

Yale University suspends law scholar and pro-Palestinian activist targeted by AI-powered Zionist news website

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In a blatant attack on free speech and due process rights, Yale University suspended international law scholar and pro-Palestinian activist Dr. Helyeh Doutaghi on Tuesday, based on a smear campaign launched by an artificial intelligence-powered Zionist news website called Jewish Online.

Doutaghi, an Iranian-born academic who became Deputy Director of the Law and Political Economy (LPE) Project at Yale in 2023 and also held the position of Associate Research Scholar at Yale Law School (YLS), was notified on March 3 of a post on Jewish Online that claimed she was a “terrorist.”

YLS did not defend her but proceeded within 24 hours to place Doutaghi on administrative leave, revoked her access to email and banned her from Yale’s campus. The university administration gave her only a few hours’ notice to attend an interrogation based on the far-right AI-generated allegations against her.

She was then subject to a barrage of harassment, death threats and online attacks by right-wing supporters of Zionism and the Gaza genocide. As Doutaghi explained in a post on X on Tuesday afternoon,

I endured all of this while fasting, and my request for religious accommodations during Ramadan was dismissed. ... I was afforded no due process and no reasonable time to consult with my attorney.

Rather than investigate the source of these allegations first, the nation’s “top law school” accepted them at face value and shifted the burden of proof from the accuser to the accused, treating me, *prima facie*, as guilty until proven otherwise. Whether Yale Law School’s attorneys knowingly relied on AI-fabricated claims or simply chose willful ignorance remains unanswered.

The individual selected by Yale Law School to interrogate Doutaghi was David Ring of the law firm Wiggin and Dana, a known supporter of Zionism, a US State Department appointee and advocate for defense contractors that have profited from war crimes against Palestinians.

As Doutaghi explained,

When I raised my concerns about the potential conflict of

interests posed by his participation in this process, YLS dismissed them, stating there was “no concern with his ability to conduct a fair interview.” It is reprehensible that YLS would appoint a counsel who profits from the machinery of Palestinian death to “interview” an employee about their public anti-genocide and pro-Palestine positions.

Doutaghi wrote that YLS’s primary concern “with maintaining the approval of the Zionist backers who bankroll their complicity in genocide led the organization to pressure me into an interrogation that I had every reason to believe was designed not to uncover the truth, but to justify a predetermined outcome.”

According to a report in the *New York Times*, the official reason Yale has given for the attacks on Doutaghi’s rights is that “she was tied to entities subject to U.S. sanctions.” The *Times* report said this “was an apparent reference to Samidoun, a pro-Palestinian group placed on the US sanctions list last year, after the Treasury Department designated it a ‘sham charity’ raising money for a terrorist organization, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.”

However, no opportunity to refute the allegations made by Jewish Online—which accused Doutaghi of being a member of a terrorist organization—was afforded before the Yale administration took punitive actions against her.

The attack on Doutaghi, 30, is among the latest in the offensive launched by fascist President Donald Trump against student and faculty activists on university campuses across the country aimed at intimidating and silencing opposition to the US-backed genocide in Gaza.

It comes within days of the kidnapping and illegal detention of Mahmoud Khalil, a legal resident of the United States, who was an activist in pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia University during the previous academic year. Khalil was seized on Saturday night in the lobby of his residential building by Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agents and transported to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facility in Louisiana.

On Monday, the US Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights sent letters to 60 colleges and universities, warning that they are under investigation for alleged violations related to “antisemitic harassment and discrimination.” Meanwhile, the lie that pro-Palestinian protesters are “antisemitic” is being supported by the entire US political establishment and repeated endlessly by the

corporate media without substantiation.

It is within this atmosphere of hysteria and lies that the fascist Trump White House is blatantly violating the fundamental democratic rights of those who are being accused of breaking the law. Among the techniques being used is the so-called “Catch and Revoke” initiative of the US State Department, which employs artificial intelligence (AI) to monitor and revoke visas of foreign nationals, particularly student visa holders, who are accused of being members or supporters of designated terrorist organizations.

