

Written Testimony of

Noah Rubin

University of Pennsylvania Class of 2025

United States House of Representatives

Committee on Education and the Workforce

“Roundtable With Jewish Students Impacted by Antisemitism”

2/29/2024

My name is Noah Rubin and I am a student at the University of Pennsylvania.

I am grateful to share my story and give voice to Jewish students at UPenn and across the country who, like me, are enduring an increasingly antisemitic and unsafe campus climate.

The antisemitism we are seeing at UPenn did not start on October 7th, but since October 7th it has certainly accelerated. Jewish students continue to experience harassment, threats, and even violence on our campus.

This school year started off, in September, with the Palestine Writes Literature Festival, a congregation of individuals with recognized antisemitic records supported by UPenn dollars, UPenn faculty, and UPenn branding. Letters and petitions from thousands of students and alumni, national Jewish organizations, and politicians went to the university urging them to distance themselves from the antisemitic conference. While Governor Shapiro removed all Pennsylvania logos from the website through a *cease and desist letter*, the university allowed the conference to proceed as originally planned with UPenn funding and its logos prominently displayed.

In the days leading up to the conference, I met with the Vice President for Public Safety - to plead that UPenn do more to protect Jewish students. I was extremely concerned that we were not safe on campus. I was told that Hillel, a Jewish cultural center, was one of the safest buildings on campus, and that I had no reason to worry.

Two days after this meeting, our Hillel was broken into and vandalized by a perpetrator who was yelling "Fuck the Jews!"

I, along with most Jews at UPenn, see the Hillel as one of the few spaces on campus where we can be ourselves. I'm in Hillel almost every day - whether it be for the Kosher dining hall, prayer, my Jewish Acapella group's rehearsal, or just to study.

After this break-in, I was more frustrated and scared than surprised. I had raised my fears to the administration, and had written an article warning of a rise in antisemitism titled "What Are We Waiting For?" in The Daily Pennsylvanian (our student newspaper) which was published the same morning of the break-in (attached). Since then, I find myself in a raised state of fear, literally looking over my shoulder, even when I'm in Hillel. My continued fear was unfortunately proven to not have been unfounded when a bomb threat was made against the building two months later.

Antisemites around the world have been emboldened since the atrocities of October 7th and our campus has been no exception. Countless antisemitic incidents happened in the immediate months following October 7th, culminating in a riot on December 3rd, 2023.

A mob of students, faculty, and additional extremists marched through our campus recording and live-streaming themselves - vandalizing school buildings, lighting smoke bombs, and screaming vicious chants in English and Arabic.

- **“There is only one solution, Intifada revolution! Intifada! Intifada! Long live the Intifada!”** - Promoting the coordinated surge in terrorist attacks on Israeli and Jewish civilians from 1987 - 1993 and 2000 - 2005 and using Nazi messaging
- **“The gate of Al-Aqsa is made of iron, and only the martyr can open it! By our soul and our blood, we will redeem you, O Al-Aqsa!”** (Translated)
  - باب الاقصى من حديد، ما بيفتحها إلا الشهيد بالروح بالدم نفديك يا اقصى  
hadidin, ma biaftahiha 'iilaa alshahid, bialruwh bialdam nafdik ya aqsaa”  
(Original)
- **“From water [river] to water [sea], Arab Palestine!”** (Translated)
  - من الماء إلى الماء فلسطين العربية “min alma' 'iilaa alma' filastin alearabia” (Original)
- Our on-campus bank was graffitied with the words **“Blood Money”**
- The Linguistics building was defaced with the word **“Intifada”**
- And **“Avenge Gaza”** was sprayed next to our gym

Watching out of our windows and on social media, my Jewish friends and I locked ourselves in our dorm rooms. I had to cancel plans to work on my final project in the engineering lab because I was truly terrified.

I couldn't believe that I was experiencing a nightmare at the school I had once dreamed about attending. I stayed up past 4 AM in disbelief, documenting what had happened in order to share with the administration. Unfortunately, there has been nothing done to prevent the night of December 3rd from repeating.

This riot was the scariest of all events to date led by the 'Philly Palestine Coalition,' a well-coordinated collective of over a dozen antisemitic organizations from the broader Philadelphia region. 'Penn Against the Occupation' (PAO), an official club at UPenn, is a part of this collective. PAO helped organize the December 3rd riot along with many other events through the Philly Palestine Coalition. This is evidenced by their co-posting of flyers online and resharing videos from each other's events.

