In McCarthyite congressional hearing

US politicians and university presidents slander anti-genocide protesters, Roger Waters as antisemites

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For over three hours on Tuesday, the presidents of Harvard, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and University of Pennsylvania testified in front of the House Education and Workforce Committee in a hearing titled "Holding Campus Leaders Accountable and Confronting Antisemitism."

Tuesday's hearing, led by Rep. Virginia Foxx (Republican-North Carolina), operated on the false premise that opposition to Zionism, the genocide in Gaza and chanting the phrase, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free," is equivalent to antisemitism and calls for exterminating Jews.

This is the second hearing held by Congress since October 7 that has featured presidents from universities aimed at curbing the democratic rights of students and the population as a whole, who, in the face of police violence, right-wing intimidation and threats to future job prospects, have protested by the millions against the nearly two-month-long US-NATO-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza.

As of this writing over 16,000 Palestinians have been killed since October 7 with another 43,000 injured. On Tuesday, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) acknowledged that it is killing at least two civilians for every alleged "Hamas fighter" killed. Since the initiation of the Israeli ground offensive on October 27, the IDF has acknowledged the deaths of 83 soldiers.

Setting the tone for the McCarthyite proceedings that were to follow, after holding a moment of silence for those killed by "Hamas terrorists," Rep. Foxx warned the university presidents that they would have to "atone for the many specific instances of vitriolic, hate-filled antisemitism on your respective campuses." She said that "institutional antisemitism and hate" were the "poisoned fruits of your institution's cultures."

Completely ignoring the role of the Biden administration and the US government as a whole in facilitating the ethnic cleansing in Gaza, Foxx proceeded to play a short video featuring students protesting the genocide on various campuses. Ominous music was added to the video track in order to make the protests appear sinister. After playing the video, Foxx attacked the students and warned the witnesses that it was time to "delineate good from evil and right from wrong."

Closely adhering to the foreign policy objectives of US imperialism, in each of their opening statements, the university presidents condemned Hamas and pledged to combat antisemitism on their campuses by working with the police, the FBI and/or the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). None of them spoke out against the Israeli genocide or condemned the role of the Republican Party in cultivating, and promoting antisemitic, white supremacist and fascistic forces in the US and internationally.

Instead, throughout the hearing the presidents adapted to the right-wing politicians. Asked by Rep. Foxx if Israel had the right to exist "as a Jewish state," Harvard University President Dr. Claudine Gay, MIT President Dr. Sally Kornbluth and UPenn President Elizabeth Magill all agreed that it did. None of the university presidents, or politicians on the committee, spoke in favor of a multi-ethnic state with equal protections and rights for all, regardless of religion or national origin.

In her brief comments, Rep. Pramila Jayapal (Democrat-

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Washington) laundered bogus statistics from the ADL—an ultra-Zionist, quasi-state intelligence agency that falsely equates opposition to Zionism as antisemitism—in order to bolster Republican claims that public and private universities in the United States were hotbeds of Jew-hatred.

"The ADL found that reports of antisemitism have quadrupled," Jayapal said, adding, "We are seeing that reflected on college campuses."

Later on in the hearing, Rep. Jim Banks (Republican-Indiana), one of 147 Republicans who voted to overturn the election following Donald Trump's January 6 coup, attacked UPenn President Magill for refusing to preemptively censor and cancel a Palestinian literature festival held on the campus in September. Prior to the event, the UPenn administration blocked international rock superstar and lifelong defender of Palestinian and human rights, Roger Waters, from appearing in-person on a festival panel.

Banks slandered Waters as someone who "publicly" uses "anti-Jewish slurs" and "desecrated the memory of Anne Frank." He questioned Magill, "Why in the world would you host someone like that on your college campus?"

Magill accepted Banks' false characterization of Waters and replied that "prior to the event I issued a statement calling out the antisemitism of some of the speakers." Pressed by Banks if that "specifically" included Waters, Magill replied, "Roger Waters is among them."

Despite her best efforts to appease the fascistic Banks, the Republican congressman ended his questioning with an unhinged tirade accusing Magill of "creating a safe haven for antisemitic behavior" and that UPenn was a "hot bed" of antisemitism.

Immediately after Banks, New Jersey Democratic Rep. Donald Norcross likewise attacked Magill over allowing the Palestinian Writes Literature Festival and like Jayapal, used bogus "facts" from the ADL to slander opponents of genocide and racism as antisemitic.

"Given that the ADL identified many of the speakers, 25, as antisemitic," Norcross said, "Dr. Magill, did you have the power to stop this event?"

Magill said she does not preemptively censor or cancel the "thousands" of speakers they have on campus every year even if she disagrees with their views.

"In hindsight do you think that was the proper decision?" Norcross pressed. Magill said that "canceling that conference would have been very inconsistent with academic freedom and free expression, despite the fact that the views of some of those that came to that conference I find very, very objectionable because of their antisemitism."

Unsatisfied with her answer, Norcross provocatively asked if he would allow UPenn academic departments to sponsor a conference that featured "25 speakers that the NAACP identified as racist?"

Emboldened by Democratic committee members' refusal to differentiate between anti-Zionism and antisemitism, in his comments, far-right Rep. Bob Good (Republican-Virginia) attacked what he called a "deeply troubling tendency on the left" to equate "antisemitism with Islamophobia." Despite the fact that three Palestinian college students were just shot in Vermont less than two weeks ago, Good claimed there was "no equivalence" and that "Jewish hate crimes are far higher" and that it was "dishonest" to compare the two.

Tuesday's hearing coincided with an overwhelming bipartisan, 311 to 14, vote by the House to adopt a resolution that equated all opposition to the apartheid state of Israel and Zionism as antisemitism.

House Resolution 894, introduced by Rep. David Kustoff (Republican-Tennessee) not only adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's reactionary definition of antisemitism but stated "clearly and firmly" that "anti-Zionism is antisemitism."

Only one Republican, libertarian Thomas Massie (Kentucky) and 13 Democrats voted against the resolution. Instead of opposing the measure, 92 Democrats voted "present," including Representative Jerrold Nadler (Democrat-New York), who had previously criticized the resolution for equating political opposition to Zionism to antisemitism, noting the opposition of orthodox Hasidic Jews and the early Jewish labor movement to the Zionist project.

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