

SJP Statement on General Meir Elran's "Counter-Terrorism" Course

This Winter, the University of Chicago is hosting Meir Elran, a veteran general in the Israeli army, to teach a college course. Euphemistically entitled "Security, Counter-Terrorism, and Resilience: The Israeli Case," General Elran's course promises to provide students with a detailed overview of Israeli "security strategy and practice" from the period before 1948 to the present, with a particular focus on how this "practice" might presently be embraced or adopted by other "liberal democracies," the United States among them.

A review of Elran's lecture materials – published earlier this month on Canvas – paints a clearer and more concrete picture of what his course sets out to achieve: namely, inculcating US students with the mindset and worldview of the Israeli military. On Elran's telling of Israeli history, Israel appears not as an [expansionist apartheid state](#) predicated on the ethnic cleansing of Palestinian land, but as an embattled liberal democracy surrounded by "large hostile Muslim populations" and mired in a "Muslim-Jewish conflict" not of its own making. Having established this essentially Orientalist and [propagandistic](#) framing, Elran's course encourages students to put themselves in the shoes of Israeli military strategists, reflecting throughout the quarter on the various past and present means by which Israel has worked to "secure" its colonial enterprise and crush Indigenous Palestinian resistance to it.

Needless to say, Elran's lecture materials pay virtually no attention to the horrific violence that Israel's so-called security regime inflicts daily and systematically on the millions of Palestinians Israel occupies. Elran's lectures display scant concern, for example, regarding Israel's programmatic [theft](#) of Palestinian land, its [demolition](#) of Palestinian homes, its [collective punishment](#) of Palestinian communities, its [biological warfare](#) against Palestinian civilians, its [destruction](#) of Palestinian olive groves, or its [torture](#) of Palestinian children – to say nothing of its "strategy" of [periodically massacring](#) the Palestinians it holds captive in the Gaza Strip. All this and more apparently passes, in Elran's worldview, for so many forms of "counter-terrorism," while the various means by which Palestinians fight to resist these [genocidal](#) practices are broadly dismissed throughout his lectures as emotional, hostile, and/or "[terrorist](#)" in nature.

The problems with Elran's course go beyond its content, however. As noted above, Elran served for decades in senior positions of the Israeli army, which he assisted in its efforts to crush Palestinian resistance and subjugate Palestinian communities who protest the theft and colonization of their land. Particularly damning in this regard is the role Elran played in repressing the first *intifada* (1987-93), a popular Palestinian uprising against apartheid and occupation that the Israeli army confronted with a notorious policy of "[force, might, and beatings](#)." Elran served as Deputy Director of Israeli Military Intelligence for the *intifada*'s first two years, a period during which the Israeli military systematically [broke the bones](#) of unarmed protestors and murdered [more than 300 Palestinians](#) (49 of them children).

Nor did Elran's participation in anti-Palestinian violence end with his formal retirement from the military. On the contrary, he continues today to serve as "top expert" for the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), a think tank constructed atop a former Palestinian cemetery that aims to develop and globally export the brutal repression tactics of the Israeli military. The INSS-sponsored "Dahiya Doctrine" serves as a case in point. [First formulated in two INSS policy papers](#) published in 2008 – and named after a Beirut neighborhood flattened by Israel in its 2006 invasion of Lebanon – the Dahiya Doctrine calls on Israel to respond to armed Palestinian or Lebanese resistance "[with force that is disproportionate,](#)" particularly by "damaging" and "punish[ing]" civilian areas "to an extent that will demand long and expensive reconstruction processes." This doctrine saw its first real-world application in Israel's 2008 assault on Gaza, a 22-day massacre in which Israeli "counter-terrorism" took the form of [leveling more than 6,000 Palestinian homes and slaughtering some 1,200 Palestinian civilians, 350 of them children.](#) (The alleged Palestinian "terrorists," for their part, destroyed 1 Israeli home and killed 3 Israeli civilians in the course of resisting Israel's invasion, yielding a final Palestinian/Israeli civilian death ratio of roughly 400:1.)