At the core of the Philly Palestine Coalition are a few antisemitic agitators who have come to our campus to spread extremism multiple times. They are connected to students and faculty at UPenn. Included in this group are:

- Susan Abulhawa: The executive director of the Palestine Writes Literature Festival who wrote that, “Palestinian fighters finally broke free on 7 October 2023 in a spectacular moment that shocked the world.” She has a long history of glorifying terrorism and calling for an “Intifada.” In October of 2022 she tweeted, “Yalla [Let’s go] intifada! Yalla thawra [revolution]! ...”
- Noura Erakat: A Rutgers professor who justified Hamas taking civilian hostages on October 7th, and has a history of glorifying terrorists. She spoke at UPenn on March 23, 2023 with Mohammed El-Kurd who just this past week tweeted, “...You can’t hijack planes. You can’t block traffic. You can’t throw Molotovs... You can’t dissent. You can’t just be.” Both have promoted and justified violence against Jews and spoke on campus again during Palestine Writes.
- Jordan Vaughan: A self-described: “facilitating organizer for the Philly Palestine Coalition.” Jordan posted to Instagram on October 7th “Victory to our Resistance. Long Live the Intifada. Al- Aqsa Flood has quenched our thirst,” and has tweeted “Glad Hamas killed this bitch cause what’s that?” to a picture of Shani Louk who was kidnapped and murdered at the Nova Music festival on October 7th. Jordan has also tweeted “Live, Love, Hamas.” and has led at least one protest (10/28/2023) with Tara, a UPenn student, leading chants from the back of a yellow pickup truck.

I want to share my perspective on some of the other events raised to the Committee before President Magil and Chairman Bok resigned.

- Leading up to the December 3rd riot, there was a huge increase in antisemitic vandalism on campus. A swastika was spray painted in the school of design, “THE JEWS ARE NAZIS” vandalized next door to the AEPi Chapter House, and the Chabad sukkah was spray painted. While all of these have since been painted over, I can’t help but wonder what’s next?
- I unknowingly ate lunch in a packed Hillel dining hall while there was an active bomb threat against the building. After many hours of rumors circulating, the university finally made an announcement about the threat and my Acapella group’s rehearsal was moved out of the building for that night.
- I wake up every day to a new antisemitic post made by ‘Penn Against the Occupation’, the Instagram page. They have consistently used their official UPenn affiliated Instagram account to incite violence against Jews. PAO organized a “rally” on October 8th (before Israel’s military engagement in Gaza) to celebrate Hamas, posted “Globalize the Intifada,” projected antisemitic slogans on school buildings,



eulogized a senior Hamas commander, and invited outside agitators from the Philly Palestine Coalition to our campus on multiple occasions. I do not understand how they can still be an official student group bearing the university name?

- I stopped eating and studying in Houston Hall, our central student center, as antisemitic students, faculty, and community members took it over - spreading Hamas propaganda, disrupting study spaces with megaphones, and sleeping in the building past closing time for over 30 days leading up to winter break. Why did this go on for so long?
- I've been shocked by professors who abuse their power to make Jewish students feel uncomfortable. Some of the worst offenders include:
  - Ahmad Almallah skipped teaching his classes to harass and intimidate Jewish students during unauthorized protests. He has led chants calling for an Intifada.
  - Robert Vitalis posted a Hamas military brigade patch on his Facebook with the caption "A quick and easy way to reduce my friends list (and it will look cool on your jacket too)". This was not covered by The Daily Pennsylvanian because, as one editor told me, "We are not a tabloid."
  - Huda Fakhreddine posted on October 7th in Arabic that "While we were asleep, Palestine invented a new way of life." She later clapped at a protest after the speaker told Jewish students to "...go back to Moscow and Brooklyn and Gstaad, and fucking Berlin where you came from..." and is now teaching a new course titled "Arabic Readings in Belles-Lettres: Resistance from Pre-Islamic Arabia to Palestine."
  - Many of Penn's faculty immediately took to social media on October 7th and have continued posting their personal support of Hamas for months.

But despite a new year and a new president, the environment of hatred continues...

