

Hit emotions, hide facts: MSM's semantic games in Mahmoud Khalil's deportation case

By Lev Tsitrin

If one is to check [CNN](#) on why Columbia graduate and anti-Israel firebrand Mahmoud Khalil faces deportation from the US, you will see this explanation from Khalil's lawyer: "He was taken by US government agents in retaliation, essentially, for exercising his First Amendment rights, for speaking up in defense of Palestinians in Gaza and beyond, for being critical of the US government and of the Israeli government." But scroll down to the government's explanation, and the picture is completely different: "This is not about free speech. This is about people that don't have a right to be in the United States to begin with. No one has a right to a student visa. No one has a right to a green card, by the way," per Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Furthermore, "Secretary of State ... has the authority to revoke a green card or a visa for those whose "activities in the United States would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences" to the country."

So, what we have is, in essence, a game of words about the role of Khalil's speech. Clearly, Khalil used speech to help roil the Columbia campus. Had he stayed quiet and diligently attended to to his studies rather than pour the oil of fiery anti-Israeli rhetoric on the fire of high-strung, self-righteous campus encampments, he would not be in trouble now. Is Khalil's lawyer right that his client is punished merely for his speech?

The problem with his logic is that speech is simply not

relevant here. Needless to say, speech is a social force multiplier, since it coordinates an aimless crowd into acting with a single purpose. That purpose can be constructive – buildings and bridges are built by a single mind directing, through speech, the energies of thousands of workers towards one goal. Speech can effect even greater changes in the world – it is through speech, after all, that presidential candidates convince the country to vote for them, thus turning the ship of state. It is because of the power of speech that repressive regimes suppress the right to speak, fearful that uncontrolled speech will topple them.

So, speech is indeed a powerful tool – and this is precisely the point here. Secretary of State felt a pushback in Khalil's speech to the conduct of US foreign policy – and Khalil being a foreigner, ordered his removal from the country; let him talk elsewhere.

That's all there really is to it. That "Using those immigration law provisions to deport a green card holder is rare," as per John Sandweg, former acting director for ICE, since "[t]hey are typically used if ICE alleges a person was "providing direct financial or operational support to a terror organization" is simply beside the point – because neither the "rare" nor the "[a]typical" means "illegal." It is up to the Secretary of State to determine whether his goals are being obstructed by someone (yes, through speech – this ultimate tool of all social change) – and if that someone is a foreigner, the law gives him full power to remove that obstructing foreigner from the US. This is the gist of the issue; the rest is fluff.

This fluff includes pointing out that Khalil has a green card;

that he is married to a US citizen; that his wife is eight months pregnant, – all of which the CNN report duly does, trying to invoke reader's sympathies to her plight: "US immigration ripped my soul from me when they handcuffed my husband and forced him into an unmarked vehicle," she said, while also noting his arrest came as the couple was returning from an iftar dinner, the meal Muslims eat during Ramadan to break their fast.'" She will undoubtedly show her love by following him to the country he will be deported to. There shouldn't be any problem there.



Mahmoud Khalil's is [an interesting story](#) of a highly successful social climber who escaped from Syrian civil war to Lebanon, getting a job there with British embassy; upgrading it to a US student visa – and upgrading that visa to a green card by marrying a US citizen – only to have US Secretary of State hit a "reset" button on this rapid social climb.

It will be interesting to see whether this will stop him, or whether federal judges will let him escape, and climb to further heights. Whether it will or not, one thing is perfectly clear – Khalil's current troubles have nothing whatsoever to do with America's free speech laws – though it has much to do with Khalil's misunderstanding of those laws which made him a great deal more insolent and "uppity" than was good for him.

The press tries its best to sentimentalize his case, presenting it as a test for America's free speech – though it isn't. It concerns speech by merely offering yet another proof

that speech can trigger a huge change, President Trump acting very differently toward Hamas supporters than did Biden, and turning Khalil's speech into a burden rather than asset.