In a statement on March 6, Secretary of State Marco Rubio spelled out the administration’s attack on basic rights contained in the “Catch and Revoke” program, “Those who support designated terrorist organizations, including Hamas, threaten our national security. The United States has zero tolerance for foreign visitors who support terrorists. Violators of US law—including international students—face visa denial or revocation, and deportation.” In other words, once someone has been labeled as such by the White House—regardless of facts, evidence or proof—they will be fired, kidnapped, detained and/or deported by the US government against their rights.

As Doutaghi explained in her post:

It should cause profound concern to all defenders of free speech that those infamous words, “Are you now or have you ever been a member of ...” are once again becoming a common refrain. We are entering an era of Zionist McCarthyism—a time when dissent is invariably met with crackdown, careers are destroyed for speaking the truth, and the mere act of standing in solidarity with Palestine liberation is treated as a crime. Just as McCarthyism sought to crush anti-imperialist resistance through fear and repression, this new iteration aims to silence, intimidate, and purge those who challenge Zionist settler-colonialism and U.S. imperialism.

It is the method of the political witch hunt that is being revived by the Trump administration, which is aimed at suppressing all opposition to the fascist program being pursued both within the US and internationally. These measures are being taken amidst a deepening economic and political crisis as well as growing mass opposition, as Doutaghi wrote in her concluding comment, “This is not a display of strength; it is the last refuge of a crumbling order—an empire in decline, resorting to brute repression to stifle and crush those who expose its unraveling hegemony.”

Eric Lee, the attorney who also represented Will Lehman in his challenge to the 2022 UAW election, is representing Doutaghi. Lee issued a statement on Tuesday which explained the sequence of events that clearly violate the law scholar’s rights:

I was retained by Dr. Doutaghi in the late morning of March 3. At roughly 2:30 pm that afternoon, I received an email from Yale’s office of general counsel linking to the “Jewish Onliner” article and indicating that Dr. Doutaghi was being investigated as a result of that article. I was then contacted by Yale’s outside counsel who insisted that Dr. Doutaghi agree to an interview that same afternoon. I asked for a discussion with outside counsel, and we spoke at 4 pm. I inquired as to what procedures would be in place for the interview and explained

that due to previously planned meetings, I would not be able to participate in an interview that same afternoon. Outside counsel asked me to send an email proposing next steps, which I did at 5:30, roughly one hour after our phone call ended. In that email I indicated that we were requesting a brief religious accommodation due to the fact that Dr. Doutaghi had been fasting for Ramadan while enduring intense harassment and violence online and would be better prepared to discuss next steps the following day after Dr. Doutaghi received a good night’s sleep. At the same time, I sent this email, I received an email from Yale’s office of general counsel indicating Dr. Doutaghi was placed on administrative leave for allegedly failing to respond to the interview request.

Lee’s preliminary investigation showed that Jewish Onliner had been exposed by the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* in January 2025 to be “a type of AI-generated bot that spreads misinformation to counter pro-Palestinian speech online,” and that it “may have ties to the Israeli government and military.”

Lee wrote to Yale on March 4,

asking (1) whether they were aware of the illegitimacy of the source, (2) if not, whether they had taken any steps to determine the legitimacy of the source before rushing to judgment against Dr. Doutaghi, and (3) whether the rush to force Dr. Doutaghi into an immediate interview was aimed at preventing us from having time to investigate the legitimacy of the source. Yale declined to answer these questions.

Lee concluded his statement with an explanation for why both Yale and the Trump administration are carrying out the attack on democratic rights and then issued a call to action against it:

Yale is bending the knee to Trump’s effort to suppress free speech, crush academic freedom and establish a dictatorship. Whether he succeeds will depend entirely on the response of the population. We urge everyone to stand up and come to the defense of Dr. Doutaghi and the democratic principles of free speech and due process which are fundamental to us all. We repeat our demand that Yale reinstate Dr. Doutaghi, give her access to campus and email, and take public action to restore her credibility and reputation.



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