

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

February 6, 2024

VIA EMAIL AND U.S. MAIL

Dahlia B. Doumar, Co-Chair and Managing Partner
Peter W. Tomlinson, Co-Chair
Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler LLP
1133 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10036

Dear Ms. Doumar and Mr. Tomlinson:

We write regarding Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler LLP's (the firm's) financial support of the Rutgers University Center for Security, Race and Rights (the Center). Founded in 2018, the Center sponsors events promoting anti-Semitic speakers, individuals who justify violence against the State of Israel, terrorist sympathizers, and advocates for domestic radicalism. The Center's Director, Professor Sahar Aziz, "regularly and consistently promote[s] vile antisemitic propaganda."¹

Patterson Belknap has supported the Center's work for the past three years, contributing at least \$13,000 to the Center's Law Fellows Program.² We find it troubling that one of America's premier law firms³ would financially support such an organization. We write to seek more information on your firm's affiliation with the Center. Judiciary Committee Staff requested an informal, non-public discussion on this topic, but you declined. As such, we submit our questions in writing.

As one example of the Center's activities, on the twentieth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, the Center sponsored an event titled "*Whose Narrative? 20 Years since September 11, 2001*."⁴ The event promulgated the narrative that "U.S. imperialism" was to blame for the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and featured speakers with known terrorist affiliations, including Sami Al-Arian. Mr. Al-Arian, a former professor at the University of South Florida, was indicted in 2003 for conspiring

¹ Dov Ben-Shimon, *Rutgers University / Call to Action*, JEWISH FED'N OF GREATER METROWEST NJ, <https://www.jfedgmw.org/rutgers-university-call-to-action/>.

² Mr. Adeel Abdullah Mangi, Responses to Questions for the Record of Senator Lindsey Graham at 3 (Jan. 8, 2023), https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2023-12-13_-_qfr_responses_-_mangi.pdf.

³ Press Release, Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, Patterson Belknap Named to The American Lawyer's 2023 "A-List" of Most Prestigious Law Firms (Aug. 1, 2023), <https://www.pbwt.com/news/patterson-belknap-named-to-the-american-lawyers-2023-a-list-of-most-prestigious-law-firms>.

⁴ The People's Forum NYC, *Whose Narrative? 20 Years Since September 11, 2001*, YOUTUBE (Sep. 11, 2021), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pd0lDqc9N_U.

to provide material support to Palestinian Islamic Jihad.⁵ Palestinian Islamic Jihad, with whom Mr. Al-Arian was associated, is the second-largest armed group in Gaza.⁶ According to Mr. Al-Arian's indictment, Palestinian Islamic Jihad is an "international terrorist organization with 'cells' or units located throughout the world."⁷ The group's manifesto "rejected 'any peaceful solution to the Palestinian cause, and the affirmation of the Jihad solution and the martyrdom style as the only choice for liberation.'"⁸ Mr. Al-Arian eventually pleaded guilty to one count of conspiring to support terrorism, was sentenced to 57 months in prison,⁹ and later was deported.¹⁰

Controversial events like this are not an anomaly. Only three days after the brutal October 7th massacre, the Center hosted an event titled "Psychoanalysis Under Occupation: Practicing Resistance in Palestine."¹¹ A speaker opened the talk saying "Zionist settler colonialism is a structure that is the provocation."¹² A few weeks later, the Center posted on X stating: "To assess Hamas's October 7th operation and the Israeli regime's subsequent response in isolation is to ignore over 75 years of colonial violence and the horrific consequences born out of these decades of oppression and attempted erasure."¹³

As an additional example, on December 4, 2023, the Center hosted an event titled "*The West, Israel and Settler Colonization of Palestine*" with Professor Joseph Massad—a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Center.¹⁴ In an October 8, 2023 article, Prof. Massad lauded the October 7th massacre in "jubilant" terms.¹⁵ According to Prof. Massad, "[t]he sight of the Palestinian resistance fighters storming Israeli checkpoints separating Gaza from Israel was astounding."¹⁶ He goes on: "[n]o less awesome were the scenes witnessed by millions of jubilant Arabs who spent the day watching the news..." and "[n]o less striking was the capture of some of Israel's colonial soldiers and officers in their underwear while sleeping."¹⁷

These appeals to violence are not isolated. Faculty affiliate of the Center Hatem Bazian, also a speaker at the above-referenced 9/11 event, retweeted a Jewish caricature of a man with locks

⁵ Indictment, *United States v. Sami Amin Al-Arian, et al.* No. 8:03-cr-77, U.S. Dist. Ct. M.D. Fla., available at https://irp.fas.org/ops/ci/al-arian_indict_022003.pdf.

