

NY governor orders Hunter College to remove Palestinian studies job listings

by [Arno Rosenfeld](#)

March 4, 2025



Hunter College in New York City (via Facebook)

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul ordered Hunter College to remove job listings for two Palestinian studies positions last week, following criticism from pro-Israel groups. It was the latest skirmish in years of simmering tension over Israel and allegations of antisemitism across the City University of New York system.

Heba Gowayed, a sociology professor at Hunter, [announced](#) the new roles on social media on February 24 after they were posted on the college's website (they have since been taken down). "This is an incredible source of pride for me as a faculty member and one of the many reasons that I feel so lucky to work here," she wrote on Bluesky. "Proud of Hunter administration for being a voice for justice in the

face of so much horror.”

The two job listings, one in the humanities and one in the sciences, sought scholars who take “a critical lens to issues pertaining to Palestine including but not limited to: settler colonialism, genocide, human rights, apartheid, migration, climate and infrastructure devastation, health, race, gender and sexuality.”

StopAntisemitism, a strident pro-Israel group, [described](#) the listing as part of a “blood libel” at CUNY and Steve McGuire, who works for a right-wing group that monitors higher education, [lamented](#) that “Hunter College is looking to hire an anti-Israel activist.”

Hochul’s office did not immediately respond to inquiries about why the governor had made the school take down the listings; whether similar interventions had happened before; and whether the job listings were simply being rewritten or the positions eliminated.

Félix Rodríguez, CUNY’s chancellor, said in a [statement](#) that he agreed with Hochul’s “direction to remove this posting.” He added that the language in the listing was “divisive, polarizing and inappropriate.”

Hunter is one of 25 campuses that comprise CUNY, the largest urban public university system in the country. In recent years, it has been the site of regular conflagrations over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially at its law school and among members of its faculty union.

In both 2022 and 2023, student commencement speakers for CUNY School of Law [condemned Israel](#), prompting administrators to [cancel](#) the annual student speech last year. Separately, some professors have quit the union, called the Professional Staff Congress, over some leaders’ support of a boycott of Israel.

Last spring, protesters began targeting the Hillel at another CUNY campus, Baruch College, with Hamas iconography.

The system’s defenders say that actual instances of antisemitism at CUNY schools are rare and that the intense scrutiny is intended to chill criticism of Israel and, in some cases, advance right-wing demands to cut funding from a major public institution in New York.

On February 25, the *New York Post* [reported](#) on what it described as backlash from “furious Jewish watchdog groups.” It cited two pro-Israel groups and a former CUNY trustee, Jeffrey Wiesenfeld, who made headlines in 2011 for [blocking](#) Tony Kushner, the Jewish playwright who wrote *Angels in America*, from receiving an honorary degree because of his criticism of Israel.

“To make a Palestinian studies course—completely about alleged Jewish crimes—is akin to courses offered in the Nazi era which ascribed all the world’s crimes to the Jews,” Wiesenfeld said. “This course takes antisemitism to another level at CUNY.”

A Hochul spokesperson [told the Post](#) on February 25 that the governor had intervened. By February 26, the job listings were no longer on Hunter’s website.

“Governor Hochul has directed CUNY to immediately remove this job posting and conduct a thorough review of the position to ensure that antisemitic theories are not promoted in the classroom,” the *Post* quoted a Hochul spokesperson as saying.

Unlike Israel studies, there are very few academic programs dedicated exclusively to Palestinian studies in the country; prominent scholars in the field are often integrated into Middle Eastern studies programs. The Hunter positions would have been affiliated with different academic departments but as part of a cluster of people with expertise in the Palestinian experience.

After the school removed the listings, UJA-Federation of New York praised it for “decisive action against a course that would have promoted hate and antisemitic conspiracy theories.”

Gowayed, who is also a writer and an outspoken critic of Israel, [criticized the move](#) as evidence of “a new McCarthy era.”

“Stupid, depressing, and dangerous as ever,” she added. —The Forward

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