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*U.S. Affiliate of the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists*

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October 18, 2023

President Pollack  
300 Day Hall  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, NY 14853

By Email to: [president@cornell.edu](mailto:president@cornell.edu)

Dear President Pollack,

The American Association of Jewish Lawyers & Jurists (AAJLJ) is the voluntary bar association of American Jewish lawyers. We are a national nonprofit association that represents the American Jewish legal community on legal issues that affect, and are of importance to, the community, including: freedom of religion, civil rights, human rights, access to justice, social justice, and defense of the rule of law. The Association also advocates upon and defends against matters affecting the global Jewish community such as antisemitism and those which are covers for antisemitism claiming only a desire to undermine the State of Israel such as the BDS movement. We are also privileged to have amongst our members student lawyers, including those who have attended or are currently attending the Cornell University.

It may be no surprise that I am writing to you now, as many alumni of Cornell are critically concerned, not only for the soul of the institution but for the physical safety of Jewish students on campus. The [speech](#) of [Associate Professor Russell Rickford](#) at the Pro-Palestinian rally on Ithaca Commons is nothing short of nauseating. While the rest of the world were retching and keening as [Zaka](#) volunteers uncovered the remains of the brutal murders, burnings and rapes of innocent civilians by Hamas in Southern Israel on October 7, 2023, Professor Rickford was finding it “exhilarating”, “exciting”, and “energizing.”

I should not have to say that the callous trivialization of war crimes by a professor at Cornell cannot and should not be tolerated. If Professor Rickford is not terminated forthwith for being clearly divorced from humanity, he should be fired for his complete and utter lack of judgment.

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Maybe Cornell should not be surprised. One finds it hard to believe that Cornell is flabbergasted by Professor Rickford's comments, as such a denouement does not arise overnight. He did complete his M.A., M.Phil and Ph.D. at Columbia University, a well-known hotbed of virulent antisemitism, and this cannot be his first foray into speaking at rallies which support terrorist actions against Israel. I would be grateful if you could disclose whether there have been any similar complaints concerning Professor Rickford in the past.

Furthermore, donors should be made aware during the commitment process that their monies are being used to support research which is either being undertaken by terrorist sympathizers or may be used to establish an intellectual rationale for terrorism. This is especially the case in the circumstance of a history professor like Mr Rickford. History is particularly susceptible to the occlusions on the lens of the person documenting and commenting upon it. Professor Rickford's prejudices cannot be unheard or unseen, and one wonders what student should wish to be taught by such a bigot and fomenter of hate.

A clear message must be given to all students, and their parents, that they are safe to attend Cornell and that they will not be subjected to hate speech, hate conduct or the threat of physical violence against property or person by students or faculty. This is to protect the entire student body, not just Jewish student. It is clear as day those who are exhilarated by terrorist actions against Jews would see their blood lust equally energized should such crimes be perpetrated against Americans.

The AAJLJ demands not condemnation, as that is a given, but robust and swift action.

We look forward to hearing as to the steps that have been taken by your office.

Yours Sincerely,



Robert Garson  
President



Nadav Besner

cc: Donica Thomas Varner