⁶ Raja Abdulrahim, *Islamic Jihad, the Group Israel Blamed for the Hospital Blast, Is an Armed Group Often Aligned with Hamas*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 17, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/17/world/middleeast/islamic-jihad-gaza-hospital-israel.html>.

⁷ See *supra* n.5 ¶ 2.

⁸ *Id.* ¶ 3.

⁹ Press Release, U.S. Dept. of Justice, Sami Al-Arian Sentenced To 57 Months In Prison For Assisting Terrorist Group (May 1, 2006), https://www.justice.gov/archive/opa/pr/2006/May/06_crm_260.html.

¹⁰ Josh Gerstein, *Al-Arian Saga Ends with Deportation*, POLITICO (Feb. 6, 2015), <https://www.politico.com/blogs/under-the-radar/2015/02/al-arian-saga-ends-with-deportation-202233>.

¹¹ *Psychoanalysis Under Occupation: Practicing Resistance in Palestine*, RUTGERS CTS. FOR SEC., RACE AND RIGHTS, <https://csrr.rutgers.edu/psychoanalysis-under-occupation-practicing-resistance-in-palestineoctober-10-20231200pm-est/> (last accessed Jan. 10, 2024).

¹² *Id.*

¹³ Center For Security, Race and Rights (@RUCSRR), X (Oct. 31, 2023, 11:01 AM), <https://twitter.com/RUCSRR/status/1719369039066148868> (hyperlinks to <https://t.co/hk08EcgiJP>).

¹⁴ Rutgers Center for Security, Race & Rights, *The West, Israel and Settler Colonization of Palestine with Professor Prof. Joseph Massad*, YOUTUBE (Dec. 4, 2023), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UexBaAmEtj4>.

¹⁵ Joseph Massad, *Just Another Battle or the Palestinian War of Liberation?* THE ELEC. INTIFADA (OCT. 8, 2023), <https://electronicintifada.net/content/just-another-battle-or-palestinian-war-liberation/38661>.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

and traditional dress proclaiming “Mom, look! I is chosen! I can now kill, rape, smuggle organs & steal the land of Palestinians. Yay! #Ashke-Nazi.”¹⁸ Mr. Bazian is also a founder of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and American Muslims for Palestine (AMP).¹⁹ He remains Chairman of AMP’s board,²⁰ which is being sued in federal court in Chicago²¹ and investigated by the Virginia Attorney General²² for alleged financial ties to Hamas. Mr. Bazian has publicly called for an Intifada in the United States.²³

As for the Center’s Director, Prof. Sahar Aziz, the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ characterized Prof. Aziz as having “regularly and consistently promoted vile antisemitic propaganda.”²⁴ On May 29, 2021 Aziz signed an open letter that read: “[w]e are in awe of the Palestinian struggle to resist violent occupation, removal, erasure, and the expansion of Israeli settler colonialism.”²⁵ Prof. Aziz also reposts propaganda on X, including the following: “Turns out there no rapes or ‘beheaded babies’! Israel & its MSM accomplices are making up so many outrageous lies to distract from its carnage in Gaza!”²⁶

Patterson Belknap has donated a total of \$13,000 to the Center since 2021, with donations increasing each year, from \$2,000 in 2021, to \$6,000 in 2023.²⁷ While the firm’s donations were supposedly earmarked for the Center’s Law Fellows program,²⁸ a cornerstone of the Law Fellows’ work is “one-to-one mentorship” with Prof. Aziz.²⁹ According to their own testimonials, the fellows are “direct[ed]” by Prof. Aziz in their “research, education, and activism.”³⁰

¹⁸ Ron Hughes روني هيويز @wherepond, TWITTER (July 31, 2017, 1:49 PM), <https://twitter.com/wherepond/status/892079717880344577> (original tweet); <https://twitter.com/wherepond/status/892079717880344577/retweets> (list of retweets).

¹⁹ About, HATEM BAZIAN, <http://www.hatembazian.com/about/> (“Dr. Bazian is founder and national Chair of American Muslims for Palestine.”); Alan Blinder, *Inside the Pro-Palestinian Group Protesting Across College Campuses*, N.Y. TIMES (Nov. 17, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/17/us/students-justice-palestine-campus-protests.html> (“One of the people who founded [AMP] about 30 years ago, Hatem Bazian.”).

²⁰ *Our Team*, AM. MUSLIMS FOR PALESTINE, <https://www.ampalestine.org/about-amp/our-team>.

²¹ *Boim v. Am. Muslims for Palestine et al.*, 17-cv-3591 (N.D. Ill.); Chuck Goudie, et al. *Family’s fight against Hamas targets local pro-Palestinian nonprofit*, ABC7 CHICAGO (Nov. 1, 2023), <https://abc7chicago.com/hamas-david-boim-terrorism-american-muslims-for-palestine/14001029/>.

