



Censoring Israel Critics (& Right-Wing Hypocrisy) Is Nothing New

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): But this entire time, all these years that left liberals have been building the censorship regime aimed at conservative voices, it has also been a very common and pervasive form of censorship for the United States to censor Israel critics. In academia, in media, in politics, in corporate America. They've lost their jobs. They've been fired. They've been banned. They've been punished. This is not some new thing that the American right is suddenly doing against the left as tit for tat: oh, we're finally going to show them what it's like to be censored. This is something that's been going on for a long time. I'm suppressing a sneeze, so we'll see if I'm able to succeed in doing that. I don't know what you do when you have to sneeze and you're live on the air. I think I've vanquished it for the moment. In any event, here is just to - I want to just give you a sense for what's going on, for the real historical framework for what's going on.

So, at the very beginning of 2023, obviously way before the Hamas attack on October 7th, talking about January 2023, we devoted an entire show to the question of whether the American right has an Israel exception when it comes to their belief in free speech. There you see the graphic that we use. *Thou shall not criticise Israel*. You see in the background the ADL and Harvard. Because back then there were attempts to claim that Harvard was allowing too much anti-Israel speech. This is not new. And you see a picture of Benjamin Netanyahu in our title. The title that we gave to our program was *The Right's Identity Politics: Exploiting Anti-Semitism to Suppress Debate and Defame Political Opponents*. And it was all about how the American right loves to believe that there are opponents of identity politics. They hate how the left always accuses everybody, their enemies of being racist and bigots as a way of censoring and suppressing debate and ruining people's reputations and also limiting the range of political views. "Oh no, you can't say that, that's fascism. We're not suppressing free speech. We're just fighting fascism and white nationalism and racism." And we devoted this whole show to how it is very common in some sectors of the American right

to do exactly that when it comes to criticism of Israel. To run around accusing everybody of being anti-Semite. A racist, in other words. To demand that any events at college campuses or students or professors who are anti-Israel be silenced, be barred, that events be cancelled, that professors be fired. All the things that the American right has claimed it hates when the left liberals do. Many people on the right, particularly the pro-Israeli right, have been doing this not recently, but for many, many years now. This is not a new thing that's being done just to give the American left a sense for what they've been doing. This has been going on forever in the United States.

Here is an op ed in The Washington Post that I found very important. If you can put the headline on the screen. It's by Claire Finkelstein and she is an academic at a university. And unlike many people on the right who are cheering censorship while pretending they're not, she admits this is the real game here. There you see the amazing headline: *To fight anti-Semitism on campuses, we must restrict speech*. This is what people are cheering, who are pressuring university professors to crack down on the anti-Israel speech. And yes, I know all the arguments that, Oh, this speech is genocide. That's the reason why it has to be suppressed. But as we've shown before, it is a fiction that there are huge numbers of students on college campuses running around chanting "gas the Jews" or "kill all Jews" or "genocide the Jews". The United States has been engaged in the debate over the last two weeks, a hysterical debate where a manufactured crisis has been disseminated to justify censorship, that there's all these students on college campuses going around chanting, "gas the Jews and genocide". This is not happening. I've asked over 100 people in the last week to please just give me any examples of American students or students on American campuses chanting "gas the Jews" or "kill the Jews". And it isn't happening.

