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Brandeis University cuts ties with Palestinian college

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT NOVEMBER 20, 2013

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Brandeis University has suspended its decade-old partnership with a Palestinian university after its president refused to condemn a campus demonstration in which marchers reportedly flashed Nazi salutes amid banners depicting images of suicide bombers as martyrs.

Brandeis — a nonsectarian, Jewish-sponsored university — said its president, Frederick M. Lawrence, had asked the head of Al-Quds University in Jerusalem to issue an “unequivocal condemnation” of the Nov. 5 demonstration. But in a statement released Sunday night, the Arab university’s president, Sari Nusseibeh, fell short of condemning the demonstrations. Instead, he called the campus “a sacred space for free and open discussion, the exchange of ideas, and the expression of contradictory views.”

Parts of Nusseibeh's 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."

Lawrence responded Monday, calling Nusseibeh's statement unacceptable. He said there is a difference between free speech and hate speech.

"First and foremost, universities should be safe spaces for a broad range of dialogue, discussion, and debate,"

Lawrence said. "But there are limits, and hate speech has no place on our campus. While we have an unwavering commitment to open dialogue, we cannot turn a blind eye to intolerance."

Brandeis officials said the suspension of the partnership is effective immediately, but that the university could reevaluate its relationship with Al-Quds "based on future events."

The controversy is the latest example of how passions about the Middle East run deep on the Waltham campus. In 2006, for example, college officials removed paintings by Palestinian youths from an exhibition in the Brandeis library, saying the art depicted only one side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Al-Quds partnership, which began formally in 2003 and has roots dating back to 1997, has featured faculty, administrative, and student exchanges designed to foster cultural understanding and provide educational opportunities.

The rally at the Palestinian school involved demonstrators "raising the traditional Nazi salute," according to Brandeis.

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