²² Haley Cohen, *Virginia’s attorney general launches investigation into pro-Hamas campus group*, JEWISH INSIDER (Oct. 31, 2023), <https://jewishinsider.com/2023/10/virginias-attorney-general-launches-investigation-into-pro-hamas-campus-group/>.

²³ Michael Starr, *September 11 Event to Feature Speakers Affiliated with Terrorists*, JERUSALEM POST (Sep. 11, 2021) <https://www.jpost.com/international/israelic-terrorism/september-11-event-to-feature-speakers-affiliated-with-terrorists-679147>.

²⁴ Dov Ben-Shimon, *Rutgers University / Call to Action*, JEWISH FED’N OF GREATER METROWEST NJ, <https://www.jfedgmw.org/rutgers-university-call-to-action/>.

²⁵ Open Letter from Various Rutgers Faculty, *We Stand in Solidarity with the Palestinian People*, <https://csrr.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/solidarity-with-palestinians.pdf>.

²⁶ Editorial, *It’s Time for Sahar Aziz to Resign*, THE WESTFIELD LEADERS & UNION COUNTY HAWK (OCT. 11, 2023), <https://www.goleader.com/2023/10/11/time-sahar-aziz-resign/>.

²⁷ See *supra* n.2 at 3.

²⁸ *Id.* at 2.

²⁹ *Testimonials From Our Fellows*, RUTGERS CTS. FOR SEC., RACE AND RIGHTS, <https://csrr.rutgers.edu/testimonials-from-our-fellows/> (last accessed Jan. 10, 2024).

³⁰ *Id.*

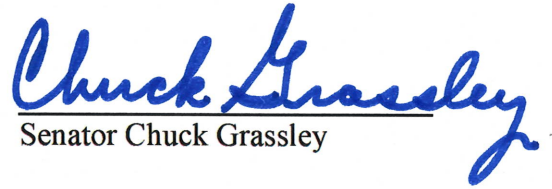
The work of the Center, its promotion of terrorist sympathizers, and its platforming of radical ideologues is troubling to us as members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. The Committee has a long history of working on legislation meant to root out support for terrorism, and to compensate its victims. For example, in 2016 Congress passed the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA), Pub. L. No. 111-222, which expanded civil liability under the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-132, to encompass acts such as aiding and abetting. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 2333(d)(2). As the Committee explores the efficacy of this legislation, particularly in the context of recent world events, it is appropriate to evaluate the financial backing of groups that seek to legitimize violence and provide platforms for terrorist sympathizers.

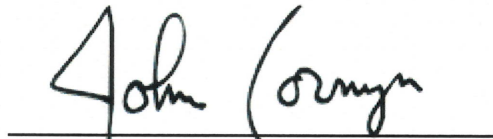
To assist us in this important work, please answer the following questions no later than 5 p.m. on February 20, 2024. We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

1. When was Patterson Belknap first contacted about sponsoring the Rutgers University Center for Security, Race and Rights? By whom was it contacted?
2. Mr. Adeel Mangi, a partner at your firm, served on an advisory board of the Center from 2019 to 2023. Did Mr. Mangi ever recommend, propose, or suggest that Patterson Belknap provide financial support to the Center and/or its Law Fellows Program?
3. Why did the firm choose to sponsor the Center and/or its Law Fellows Program?
4. Before or during the time it provided financial support to the Center and/or its Law Fellows Program, was Patterson Belknap aware of any of the above-noted events co-sponsored or hosted by the Center, and/or any of the above-noted statements of Prof. Aziz or Prof. Massad?
5. Knowing what it knows today about the events hosted and/or co-sponsored by the Center, and the anti-Semitic statements of the Center's Director (who personally mentors and directs the Law Fellows), will Patterson Belknap continue to sponsor the Center's Law Fellows program?
6. Knowing what it knows today about the events hosted and/or co-sponsored by the Center, and the anti-Semitic statements of the Center's Director, will the firm request a return of the funds it directed to the Center's Law Fellows program?
7. Given the egregious nature of events hosted by the Center and the anti-Semitic statements of Prof. Aziz, has or will Patterson Belknap revise its policies and/or procedures for approving financial contributions to outside groups?

Sincerely,


Ranking Member Lindsey Graham


Senator Chuck Grassley

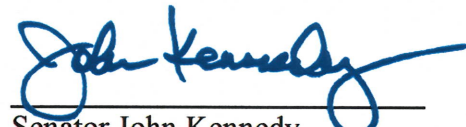

Senator John Cornyn


Senator Mike Lee


Senator Ted Cruz


Senator Josh Hawley


Senator Tom Cotton


Senator John Kennedy


Senator Thom Tillis


Senator Marsha Blackburn