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# Faculty report calls on Brandeis to resume partnership with Palestinian university

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By Matt Rocheleau, Boston.com Staff

Some faculty and an advisory board at Brandeis University are calling on the school to resume its partnership with Al-Quds University in Palestine.

The nonsectarian, Jewish-sponsored university in Waltham [suspended](#) its decade-old partnership with Al-Quds last month after the president of the Arab university refused to condemn a campus demonstration in which marchers reportedly flashed Nazi salutes and displayed banners showing images of suicide bombers as “martyrs.”

But three Brandeis faculty members said in a [report](#) published this week that they have researched and analyzed the circumstances leading up the suspension and feel that Al-Quds administrators “responded promptly and appropriately” after the rally.

“Al-Quds University is playing a courageous frontline role in working for peace by engaging those minority factions in its midst that hold extreme attitudes,” the report says. “We call on Brandeis University to resume and indeed redouble its commitment to this scholarly partnership.”

The report was authored by: Daniel Terris, director of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life at Brandeis; Susan S. Lanser, professor of comparative literature, English and women’s and gender studies and head of the humanities division; and Daniel Kryder, associated professor and chair of the politics department.

Meanwhile, the International Advisory Board of the center Terris directs issued a [resolution](#) this week saying it “urges that all steps be taken by both universities to reinstate their important partnership at the earliest opportunity.

The resolution also urges the university to lift a suspension placed on Al-Quds President Sari Nusseibeh, who is one the board’s 17 members.

On Nov. 5 demonstrators wearing black military gear and carrying fake guns marched around the main square of the Al-Quds campus while waving flags and raising the traditional Nazi salute, according to Brandeis administrators. Banners at the rally depicted images of suicide bombers at martyrs.

President Frederick M. Lawrence said previously he asked the Nusseibeh to issue an “unequivocal condemnation” of the demonstration.

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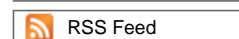
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But, a [statement](#) Nusseibeh released soon after came short of condemning the demonstrations. Instead, he described a university campus as “a sacred space for free and open discussion, the exchange of ideas, and the expression of contradictory views.”

And, parts of his statement seemed to be directed at Brandeis and its president.

“These occurrences allow some people to capitalize on events in ways that misrepresent the university as promoting inhumane, anti-Semitic, fascist, and Nazi ideologies,” wrote Nusseibeh.

Brandeis responded by immediately suspending its partnership with Al-Quds. In a [statement](#) Brandeis called Nusseibeh’s statement “unacceptable and inflammatory.”

“While Brandeis has an unwavering commitment to open dialogue on difficult issues, we are also obliged to recognize intolerance when we see it, and we cannot – and will not – turn a blind eye to intolerance,” the statement added.

But, the report this week from the three Brandeis faculty said: “While we understand the reasons why many people were disturbed or offended by Sari Nusseibeh’s November 17 letter to his student community, the letter expressed neither intolerance nor hatred.”

The partnership between Brandeis and Al-Quds began formally in 2003 and has roots dating back to 1997. It has featured a number of faculty, administrative and student exchanges, “designed to foster cultural understanding” and to provide educational opportunities, according to Brandeis.

“We believe deeply that this partnership represents a very important substantive and symbolic commitment to the idea that building bridges is essential, even and especially when that task is difficult,” said the report from Terris, Lanser and Kryder.

“Our Al-Quds University colleagues are working on the front lines to create a Palestinian society where tolerance and respect for all people – including the Jewish people and the people of Israel – is a fundamental value,” the report continues. “But in doing so, they have to find ways to engage effectively with the opponents of peace. Continuing our work with Al-Quds University on projects of mutual academic concern is one small but essential way that Brandeis University can seek to actualize its mission of social justice and the building of a better world.”

Brandeis administrators have stressed that the university has suspended, not terminated, the partnership with Al-Quds. Brandeis leaders [have said](#) they are reaching out Al-Quds leaders to discuss the issues further and are open to reconsidering the suspension.

Soon after Brandeis announced its suspension, Syracuse University [suspended](#) its ties with Al-Quds, while Bard College announced it would maintain its partnership with Al-Quds.

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