

Yes, Mr. Khalil, Your Actions Have Consequences

By Victor Davis Hanson

There's been a lot of frenzy in the news about the detention of [Mahmoud Khalil](#). He's a former Columbia University student who was here on a student visa and then has married an American citizen and has recalibrated his visa to a green card.



He's an Algerian citizen who grew up in Syria and Palestine. And he's the spokesman for something at Columbia University called the Columbia University Apartheid Divest, in which it suggests that no university should allow

any investments with the so-called criminal state, apartheid state, as they call it, of Israel.

Now, he was deported because his activity is in contrast to what the [State Department](#) guidelines suggest. And that is, simply, that they do not want to issue visas—whether green cards or student visas or other sort of visas—to people whose activity is in contrast or against the interest of the United States foreign policy.

As I'm speaking, Hamas, who engineered the Oct. 7, 2023, massacre, still holds five American citizens as hostages. They will not release them, apparently. They're on record, for the last 25 years, as a State Department-designated terrorist organization.

So, the question is, is it fair for Mr. Khalil to go back to

his home and lose his green card?

The Left and many on the libertarian right said, "This is a [free speech](#) issue. He can say whatever he wants. Yes, he was the spokesman for the Columbia University Apartheid Divest group. So what? He can say that he doesn't like Israel, that Oct. 7 was a glorious occasion."

And if you look at the literature of his organization, it's very clear that, A, they have called Oct. 7 a wonderful event, and B, in the past they've called for the eradication and destruction of Western civilization. Now, he may deny that, but that's what his organization has done.

The president of Barnard College, the sister campus of Columbia University, about a week ago wrote an op-ed blasting Mr. Khalil's organization and said that they were responsible—that is, again, the Columbia University Apartheid Divest, of which he is their, I guess, official spokesman and negotiator—had caused over \$30,000 of damage, vandalism to the Columbia/Barnard campus.

They have, on two occasions, forcibly entered halls on the university campus and refused to leave. They have illegally encamped on campus grounds, refused to leave. And he was the negotiator.

So, the question is this, it's very simple: Does he have a right, as a resident, to speak and do whatever he wants as long as it's not criminal? He does. Does the State Department have a right to consider whether to issue a visa or a renewal of this visa or cancel a visa, depending on whether the recipient is doing things in the interest of the United States, or I shouldn't say, is doing things contrary to the United States? And the answer is absolutely. Both sides are right.

In other words, [Marco Rubio](#) and his State Department are just saying this: "We issue thousands of visas to all sorts of

people who say all sorts of things, and that's perfectly fine. Obnoxious, obscene, whatever they want to say under the First Amendment because our courts have ruled that those who are residing in the United States have the same rights of free speech. However, we don't have to let people in the United States automatically. We make that decision on whether we feel they're in the interest of the United States or they pose a danger to the United States."

So, both sides are right.

And all Mr. Rubio is saying is, Mr. Khalil, as the spokesman for Columbia University Apartheid Divest, has on numerous occasions supported groups that committed vandalism, that harassed Jews, and, most importantly, have called for the destruction of Western civilization and glorified a group that is designated by the U.S. State Department as a [terrorist group](#). Now, he may deny that, but it's on record.

Marco Rubio and the State Department put it in a pretty good way. They said something along the following lines, and I'm paraphrasing:

If in 2022, when this Algerian citizen wanted to come to the United States as a guest and use our educational facilities to get a degree and he had just said the following, 'I plan, while I am at Columbia, to be part of the Columbia University Apartheid Divest group. And I will condone or participate in takeovers of particular halls and facilities on the campus to prove my point or to advocate my position, which is to alienate, ostracize Israel. And if it comes up that there is another war in the Middle East, I will side with Hamas, a known terrorist organization, as the State Department has defined it.' Do you really think that we would allow that visa to be issued?

And the answer is no.

So, yes, he can say everything he wants. But his activity has consequences.

It wasn't what he said, but it was what he did. And he now gets his wish. He can go back to the Middle East and be a strong advocate for Hamas, in closer proximity to it.

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