



The Association of Library Professionals (ALP) Condemns Vandalism and Protests Disrupting Finals Week Studies at Columbia University's Butler Library

For Immediate Release

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MANHATTAN, KANSAS —The Association of Library Professionals condemns vandalism and protests that took place in Columbia University's Butler Library. According to reports, on Wednesday, May 7th, approximately 78 protesters were arrested after pro-Palestinian demonstrations in the library. According to the Columbia Daily Spectator, the campus daily newspaper, the protestors had five demands: divestment from "Zionist occupation, apartheid, and genocide," an academic boycott of "all complicit institutions, including the cancellation of the Tel Aviv Global Center," "cops and ICE off our campus," an end to "Columbia's occupation of Harlem; return land to Harlemites and open the gates," and amnesty for all students, staff, and faculty "targeted by Columbia University's discipline." Protestors also chanted, hung Palestinian flags and banners from bookshelves, and wrote messages on furniture and picture frames, including "Columbia will burn 4 the martyrs" according to the Spectator. All those arrested were given tickets and released by Thursday morning.

Columbia's president, Claire Shipman, released a statement on the University's website, stating, "I walked through the reading room... and I saw it defaced and damaged in disturbing ways... Violence and vandalism, hijacking a library—none of that has any place on our campus. These aren't Columbia's values. Let me be clear: Columbia unequivocally rejects antisemitism and all other forms of harassment and discrimination. And we certainly reject a group of students—and we don't yet know whether there were outsiders involved—closing down a library in the middle of the week before finals and forcing 900 students out of their study spaces, many leaving belongings behind.... We, at Columbia, value freedom of speech, robust debate, and peaceful protest. Today's disruption of Butler Library was not that. We must, and we will, come together as a community to consider what civil disobedience actually is and what it means... There is a clear line between legitimate protest and actions that endanger others and disrupt the fundamental work of the University. Today that line was crossed..."

According to the Spectator, 65 of the student protestors were suspended and 33 individuals were barred from campus. Although Americans have the right to free speech and peaceful assembly, ALP condemns the actions of these protestors. Such actions infringing upon the rights of other students and staff to carry out their academic and/or professional duties should not be tolerated in a society that values access to information and the principles of research and education. Though we believe libraries to be places of learning and studying various viewpoints, they should not be used as figurative political megaphones. We commend President Shipman for her quick response and disciplinary actions of such behavior and hope that all involved in these barbaric disruptions will be brought to justice.

For more information about ALP, including how to join, please visit www.alplibraries.org.

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