The key left wing tactic for censorship, the left liberal tactic, is to take right wing speech and say this speech is not within the bounds of decency. It's not real political speech. It's fascism. It's white nationalism. It's racism. It's transphobic. And that when conservatives say their little slogans about race or LGBTs or immigrants, what they really mean is "kill all Black people, kill all trans people, kill all immigrants." And that's why we're censoring violent speech. That's the left wing tactic. To take right wing speech, re-characterise it as fascist, white nationalist, genuinely about trying to provoke violence against minority groups and only then saying, Well, now we have to censor it. This is exactly the tactic being used to justify censorship of Israel speech. I hear it every day now: "Oh, no, this isn't really criticism of Israel, this is advocacy of genocide". And it's done by taking very standard pro-Palestinian views, by calling for "intifada", which is the Arabic word for uprising. Or "From the river to the sea", which means all Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza should be free. And yes, it can have a violent connotation, just like opposition to immigration might be motivated by white nationalism, but it doesn't mean it always is. And even if it were a call for violence against Israel, that is clearly protected speech. You're allowed to say bomb Iran. You're allowed to say bomb Gaza. You're allowed to say use violence against Israel. These are allowed. We don't have an Israel exception in the First Amendment. But this finally is an

op ed that is being honest about what it's actually calling for: in demanding that antisemitism on campuses be curbed. It's a curb on free speech. That is what this op ed is. Advocating, quote, "We must restrict speech." And here's the argument. Quote, "This is because the value of free speech has been elevated to a near sacred level on university campuses." That's considered bad. What is this person arguing against? That "the value of free speech has been elevated to near sacred level on campuses"? This is what we have to fight against. Because they say, quote, "As a result, universities have had to tolerate hate speech - even hate speech calling for violence against ethnic or religious minorities. With the dramatic rise in anti-Semitism, we are discovering that this is a mistake." Meaning elevating free speech. "Antisemitism - and other forms of hate - cannot be fought on university campuses without restricting poisonous speech that targets Jews and other minorities." This is what this cause that so many conservatives are supporting is now about. It is right here. "Antisemitism and other forms of hate" - by which she means racism, transphobia, xenophobia - "cannot be fought on university campuses without restricting speech." Do you see how people who think they're doing this tit for tat against leftists or liberals, are really just strengthening these people who want to censor? The establishment in the United States is pro-Israel. You're not getting back at the establishment. They're happy to censor Israel critics because they're so pro-Israel. These are the people on campuses who are getting strengthened by these conservative calls for restrictions on speech on campus. She goes on, quote, "With or without the First Amendment, calls for genocide against Jews or even proxies for such sentiments such as calling for "intifada" or the elimination of Israel by chanting 'from the river to the sea' are in the present context, calls for a violence against a discrete ethnic or religious group. Such speech arguably incites violence, frequently inspires harassment of Jewish students and without question, creates a hostile environment that can impair the equal opportunity of Jewish students." Do you see that is the left liberal censorship case? Verbatim. Just replace Jewish students with black students or trans students or Latinos or gay students or Muslim students - and you have the censorship regime that has been created. What they're trying to do is now to say: We were happy to include Jews in that, that way we can censor even more. This is Claire Finkelstein, a tenured professor of law and philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania, where all of these controversies are taking place. She's unbelievably a member of the school's Open Expression Committee and chair of the law school's committee on academic freedom. And she's just saying outright, we're taking these conservative calls to use it as an opportunity to oppose even more censorship.

Now, as I said, none of this is new. Left wing Palestinian defenders have been among the most censored people in the United States for many years, along with conservative speakers. Here is The Guardian back in 2007, talking about 15 years ago now, 16 years ago. *University denies tenure to outspoken Holocaust academic*. This is about Norman Finkelstein. What had happened was Norman Finkelstein was teaching at DePaul University. He was a very well-known scholar. He had written scholarly books, obviously very critical of Israel and Jewish activist groups like Holocaust groups that he said were exploiting the Holocaust to prevent criticism of Israel. But his scholarship was well regarded. He had the approval of his

tenure committee, and Alan Dershowitz, the fanatical Israel supporter, went on a crusade to get tenure denied to Norman Finkelstein because he is an outspoken critic of Israel and Dershowitz won. Finkelstein got his tenure denied and he's barely taught at any school since.

