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Columbia crackdown led by university prof doubling as NYPD spook



Rebecca Weiner is a Columbia U. professor who also serves as intelligence director of the NYPD. Mayor Eric Adams credits her with spying on anti-genocide student protesters and directing the militarized raid that dislodged them from campus.

The violent crackdown carried out on Columbia University students protesting Israel's genocidal assault on the Gaza Strip was led by a member of the school's own faculty, New York City Mayor Eric Adams has declared.

During a [May 1 press conference](#), just hours after the New York Police Department arrested nearly 300 people on university grounds, Adams praised adjunct Columbia professor Rebecca

Weiner, who moonlights as the head of the NYPD counter-terrorism bureau, for giving police the green light to clear out anti-genocide students by force.

“She was the one that was monitoring the situation,” Adams explained, adding that the crackdown was carried out after “she was able to — her team was able to conduct an investigation.”

On April 30, dozens of police in riot gear descended on Columbia’s Hamilton Hall after students seized the building earlier in the day, citing a request from the administration. Several hours later, officers [used a heavily armored NYPD BearCat vehicle](#) to enter the building through the window on the second floor and arrested those inside, while another team swept up members of the encampment outside.

Starting on April 17, students at Columbia escalated their ongoing protest against Israel’s genocidal assault on the besieged Gaza Strip. They encamped on school grounds, stating their refusal to leave until the university fully divested from its Israeli-related investments. That protest model has since spread to over 100 other universities in the US, and even been taken up abroad, with similar actions occurring at Leeds University in the UK and the Sorbonne in Paris.

Just a few hundred meters from the Gaza protest encampment, Weiner maintained an office at Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). Her SIPA [bio](#) describes her as an “Adjunct Associate Professor of International and Public Affairs” who simultaneously serves as the “civilian executive in charge of the New York City Police Department’s Intelligence & Counterterrorism Bureau.”

In that role, according to SIPA, Weiner “develops policy and strategic priorities for the Intelligence & Counterterrorism Bureau and publicly represents the NYPD in matters involving counterterrorism and intelligence.”

The NYPD’s Counterterrorism Bureau currently maintains an office in Tel Aviv, Israel, where it coordinates with Israel’s security apparatus and maintains a department liaison. Weiner appears to serve as a bridge between the Bureau’s offices in Israel and New York.

A 2011 AP [investigation](#) revealed that a so-called “Demographics Unit” operated secretly within the NYPD’s Counterterrorism and Intelligence Bureau. This shadowy outfit spied on Muslims around the New York City area, and even on students [at campuses outside the state](#) who were involved in Palestine solidarity activism. The unit was developed in tandem with the CIA, which has refused to name the former Middle East station chief it posted in the senior ranks of the NYPD’s intelligence division.

The “Demographics Unit” appears to have been inspired by Israeli intelligence as well. As a former police official told the AP, the unit attempted to “map the city’s human terrain” through a program “modeled in part on how Israeli authorities operate in the West Bank.”

A lawyer by training, Weiner [oversaw negotiations](#) between the NYPD and lawyers for local Muslims who had their civil liberties violated by its “Demographics Unit.”

Weiner is the granddaughter of [Stanislaw Ulam](#), the Polish Jewish mathematician who helped conceive the hydrogen bomb as part of the Manhattan Project. “I’m very proud of that legacy,” Weiner [said](#) of her grandfather’s work upon being appointed as NYPD intelligence chief.

NYPD/Columbia’s Weiner: militarized raid was response to student “rhetoric associated with terrorism,” Tiktok posts

During the NYPD’s triumphant May 1 post-raid press conference, Weiner blamed “outside agitators” for triggering the military-style police crackdown at Columbia. However, she refused to name the outsiders supposedly on the scene.

According to Weiner, the police response was not necessitated by any criminal behavior, but by the radical language and symbols of the students. “This is not about students expressing ideas,” she claimed. The real problem, Weiner maintained, was the alleged “change in tactics” by protesters, which she said represented “a normalization and mainstreaming of rhetoric associated with terrorism.”

Proof of this dynamic, Weiner suggested, could be seen in what she claimed was the “common” trend of wearing of “headbands associated with foreign terrorist organizations” on college campuses; the “reissuing of Osama Bin Laden’s 2002 letter to America” on TikTok; and a brief visit to Columbia by Nahla Al-Arian, who Weiner incorrectly described as “the wife of somebody who had been convicted for material support to terrorism.”

“That’s not somebody who I would want necessarily influencing my child if I were a parent of somebody at Columbia,” Weiner commented.

Nahla’s husband, Palestinian academic Sami Al-Arian, had been indicted on flimsy terrorism charges in 2003, but a jury refused to convict him. Nevertheless, her brief stop at the Columbia encampment — where she says she did not even interact with any demonstrators — was cited by Adams during three separate media engagements to [justify](#) the police repression.

Throughout the press conference, Mayor Adams repeatedly cast the city’s crackdown on student speech as the only possible solution to ongoing campus encampments, citing undefined threats to the minds of impressionable youth.

“There is a movement to radicalize young people, and I’m not gonna wait until it’s done and all of a sudden acknowledge the existence of it,” Adams proclaimed.

“Young people are being influenced by those who are professionals at radicalizing our children,” he insisted, without specifying. “And I’m not gonna allow that to happen as the mayor of the city of New York.”

After angrily proclaiming that his “uncle died defending this country,” Adams declared: “It’s despicable that schools will allow another country’s flag to fly in our country.”

However, as an enthusiastic participant in New York City’s annual Celebrate Israel parade, Adams is no stranger to waving another country’s flag.



New York City

Mayor Eric Adams waves Israel’s flag during the Celebrate Israel parade on June 4, 2023

MAY 2, 2024