

♦One Year Later: Examining Antisemitism at Harvard, MIT, and UPenn

Christopher Smith

4 December 2024

In December 2023, a congressional hearing placed the leadership of Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn), and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) under intense scrutiny over their responses to a troubling rise in antisemitism on campus [\[1\]](#).

What Happened?

The context for the hearing was grim. Following the October 7, 2023, attacks on Israel by Hamas [\[2\]](#), campuses across the U.S. saw increased polarization. Jewish students reported heightened harassment and hostile environments, particularly as pro-Palestinian student groups organized demonstrations that many perceived as crossing into antisemitic territory. These incidents, coupled with institutional hesitance to enforce disciplinary measures, amplified calls for accountability.

The hearing, spearheaded by Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY), featured pointed questioning of university presidents. Harvard's Claudine Gay, UPenn's Elizabeth Magill, and MIT's Sally Kornbluth. Central to the discussions were allegations of inaction in response to antisemitic rhetoric, such as chants of "intifada" at student protests. Stefanik challenged whether such calls, interpreted as advocating violence against Jews, violated university codes of conduct. Presidents defended their institutions' commitments to free speech(???), sparking widespread debate about the boundaries of expression versus hate speech [\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#).

Aftermath

Since the hearing, legislative efforts to address campus antisemitism have gained momentum. The DETERRENT Act [\[6\]](#), for instance, aimed to enhance transparency in foreign funding to universities. Claudine Gay of Harvard resigned [\[7\]](#) as did Elizabeth Magill of UPenn [\[8\]](#)

Follow-Up

I contacted Harvard's president's office and UPenn's president's office. Harvard's president didn't want to comment and I never heard back from UPenn.

What do current faculty and administrators think about this antisemitism? What changes in the culture will the next presidents make? Will there be changes to policy? What policy changes are to be implemented? What will happen to these once great universities?

[1] - U.S. Congress. *Congressional Record*—118th Congress, House Event LC72923. Congress.gov, Library of Congress,

<https://www.congress.gov/event/118th-congress/house-event/LC72923/text?s=2&r=4>.

[2] - Reuters. "How Hamas Attack on Israel Unfolded." *Reuters*, 7 Oct. 2023,

www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/how-hamas-attack-israel-unfolded-2023-10-07/. Accessed 4 Dec. 2024.

[3] - Stefanik, Elise. "ICYMI: Stefanik Joins House Republicans and College Students to Discuss the Rise of Antisemitism at American Universities." *Press Releases*, Office of Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, 4 Dec. 2023,

<https://stefanik.house.gov/2023/12/icymi-stefanik-joins-house-republicans-and-college-students-to-discuss-the-rise-of-antisemitism-at-american-universities>.

[4] - Stefanik, Elise. "Press Release: Stefanik Highlights Legislative Accomplishments and Advocacy for Upstate New York and the North Country." *Press Releases*, Office of Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, 4 Dec. 2023,

<https://stefanik.house.gov/press-releases?ID=0E21B0DC-7BE2-40D8-AFE1-2D5F72188D78>.

[5] - Stefanik, Elise. "ICYMI: Stefanik Demands Answers from Harvard President Claudine Gay on Harvard's Failure to Condemn Antisemitism and Anti-Israel Attacks on Campus." *Press Releases*, Office of Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, 4 Dec. 2023,

<https://stefanik.house.gov/2023/12/icymi-stefanik-demands-answers-from-harvard-president-claudine-gay-on-harvard-s-failure-to-condemn-antisemitism-and-anti-israel-attacks-on-campus>.

[6] - U.S. Congress. H.R.5933—Social Media Anti-Censorship Act. Congress.gov, Library of Congress, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/5933>.

[7] - Gay, Claudine. "Personal News." *Office of the President—Harvard University*, Harvard University, 4 Dec. 2024, <https://www.harvard.edu/president/news-gay/2024/personal-news/>.

[8] - Magill, Liz. "Full Resignation Announcement." *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, 4 Dec. 2023, <https://www.thedp.com/article/2023/12/penn-liz-magill-full-resignation-announcement>.