- Tara, the student who was arrested for stealing an Israeli flag and went viral for glorifying October 7th at a protest on "Instagram live" is back in class.
- 'Faculty for Palestine' was formed and staged a 'die-in' blocking the entrance to College Hall.
- Just this past weekend, 'Penn Against the Occupation' did a joint public Instagram post with the 'Philly Palestine Coalition' condemning Jewish professors and exposing their names, faces, and positions. National SJP reshared this post. The Instagram account is still promoted on their official UPenn club page despite posting support of Hamas, genocidal chants, and now this. PAO has been characterized by a recent Forbes article as "Pro-Hamas" - how are they still an official UPenn club?
- American Association of University Professors (AAUP) at UPenn and the Faculty Senate repeatedly blame rich Jewish donors and politicians for attacking 'academic

freedom' despite over 27,000 signing a petition for change and while recommending academic sanctions against a professor accused of racist speech. How can they not face the fact that it is not a small group demanding change at the university?

- A lecturer, Dwayne Booth (Mr. Fish), created horrifying blood libelous cartoons, is still teaching, and releasing more inciteful content. His personal website where he shares the cartoons is still promoted on his online [www.upenn.edu](http://www.upenn.edu) bio. These cartoons were so shocking and scary to the Jewish community that many of my friends couldn't believe that they were produced by someone employed by the university. Why has he not been terminated?
- Just this past Monday, while I was studying for a midterm, I could hear loud chants calling for the genocide of Jews from my dorm room again - reminding me of the December 3rd riot. Students could hear these chants from within dorms, libraries, and classes. Penn Against the Occupation had led the protest through our campus to intimidate students and posted on Instagram with the caption "we're still here."
  - Jordan Vaughan led chants down the main walkway of Penn's campus using a megaphone despite classes being in session. Jordan ended the protest by screaming into the megaphone "we want all of Palestine, we will not stop at a ceasefire!" Jordan later posted a screenshot from a private Jewish student group chat (Orthodox Community) doxing 3 students' full names, phone numbers, and Instagram accounts.

My latest email to campus police sent on January 4th has gone without any response for almost 2 months.

At over 15 meetings I've had with administration about these issues, I've been patronized and told that I "should take care of myself and get some rest".

In addition, I'm a member of the Jewish Student Advisory Board. After our first meeting was canceled in December, we've been given exactly 3 hours to meet over this entire semester. It has gotten old hearing that "the university is taking these issues seriously" when there has been no meaningful action taken that reduces the risks or hostilities on my campus.

Frankly, I'm not interested in sitting through more meetings just to hear more rhetoric. I want to go back to being a student, studying and taking full advantage of what my university has to offer.

I want to stop worrying about my safety, mental health, and belonging on campus as a Jew. Inaction is simply unacceptable.

I should not have to ask again and again for the most basic needs. For the record, here are my simple requests:

- 1) Ensure that Jewish students are safe and feel safe by enforcing existing policies against individuals and groups who create an unsafe environment. Offer robust security support, such as armed guards, to Jewish institutions on campus, especially around Shabbat and Holidays.
- 2) Publicly investigate and discipline antisemitic students and faculty and then inform us of those actions.
- 3) Restrict the use of the UPenn logo and funding on events to ensure the university is not promoting antisemitism.

Freedom of speech does not mean freedom to incite violence; academic freedom does not mean freedom to indoctrinate.

It's time to wake up America! Understand what's happening on our college campuses and take action.

I look forward to answering your questions and providing further insight into the situation on UPenn's campus.

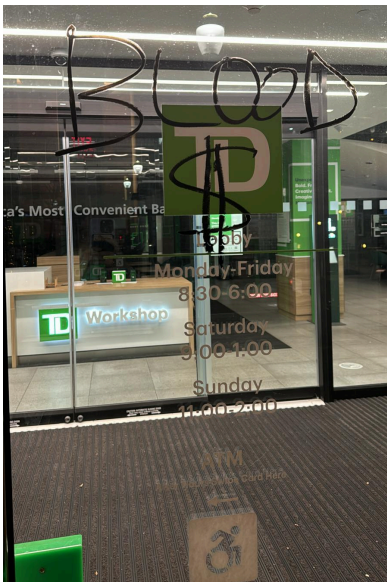
Attached are photos from the riot on December 3rd, posts from the pro-Hamas student group, a few comics created by Dwayne Booth, an excerpt from the student's aforementioned pro-Hamas speech, and some screenshots from UPenn faculty social media.