One of the most rancorous disputes in American academia has ended with a prominent political scientist with controversial views on Israel and Antisemitism being denied tenure at one of the country's largest universities. Does this sound like it's new? A political scientist with controversial views on Israel being denied tenure at one of the largest universities? This is not tit for tat, what is being done now. This is just a repetition of what's been going on in the United States for many years, when it comes to criticism and to punishment and censorship of Israel critics. "Norman Finkelstein, author of *The Holocaust Industry*, now has less than a year remaining on his contract with the political science department at DePaul University in Chicago. He lost his bid for a life long post after a four to three vote of the promotions and tenure board. Mr. Finkelstein has argued in his books that claims of antisemitism are used to dampen down criticisms of Israeli policy toward the Palestinians and that the Holocaust is exploited by some Jewish institutions for their own gain. Mr. Finkelstein, the son of Holocaust survivors," - he is obviously not advocating the genocide of Jews - "has responded to the decision to, in effect, sack him from his job at the DePaul by condemning the vote as an act of political aggression. Quote, 'I met the standards of tenure DePaul required, but it wasn't enough to overcome the political opposition to my speaking out on the Israel-Palestine conflict.'".

Here seven years later in 2014 from The New York Times: *Professors' Angry Tweets on Gaza Cost Him a Job*. Quote, "The trustees at the University of Illinois voted on Thursday to block the appointment of Steven Salaita, a Palestinian-American professor who had been offered a tenured position last year, following a campaign by pro-Israel students, faculty members and donors, who contended that his Twitter comments on the bombardment of Gaza this summer were anti-Semitic." Quote, "'Hate speech is never acceptable for those applying for a tenured position; incitement to violence is never acceptable', Josh Cooper, a college senior who collected 1300 signatures on a petition against the appointment, told the trustees before the vote. The student, a former intern for AIPAC, the American Israel Public Action Committee, added that, quote, 'There must be a relationship between free speech and civility.' Several of the comments that supporters of Israel took exception to referred to parallels Mr. Salaita has drawn in his work between the experiences of North Americans and Palestinians." Now, you can disagree with that parallel. You can disagree with Steven Salaita's criticisms of Israel's bombing of Gaza in 2014. But the idea that he should be denied tenure, like Norman Finkelstein was because of his criticism of Israel, is insanity. And yet that is the norm on American college campuses. The Jewish student group that demanded he have his tenure withdrawn explicitly cited the need to be safe on campus. They said it's not a question of censoring, it's a question of being safe on campus. The American right goes around mercilessly mocking students who say they need to be safe on campus by having views they dislike. Censored are professors who disagree with them - fired - and yet, in this case, barely

anyone in the American right defended professor Salaita because they have an Israel exception of free speech. Many do on the American right. That is not new. That has been going on for many years.

Here in Salon in 2010, I wrote about the firing by a long time CNN producer Octavia Nasr. She had been a CNN employee for 20 years and was instantly fired because a man who was linked to Hezbollah died and she expressed condolences to the people who followed him. And all sorts of Israel supporters said, you can't have a journalist working like this. And CNN fired her overnight. Helen Thomas, for those of you who may not remember, was one of the most famous and accomplished White House journalists in the country, she was the first woman to cover the White House in the 60s. She was a mainstay at every press conference going back to JFK and LBJ, Nixon and Ford and Reagan. I mean, she was an institution. And she had Palestinian descent. And in 2010 she said that she was fired - here you see *White House columnist Helen Thomas resigns after telling Jews, quote, 'Go Home'*. Now, she wasn't telling Jews in America to go home. She was telling Jews in Israel to go home. "Helen Thomas, a veteran columnist for Hearst Newspapers, announced her resignation today shortly after the White House condemned her remarks about Jews as, quote, 'offensive and reprehensible'". That's the Obama White House. "Thomas caused an uproar with recent remarks that Jews should, quote, 'get the hell out of Palestine' and 'go home' to Poland, Germany, America and 'anywhere else'". She was like 90 at the time, by the way. "I think she should and has apologised", White House press Secretary Robert Gibbs said of the daily briefing today. 'Obviously those remarks do not reflect certainly the opinion of, I assume, most of the people in here and certainly not of the Obama administration'."