As should be clear, from his past service in the Israeli army to his present work for the INSS, Elran's career has been defined by and dedicated to securing Israel's colonial project and crushing Palestinian resistance to it. Personally as well as institutionally, Elran embodies the history of anti-Palestinian violence in which he has long been a senior participant. And it is in light of this fact, ultimately, that the University's decision to offer Elran's latest "Counter-Terrorism" course must be understood and opposed. Taught by an Israeli-general-turned-INSS-specialist and funded by the Israel Institute – an organization that [uses millions of tax-exempt dollars to push a pro-Israel agenda in US academic spaces](#) – Elran's course represents nothing less than the incursion of Israel's military complex into the University's campus.

No principle of "academic freedom" or "intellectual diversity" justifies hosting classes taught by complicit Israeli military personnel – particularly not classes that misrepresent Palestinian history, treat Palestinian deaths as fodder for "strategic" military theorizing, and inundate students with the Orientalist worldview of Israeli colonists.

For these reasons and others, we, Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), will be conducting a sustained, student-led campaign against Elran's course for the duration of this quarter. We urge students, faculty, and staff interested in expressing support for our campaign and opposition to Elran's course to [sign here](#), as well as to follow our [Instagram](#) for periodic updates about upcoming events and actions. Above all, we look forward to a future in which the University's Palestinian students will no longer be forced to watch leading participants in their [ongoing](#)

[Nakba](#) be hired by their administration, welcomed on their campus, or handed positions of power in their classrooms.

Until Liberation,
Students for Justice in Palestine
#IsraeliMilitaryOffOurCampus
#CounterColonialism

Signatories (updated regularly)

Noam Chomsky, Professor of Linguistics, University of Arizona
Abhishek Bhattacharyya, Teaching Fellow in Anthropology and the College
Alireza Doostdar, Professor of Islamic Studies and the Anthropology of Religion
Angie Heo, Professor of the Anthropology and Sociology of Religion
Anne Knafl, University of Chicago Library
Darryl Li, Professor of Anthropology
Eman Abdelhadi, Professor in Comparative Human Development
Eve L. Ewing, Professor in the Department of Race, Diaspora, and Indigeneity
Ghenwa Hayek, Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations
Lisa Wedeen, Professor of Political Science
Nell Pach, Writing and Research Advisor in English
Timothy Garrison, University of Chicago Library
[#CareNotCops](#) (UChicago)
[Democratic Socialists of America BDS & Palestine Solidarity Working Group](#)
[Environmental Justice Task Force](#) (UChicago RSO)
[Katherine Cavanaugh, Behind Enemy Lines](#)
[Stand With Kashmir](#) (Chicago Chapter)
[Students For Disability Justice](#) (SDJ)
[UChicago Against Displacement](#) (UCAD)
Aaron Liu, College Student
Abbie Porto, Student
Abigail Taylor-Roth, PhD Student in CHSS
Adam Bailey, MA Student at the CMES
Aleena Tariq, Student in Law School

Alex Gomez, College Student
Alex Z., College Alum
Alexander Gonzalez, College Student
Alexander Masoudi, College Student
Alicia Hurtado, College Alum
Alvin Blankson, Student
Amani Mryan, College Student
Amarah, MA Student at the CMES
Ameena Ahmed, College Student
Amal Azzouni, College Student
Amatullah Mir, College Student
Aminah Ghanem, College Student
Amir Marshi, MA Student in Divinity
Andrew Basta, College Student
Aneeza Ahmad, College Student
Angel Rosales, College Student
Anna Gurolnick, Student at Crown and Harris
Anwar Omeish, Student in Political Science
Arturo Gutierrez de Velasco, College Student
Arwa Awan, Student in Political Science
Asaf Lebovic, College Student
Avery Metzcar, College Student
Aya Hamza, College Student
Ayomide Badmus, College Student
Belane Ayelework, College Student
Bob Offer-Westort, Graduate Student in Anthropology
Cade Creighton, College Student
Cameron Drake, College Student
Camille Morgan, Booth Office of Global Diversity & Inclusion
Carol Iglesias, PhD Student in Anthropology
Caroline Waldmann, College Student