I have also attached an article I wrote in the Daily Pennsylvanian on September 21st, 2023 warning Jewish students of a rise in antisemitism on our campus. And the article published 24 minutes later reporting that the Hillel was broken into and vandalized that morning.

## On Campus Photos from the December 3rd Riot



Photo Credit Joe Piette



On campus TD Bank  
(Across street from  
Huntsman Hall)



Next to the Pottruck Gym

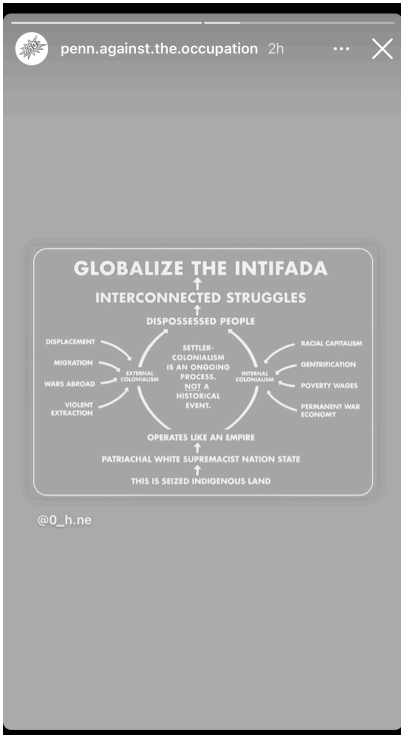


Linguistics Building

Official Student Group (Penn Against the Occupation) Recent Posts



10/7/2023



12/6/2023



01/2/2024



Examples of UPenn Lecturer Dwayne Booth's Cartoons



*"Who invited that lousy anti-Semite?"*

## THE ANTI-SEMITES



At the October 28th “Emergency Rally” outside the South Side of City Hall in Philadelphia at 9:32 PM Tara, a UPenn student, gave a speech. This is an excerpt from the end.

We know that we have the power, that the resistance will reign triumphant and we will celebrate victory one day!

*\*Cheering\**

A friend from back home recently reminded me of something that I would like to share with you. Do you guys remember the photos of the kids and men laughing and smiling as they sat on top of the Israeli military jeep captured by our freedom fighters? Do you remember that picture?

*\*Crowd screams Yes! \**

How about the photos of the bulldozer breaking through the deathly border? Do you remember that picture?

*\*Crowd screams Yes! \**

And the several other joyful and powerful images which came from the glorious October 7th?

*\*Crowd screams Yes!\**

*\*Attendee shouts, “Long live October 7th!” \**

I want you to picture those in your mind. I want you all to remember how you felt when you saw those images and heard the news.

I remember feeling so empowered and happy; so confident that victory was near, and so tangible!

*\*Crowd cheers \**

I want all of you to hold that feeling in your hearts. Never let go of it. Channel it through every action you take. Bring it to the streets!

*\*Crowd screams Yes! \**

## Professors' Social Media Posts:



Translates to: "While we were asleep, Palestine invented a new way of life"



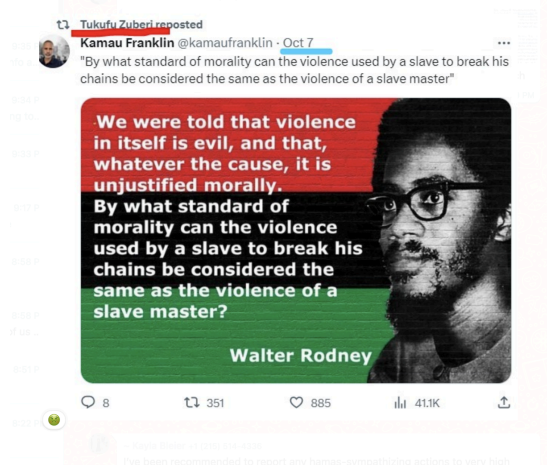
UPenn Professor Vitalis



UPenn Professor Roberts



UPenn Professor Powell



UPenn Professor Zuberi



UPenn Professor Fakhreddine

Translates to: "Gaza is not an 'open air prison.' Prisoners receive visitors and aid is allowed to be passed to them. Gaza is a Nazi-style concentration camp, a concentration camp under bombardment."