Just case after case after case after case after case after case of people being fired in academia, in media for criticising Israel, for angering pro-Israel factions in the United States. Again support that if you want. Try and find ways for some reason why this kind of cancel culture about this kind of censorship is permissible but please don't tell me, that the spade of censorship and cancellation since October 7th is something new in this country that the American right is only cheering to finally show the American left what it's like because this has been going on a long, long time. In 2015, the Centre for Constitutional Rights prepared a report that was titled *The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the United States*. And I use this report a lot in my reporting. And it concluded the following, quote, "This report, released by the Centre for Constitutional Rights and Palestine Legal in September 2015, documents for the first time the widespread and growing suppression of Palestinian human rights advocacy in the United States. Between January 2014 and June 2015, Palestine Legal responded to nearly 300 incidents of suppression. 85% of those incidents targeted students and professors, on a total of more than 65 US college campuses." This trend has significant implications for both the First Amendment and democratic principles like academic freedom, not to mention the mission of higher education to help develop critical thinking. The report outlines the tactics, including event cancellations, baseless legal complaints, administrative disciplinary actions, firing and false and

inflammatory accusations of terrorism and antisemitism that Israel advocacy organisations, universities, government actors and other institutions have used against pro-Palestinian activists. It also contains testimony from advocates who have been targeted for their speech or expression and includes an index of more than 50 campus related case studies.

In 2018, here is from NBC News. *Marc Lamont Hill was fired from CNN after he gave a speech criticising Israel.* And he had to say, I don't support antisemitism, I don't support killing Jewish people. I simply support the movement for Palestinian rights. But he was fired by CNN. Now, you would be very hard pressed, by the way, to find any similar examples of pro-Israel advocates being fired from their jobs. Just like since October 7th, almost every person fired for speaking about the Israel-Gaza war or who was cancelled or had events cancelled by institutions under pressure from big donors. It's almost all entirely in one direction. The people being silenced and fired and cancelled are pro-Palestinian advocates, people who criticise the Israeli government and its actions in Gaza. Almost none defending Israel. The only example I know - and there may be a couple others, but it's so lopsided -, is a UCLA professor who confronted pro-Palestinian students who are protesting in defence of Palestine and said something like, Kill them all, kill all Hamas. And I think he was placed on leave or suspended pending an investigation. And I denounce that as repressive. Because I'm not a free speech hypocrite, I actually believe in free speech. I don't only say that when it's views that I agree with that are being targeted. But overwhelmingly it's been pro-Palestinian advocates who are being censored in silence. And that's not new. That's been going on for more than a couple of decades in the United States.

As we all know, Ben Shapiro is a fanatical defender of free speech who loves free speech so much and cannot abide censorship. When Marc Lamont Hill was fired by CNN for his criticisms of Israel, Ben Shapiro went on to Daily Wire shortly thereafter and he defended CNN - Ben Shapiro did - why CNN's firing of Marc Lamont Hill was right. Can you believe it? Ben Shapiro - his defence of free speech and criticism of Israel, just like his opposition to affirmative action ends at setting aside jobs for Jews. It is incredibly easy to cut off all empathy for other minority groups, of which you're not a part. "Oh, there's Black people whining about feeling oppressed on college campuses, all those trans people are whining about feeling unsafe because of someone from our network saying, I believe in the eradication of transgenderism from society. Those poor little babies, they need to toughen up. Do they need a little therapy dog or a safe space or a blanket?" So easy to mock the grievances of other groups to which you don't belong. But when it's your group that's suddenly saying, Oh, no, we feel unsafe, we feel besieged by this speech, then you turn around and say, Oh, yeah, CNN, good job for getting rid of that Israel critic. Fire him, fire more of them. This is something that is a long time coming.

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