



Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian and 'liquidation of all untruths'

As Shalhoub-Kevorkian has herself documented, such violence is the norm in Israeli jails. Fortunately, an Israeli court declared later on Friday that her arrest was unlawful and that the police had failed to find "substantial evidence to support the severity of the accusations or to indicate [her] involvement in further offenses". Professor Shalhoub-Kevorkian was released, but her ordeal is far from over. The terms of her release stipulated that in addition to paying a bond, she would have to "attend" a further interrogation. That interrogation was set to take place Thursday, April 25, behind closed doors and without legal representation.

Shalhoub-Kevorkian's arrest and violent interrogation marks an escalation in a sequence of harassment, intimidation, and attempts at censorship that has been ongoing for years, but which intensified after "Operation Al-Aqsa Flood" shook Israel's sense of security on October 7. Her own institution, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where she is among the most eminent professors, holding the Lawrence D. Biele Chair in Law at the Faculty of Law-Institute of Criminology and in the School of Social Work and Public Welfare, has been profoundly complicit in the campaign of intimidation that has seriously endangered her life, as a Palestinian resident of occupied East Al-Quds (Jerusalem) who lives among fanatical and violent settlers. In October, the administration of HUJ wrote to her requesting that she step down from her post at the University as a result of her signing a statement, previously published in *Mondoweiss*, by childhood researchers and students calling for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza. Not only did they pressure her to resign, but they also took the extraordinary step of making public an employment-related letter that would normally have remained confidential as a personnel matter.

The inevitable consequence of their public statements has been a tirade of death threats and trolling on social media, such that Professor Shalhoub-Kevorkian has had to go to campus — where both professors and students are openly armed — protected by a phalanx of her students. In March, the administration followed up by suspending her from teaching on security grounds, a decision eventually rescinded after an international outcry from scholars around the world. Her arrest in April followed hard on the heels of the University's very public harassment and targeting of her scholarship on political grounds, a fundamental violation of internationally respected conventions of academic freedom that Israeli universities have constantly invoked to protect themselves from the global movement for academic boycott.

It is no small irony that, in this instance, the administration of HUJ has made a public pronouncement that it is not an institution of higher learning in the normally accepted understanding of what that entails, that is, an institution where scholars pursue research in order to establish facts free from political interference or the need for obedience to social orthodoxy or other extraneous pressure. On the contrary, the grounds they declared for asking

Professor Shalhoub-Kevorkian to resign from her post was that she should "seek an academic home aligned with her positions". Such a statement is tantamount to declaring that HUJ is, first and foremost, a Zionist institution and that it values political conformity with Israeli ideology above scholarly integrity.

In doing so, the university effectively declared that it can no longer be regarded as an academic institution protected from censure by the very conventions of academic freedom that it denied to its colleague. It has confirmed what the BDS movement has long argued: that Israeli universities are, first and foremost, instruments of the cabinet and agents of Zionism's project of dispossession, apartheid rule, and the ultimate moral eviction and dehumanization of Palestinians that subjects them to genocidal violence. This means that any such institution, and any faculty member who has not openly protested against the discrimination against Palestinian scholars — of which Professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian is but one instance — have forfeited any right to appeal against being boycotted on the grounds of academic freedom or freedom of speech, generally.

age of this interview has consistently failed to cite her explicit repudiation of sexual violence as a feminist — "not in my name and I will never accept it" (at 36 minutes) — and her analysis, as a longstanding scholar of what she calls Israeli "security theology," of the ways in which states produce stories to justify their violence — a technique that Israeli hasbara has notoriously deployed on multiple occasions and that has regularly been accepted without question by US media.

Professor Shalhoub-Kevorkian's remarks in this interview do directly challenge both the legitimacy of Israel's undeniably genocidal war on Gaza and Israel's long-term project to use the tools of racial dehumanization of the colonized to justify its ongoing effort to displace Palestinians — not least in her own home in the Armenian Quarter of East Jerusalem. But it is important to insist that these demonized "positions" are not what drive her widely respected scholarship, but, rather, that her consistently articulated views on the condition of Palestine are grounded in decades of careful and empirically-based scholarship. This is the scholarship that her own university administration and some colleagues have sought to impugn lately on Israeli

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OPINION

The Israeli security state's malicious cat-and-mouse game with internationally renowned feminist scholar Dr. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian continues. Professor Shalhoub-Kevorkian was arrested at her home in occupied East Jerusalem last Thursday, April 18, on charges of "serious incitement against the State of Israel" and held in a Jerusalem police station. According to her family, while in detention there she was shackled and subjected to severe interrogation under torture for hours, incarcerated in a freezing, urine and cockroach-infested cell, prevented from sleeping, yelled at and intimidated, and denied essential medication. Anyone who followed the torture debates around Guantanamo, Bagram Airbase in Afghanistan, or Abu Ghraib in Iraq will recall precisely what the function of such methods of sensory deprivation is: to reduce the prisoner to a psychological state of terror such that they will confess to whatever their interrogator wishes them to admit.

