) and [miriam@academicengagement.org](mailto:miriam@academicengagement.org)) for further resources on combatting campus antisemitism.

Sincerely,



Theodore E. Deutch  
AJC Chief Executive Officer



Dr. Miriam F. Elman  
Executive Director, AEN