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## Pro-Israel Students Seek Reprieve from Profs' Alleged Anti-Semitic Bias

By Jim Brown  
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(AgapePress) - Professors in the Middle East studies department at [Columbia University](#) are being accused of anti-Semitism and ideological bias.

A new documentary film produced by a group called the "[David Project](#)" claims Columbia's department of Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures (MEALAC) is rife with anti-Israel professors who attempt to bully and indoctrinate students with their political agenda. In response, the New York Civil Liberties Union has written a letter to Columbia president Lee Bollinger on behalf of the accused faculty, arguing the professors "must retain broad latitude to think as they will and to write as they think" and that they should "suffer no recriminations ... for the content of their scholarship."

But Greg Lukianoff, director of legal and public advocacy for the [Foundation for Individual Rights in Education](#) (FIRE), says that is "ridiculous."

"There's a big difference between official punishment and natural consequences," Lukianoff states. "If the Middle Eastern department is overwhelmingly anti-Israel, Columbia can expect to alienate Israeli and pro-Zionist students. They can also expect that people who think that that opinion is reprehensible not to give money to Columbia."

To imply that the professors are immune from criticism, says FIRE, is to "discount the rights of those who hold differing opinions."

In stepping in to defend the professors, the NYCLU also argues that students have limited rights to dissent from campus orthodoxy. But FIRE counters that argument, saying academic freedom is not just for professors. "Columbia has a responsibility to respect the freedom of students to protest what they feel is ideological bias by their professors," the group says in a press release.

Lukianoff believes the department would stand to benefit from having some semblance of ideological balance.

"There's nothing whatsoever preventing Columbia from adding someone who has a dissenting point of view from the dominant point of view in the Middle Eastern department, whatever point of view that may be -- and that's within Columbia's academic freedom rights," the FIRE spokesman says. "A lot of people would argue that that would actually *improve* the environment for free speech and intellectual diversity at Columbia."

President Bollinger has set up an *ad hoc* panel to investigate the incidents of anti-Israel bias and student intimidation alleged in a new documentary called "Columbia Unbecoming." Among the incidents highlighted in the film is one in which a professor would not answer a student's question until the student revealed how many Palestinians he had killed while a member of the Israeli Defense Forces. The professor denies the incident ever took place.

Jim Brown, a regular contributor to *AgapePress*, is a reporter for [American Family Radio News](#), which can be heard online.

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