But it is also written within the framework of a long tradition of scholarship on settler colonialism that stretches back to the classic work of Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, and Faye Sayegh and forward to the studies of scholars like Patrick Wolfe, Steven Salaita, Brenna Bhandar, or Ronit Lentin. Though doubtless the notion that Israel is settler-colonial has already been censored as antisemitic on certain US campuses, it has a long tradition within mainstream Israeli sociology and offers an important model for explaining the contours of Israel's specific form of colonialism, which is both typical and has invented unique new forms of population control and regulation of apartheid. Given Israel's longstanding practice and explicit policy of expropriating Palestinian homes and lands in order to extend Jewish ownership across Eretz Israel, it would be difficult to deny that it has always been by definition a typical settler colony in seeking to displace the native population and replace them with Jewish settlers. In maintaining an entirely separate body of laws and regulations, infrastructure, and property rights for Jews and Palestinians across historic Palestine, and thus creating a regime typical of settler states that Fanon fa-

she has recently put it, "swarming" of Israeli agencies and regulations. While the Israeli police have accused her of interviewing child terrorists, what her work as a criminologist who studies state crimes reveals is, on the contrary, the way in which Israel's practices of surveillance and terrorization "penetrate the most intimate spaces of childhood" and of the family. They deny children the right to be and live as children, and mothers and families the right to care, even the right to retrieve the bodies of their sons or daughters murdered in Israeli actions. Though it emerges from careful and objective scrutiny of the impact of Israeli settler colonialism — which famously declared Palestinian children to be "little snakes" — Shalhoub-Kevorkian's work reaches beyond that immediate context to offer important paradigms for the understanding of the "unchildering" of racialized and colonized youth everywhere, from Ferguson and Chicago to the lethal indigenous boarding schools of the United States, Canada, or Australia.

Scholarship of this integrity and rigor could scarcely be confused with incitement. As the Israeli court was obliged to admit, Shalhoub-Kevorkian's books and articles are already studied even at HUJ. Considerably more expensive than the flyers, pamphlets, and manifestoes that are the usual medium of "incitement," they are hardly the instruments of agitation. But they should be in every public as well as university library in both Israel and the United States, even if they face the doctrinaire censorship of right-wing agitators. Their careful and detailed scholarship is the best means we have of informing ourselves about the actual nature of Israel, which pretends to be "the only democracy in the Middle East" while maintaining the most intensive regime of apartheid yet established and serving as the laboratory for the instruments of surveillance and mass death that it exports as "battlefield tested" to repressive regimes around the world. As HUJ's efforts to defame and delegitimize her scholarship attest, and as the fate of many Palestinian scholars throughout historic Palestine who have been dismissed, silenced, detained, or assassinated for their work bears witness, Israeli institutions are, first and foremost, political ones, doing the repressive work of the cabinet under the guise of liberal values. And it has proven that no Palestinian, however renowned, is exempt from Israeli violence and repression. Under such conditions, no scholarship that studies Israeli society and that presents and analyzes the facts dispassionately could fail to be political in its implications, whether those implications shore up or resist the Zionist project, as Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian has so courageously and consistently done on the basis of what her scholarship reveals. Under apartheid, there can be no middle ground. We urgently need such scholarship as hers to ground our resistance in fact and argument, and, as Shalhoub-Kevorkian puts it after Fanon, to "pay attention to the liquidation of all untruths". That is why Zionist institutions, the police, and the universities, seek to silence her.

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Panelists Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (R) and Kate Rouhana (C) speak at a session of the Palestine Forum, titled 'Jerusalem: Politics of Erasure and Resistance,' in Doha, Qatar, on February 10, 2024.

Shalhoub-Kevorkian's thought crimes against this state-aligned institution have been several. In the first instance, the statement she signed in October referred to the unfolding Israeli assault on Gaza as genocidal — an assessment that had been made already by no less than 800 scholars of genocide internationally and that has since been elaborated in extensive detail by the South African government and found at least plausible by the International Court of Justice. Subsequently, the target has been her remarks on the Makdisi Street podcast on March 9, in which she questioned Israel's allegations of the systematic use of sexual violence and mass rape by Hamas on October 7 — allegations that have consistently failed to furnish concrete evidence or reliable witnesses — and called for the abolition of Zionism. Press cover-

media, against the better judgment of scholars in her field. Her outstanding books, all published by Cambridge University Press, and her many scholarly articles, offer their readers a finely-grained analysis of the impact of the Israeli regime on Palestinians and also of the impact of their own brutality on Israelis themselves.

Security Theology, Surveillance, and the Politics of Fear (2015) explores how "violent acts committed against Palestinians in the name of 'security necessities' ... demand further surveillance over certain racialized bodies in order to maintain and sometimes reproduce the Israeli political economy of fear". It is grounded in large part on interviews with Palestinian subjects of Israeli surveillance and oppression, attending "to the voices of those who 'keep on existing'".

mously described as "Manichean" formations, Israel also conforms to the definition of apartheid as established in international law.

What is less typical is the care that Israel, as a belated settler colony, has taken to mask the nature of its regime, by the mostly slow if steady extension of its settlements since the ethnic cleansing of the 1948 Nakba and by the careful fragmentation and dispersal of the legal apparatus through which it controls, evicts, and intimidates its Palestinian subject population. Part of the extraordinary achievement of Professor Shalhoub-Kevorkian's work, both in *Security Theology* and in her subsequent *Incarcerated Childhood* and *the Politics of Unchilding* (2019), lies in her careful and rigorously feminist attention to the everyday lives of Palestinians living in the web or, as