UPenn Professor Norton



This article was published on The Daily Pennsylvanian website on 09/21/2023 at 12:04PM.  
The print form is below:

# An open letter to Jewish students at Penn

**GUEST COLUMN |** What are we waiting for?

Are we waiting for a Swastika spray painted on our Chabad House? Are we waiting for our Hillel's mezuzah to be torn down? Are we waiting to be harassed for wearing a kippah or Magen David? Are we waiting for something worse? God forbid. What will it take for our community to wake up and act? Penn is one of the last college campuses in America where Jewish students feel safe. Jew hatred, as we know, has been rising every year.

Do we really think it will stay this way? Only if we express our Jewish selves and support of Israel in the places where we 'live' — sports teams, pre-professional clubs, performing arts groups, volunteer initiatives, networking circles, and social gatherings.

We are currently being manipulated into believing that there will be no antisemitism at the upcoming Palestine Writes Literature Festival. But many of the speakers have no connection to Palestinian literature. They have dressed up as Nazis, praised terrorists for targeting civilians, celebrated BDS, called for violence against Jews, called for 'death to Israel', been fired for antisemitism, have called most Jews evil, raised money for terrorists, and even directly supported terrorists. Worse yet, Penn departments, professors, spaces, and resources are contributing to this. The bottom line is, unapologetic antisemites are coming to gather here on our campus. Is that enough for us to stand up? What are we waiting for?

At best, this conference will continue to normalize this kind of rhetoric and behavior on college campuses, and at worst can lead to serious safety issues for Jewish students. Either way, it is not hard to see where we are sadly heading.

More importantly, how will we respond? We need everyone's skills, connections, and ideas to work on fighting for our community. It's not too late to think about who you are and your place at Penn. How can you make a stand for Jews of all backgrounds to practice and express our beliefs?

Do something about it! Jewish students and allies alike. Write and share news that highlight Jewish and Israeli achievements. Invite Israeli speakers to your pre-professional entrepreneurship, engineering, and health care clubs. Build partnership events with other cultural groups on campus. Collaborate with and cite researchers from Israeli universities working on cutting-edge science. Schedule your performing arts groups' shows to be Shabbat and holiday friendly. Speak out against antisemitism in casual gatherings and class. Create art and music that highlight our culture, history, and peoplehood. Use Israeli stories and Jewish heroes as case studies in course projects. Point out friends' biases and double standards against Israel. Engage with the Jewish communities on campus and encourage social groups to join you. Infuse supporting this cause with the activities you are already involved in and have influence in.

And while you're at it, love every Jew. We must be united in this fight. Don't let current political disagreements, differences in observance, or distractions come between our 3,000-year-old people. Work to uplift, not detract.

If we remain indifferent, this campus will turn into yet another place where antisemitism rages on, but no one should be surprised. What are we waiting for?

Signing a petition is important and super easy. In addition, take time to think about what you, and only you, can do.

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# Penn Hillel vandalized by individual who shouted 'antisemitic obscenities,' knocked over furniture

By Jonah Miller and Jared Mitovich | 09/21/23 12:28pm



Penn Hillel was allegedly vandalized on Sept. 21 at the same time as a service was being held for members of the Orthodox Jewish community, according to multiple witnesses. Credit: Gabriel Jung

An unknown individual vandalized Penn Hillel while shouting antisemitic rhetoric on Thursday morning.

At 6:55 a.m., the individual followed a member of the Hillel community inside as they were opening the door to the building ahead of a morning prayer service before knocking over "several pieces of furniture" and "shouting antisemitic obscenities about Jewish people," Hillel said in a statement posted on Instagram.

The organization said that no one was injured, and no students were witnesses to the incident when it happened. The incident came days before the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur.

Prior to entering the building, the individual was "overturning trash cans" and "acting erratically" on Walnut Street, Penn's Division of Public Safety wrote in a statement to The Daily Pennsylvanian. Penn Police were notified and found the perpetrator at Steinhardt Hall, the Penn Hillel building, where they determined that the perpetrator was "experiencing a crisis," removed the individual, and transported him for "further evaluation."

"Penn Public Safety also initiated and is following all protocols for potential bias incidents on campus, and is continuing to provide additional support to the Hillel community following this incident," DPS wrote. A spokesperson from the University did not respond to requests for comment.

College junior Marc Fishkind told the DP that he was walking to Hillel around 7 a.m. on Sept. 21 for Shacharit early morning services when he noticed there was a police car parked in front of the building and a police officer interrogating an individual whom he had never seen before. Fishkind added that the individual appeared to look older than a Penn student.

