

In the name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.
All praise and thanks belong to God, the Lord of the Worlds.
May peace and prayers be upon Prophet Muhammad and his family.



Council on American-Islamic Relations
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May 16, 2024

The Honorable James Comer
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Accountability
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Your Un-American, Politically Motivated Abuses of Congressional Power Aimed at Silencing American Citizens Opposed to the Israeli Government's Genocide in Gaza

Dear Chairman Comer and Chairwoman Foxx:

I write on behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, to address a disturbing letter that the Committee on Oversight & Accountability and the Committee on Education & the Workforce sent to Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on May 14, 2024.

In the letter, you call on the Treasury Department to share any suspicious activity reports that U.S. banks may have ever filed related to 20 American organizations, including foundations like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and The Soros Foundation, as well as Jewish, Muslim and Palestinian American student groups and advocacy organizations opposed to the Israeli government's genocide in Gaza.

Your request lacks any legitimate congressional purpose and echoes the witch hunts of the McCarthy era. It also represents the latest political stunt in a consistently dishonest and increasingly desperate effort to protect a foreign government from criticism by smearing American students exercising their constitutional right to criticize that foreign government.

As you know, CAIR sent a letter to the Committee on Education & the Workforce on Dec. 4, 2023, alerting the committee to a surge in hate crimes and illegal discrimination across America motivated by Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism. Since then, the committee has failed to fulfill its responsibility to provide any attention whatsoever to the threats against Muslim, Jewish, and Palestinian students opposed to the genocide.

Instead, the Committee on Education and Workforce has hosted a recent series of theatrical, dishonest congressional hearings focused on pressuring colleges to suppress speech critical of the Israeli government's genocide by leveling false allegations of antisemitism against the diverse and overwhelmingly peaceful protests that Jewish, Palestinian, Muslim and other students have launched on college campuses.

During these hearings, the same members of Congress who ignore real antisemitism whenever it comes from the likes of former President Donald Trump or Pastor John Hagee ignored rampant anti-Palestinian racism and anti-Muslim discrimination on college campuses and in workplaces.

Now you have engaged in a new abuse of congressional power—baselessly demanding that the Treasury Department turn over hypothetical suspicious activity reports about American organizations based on the speech of those organizations. This is a flagrantly un-American political stunt disguised as congressional work.

You have no basis to believe that suspicious activity reports exist for any of the named entities, and in any case, such reports do not represent any evidence of wrongdoing or provide a basis for congressional action. The reason you are targeting these groups is their speech: some groups oppose the genocide in Gaza while other groups have funded various liberal causes that you find politically objectionable.

Abusing congressional authority to launch witch hunts against Americans you disagree with tarnishes the democratic process. So does using your power to smear and silence the college students who independently organized the diverse and organic student encampment movement.

Unlike some members of Congress, many young people in America genuinely believe in racial equality and human rights, which is why they naturally oppose all forms of bigotry, including both antisemitism and anti-Palestinian racism, and why they naturally oppose our nation's involvement in human rights abuses, including the genocide that has killed over 35,000 Palestinians, injured 80,000 more, and destroyed almost all civilian infrastructure in Gaza.

Contrary to your claims, these anti-genocide protests are not anti-Semitic. In fact, many of the students organizing these protests are Jewish Americans who believe they are upholding a moral obligation to oppose genocide against any group of people.

Furthermore, your claim that students are creating “chaos” and engaging in unacceptable “illegal activities” is also misguided. Peaceful civil disobedience is as American as apple pie. Like the

students who used sit-ins to protest segregation, the Vietnam war, and apartheid in South Africa, college students today are independently exercising their constitutional right to oppose an injustice enabled by their own government.

The only significant conflict at student sit-ins has occurred when either pro-genocide agitators harassed students or when law enforcement officers brutalized students in places as varied as UCLA, Emory University, Columbia University, Ohio State University, UT Austin, and many other schools. Yet your committees have, of course, not investigated or condemned such incidents.

We would conclude by noting that your desperate attempt to launch a witch hunt into college students reveals a failure on your part: you and other supporters of the Israeli government's genocide are on the losing side of a bad argument.

Since you cannot convince young people to support genocide, you are trying to smear and silence those young people. Please know that your efforts will ultimately fail, God willing, just like the supporters of apartheid and segregation did before you.

Your abuse of congressional power threatens free speech, wastes taxpayer dollars, and contributes to a McCarthy-like atmosphere, all in service to a foreign government. You should immediately change course and focus on investigating police violence against peacefully protesting college students, countering the rise in anti-Muslim bigotry and anti-Palestinian racism on college campuses, and ending U.S. complicity in Israel's human rights abuses of Palestinians.

Until then, we plan to forcefully defend the free speech and civil rights of our community and all Americans from your abuses of power.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Robert S. McCaw". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Robert S. McCaw
Government Affairs Department Director
Council on American-Islamic Relations