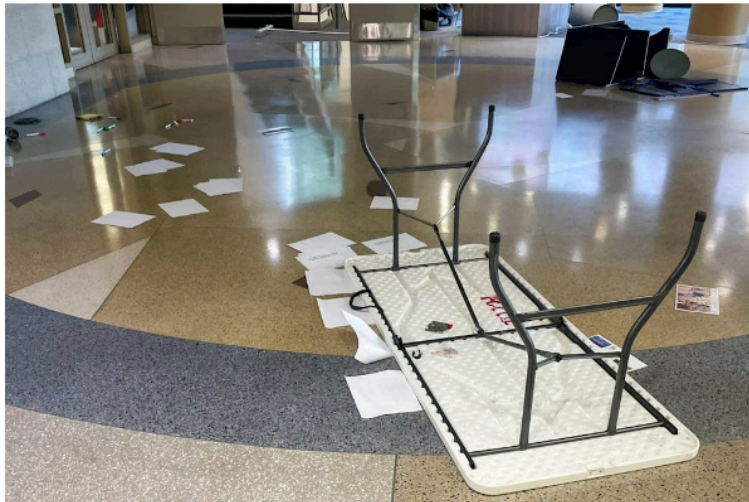
"When I walked into Hillel, I noticed that the lobby was completely trashed — one of the podiums was smashed, one of the tables was smashed. There was stuff everywhere," Fishkind said.

After asking others what happened, Fishkind said he was told that a few minutes before he arrived, a "regular attendee" was opening the door to Hillel to attend services, and the perpetrator managed to enter the building.

"He immediately started smashing things, yelling 'F\*\*k the Jews' and 'They killed JC,'" Fishkind recounted from what he was told by someone who was there, adding that eventually, the perpetrator ran out of Hillel as the police arrived.

Fishkind said that after the police intervened, Shacharit services proceeded regularly, and by 10:15 a.m., the scene was cleaned up.

Wharton junior Sydney Freedman, an active member of the Orthodox community at Penn who frequently attends the morning Shacharit service, said she arrived in the Hillel building lobby around 7:34 a.m. The damage was still evident.



*A witness reported that the Hillel lobby was "completely trashed" when they entered the building around 7 a.m. on Sept. 21 for Shacharit early morning services (Photo courtesy of Sydney Freedman).*

She took a photo of the lobby that showed a flipped table, scattered papers, and a damaged podium. She said she also saw flipped-over trash cans, as well as multiple police officers and several Hillel dining workers surveying the aftermath of the incident.

"This morning when I went to pray with my community like I do every day, I found that the building was vandalized, and someone had come in and started yelling, really violent and aggressive statements against my people," Freedman said. "I felt so guilty about feeling scared and then something like this happens and it's just really telling."

She said that as the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor, Freedman said she found it unfortunate that Penn administration has not taken "a strong stance against" antisemitism and established a "zero-tolerance policy that would potentially protect the Jewish community on campus."

"To see our Hillel building completely vandalized from what looks to be a disgusting act of antisemitism on our campus was a complete shock," College first-year Eyal Lubin said.

In response to the incident, Hillel said that it has asked Penn to provide full-time security in front of the Hillel building "beginning immediately." The building currently has private security guards as well as off-duty and on-duty Penn Police officers.

"This person did not accidentally choose to enter our building. He did not accidentally choose to shout antisemitic slogans. He chose our building," Hillel wrote on Instagram. "He chose to do so just three days before Yom Kippur. He chose to do so one day before a number of speakers are coming to campus who have histories of making antisemitic and hate-filled statements against Jews. This was not a coincidence."

The incident came just a day before the start of the Palestine Writes Literature Festival, in which members of the Penn community have said feature speakers who have allegedly made antisemitic remarks in the past. However, there is no evidence confirmed by the DP connecting the incident to the upcoming Palestine Writes festival.

Vice President of Israel Engagement and College junior Maya Harpaz, an executive board member of Hillel, told the DP that it was "extremely heartbreaking and painful given everything that's happening right now on campus."

"When I heard, my stomach just immediately dropped," Harpaz said.

Harpaz said Hillel feels like a home for her and is a place with friendly faces around, adding that "it's definitely a scary feeling that this could happen to somewhere that you consider very safe on campus."

*Editor's Note: The DP previously reported that Hillel had described the perpetrator as a student. However, the official statement changes the wording to "an unknown member of the campus community." The identity of the individual has not been confirmed.*