Casey Mathur, College Student
Cassidy Wilson, College Student
Catalina García, College Student
Cecilia Hanna, College Student
Chae Lee, College Student
Christopher Iacovetti, PhD Student in Divinity
Claire Huang, College Student
Connor Bailey, MPP Student in the Harris School
Crystina Windham, College Student
Daniel Arad, College Student
Derek Schlabach, Hyde Park Resident
Deqa, Student
Elaine Zhou, College Student
Ellen Misloski, Hyde Park Resident
Emile Sow, College Student
Eva Koronios, Graduate Student in CMES
Eyshe Beirich, College Student
Farah Akhtar, MDiv Student in Divinity
Farooq Chaudhry, Student in Law School
Fatima Madey, College Student
Fernando Revelo La Rotta, PhD Student in Anthropology
Gabi Kinlock, College Student
Hadessah O'Neal, College Alum
Hajra Zaid, MA Student in Divinity
Hala Hersi, College Student
Hanim, College Student
Hannah Brody, College Student
Harley Pomper, College Student
Hassan Doostdar, College Student
Hope Houston, College Student
Ibrahim Gomaa, Student

Ihsan Ul-Ihthisam, Graduate Student in SALC
Iman S., College Student
Indran Fernando, MA Student at the CMES
Inioluwa Aloba, College Student
Isak Saaf, MAPH Student
Jackson Overton-Clark, College Student
Jake Sirota, PhD Student in Divinity
James Blaisdell Ndaayezwi, College Student
Jeffrey Sun, College Student
Jenna Moor, Student
Jenna Nimer, College Student
Jeson Ng, PhD Student in Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations
John Hieronymus, RN at the University of Chicago Medical Center
John Marvin, PhD Student in Divinity
John Mrema, Student
Jonathan Katz, Graduate Student at the Committee on International Relations
Joseph Morrison, PhD Student in Divinity
Joseph Schneider, Graduate Student at CMES/Harris School
Joshua Payne, College Student
Jude Denning, College Student
JQ Lee, College Student
Kaan Asker, Student
Kameel Khabaz, College Student
Kat Mokedi, College Student
Katie O'Donnell, Student
Katja Edwards, Student
Kelly Hui, College Student
Kennedi Williams, College Student
Kit Antonelli, College Student
Lauren Dotson, Student in CRWR and CRES
Layla Khazeni, College Student

Lewis Sherman, MAPH Student
Lola Flores, College Student
Lorenzo Granada, PhD Student in Anthropology
Luisana Encarnacion Amador, Student
Maia Johnson, College Student
Malorie Lewis, MA Student at the CMES
Maniza Ahmed, PhD Student in History
Manu Sundaresan, College Student
Marce Sanchez, College Student
Marya Tawam, College Student
Maryam Abdella, College Student
Maryam Shariff, Student
Maximilien Newman, College Student
Maya Jain, College Alum
Mazie Witter, Student
Mehdi Ali, PhD Student in Divinity
Menna Hassan, MA Student in PME
Mia Rimmer, College Student
Michael Ibrahim, College Student
Mike Miccioli, PhD Student in Physics
Miles Mikofsky, Student in NELC
Mobeen Ahmed, MA Student in Divinity
Mohamed Fawaz, College Alum
Molly Cunningham, College Student
Morgan Kincade, PhD Student in Divinity
Mumina Sadullozoda, PhD Student in BSD
My Chu, College Student
Nada Ali, Student
Najya Fayyaz, College Student
Natalie Smith, College Student
Navid Mazidabadifarahani, College Student

Neal Feldman, MA Alum
Neomi Rao, PhD Student in Political Science
Nick Lorenz, PhD Student in Divinity
Nicole Zhong, College Student
Nikhita Mendis, Phd Student in Anthropology
Noura Ahmed ElEssawy, Student
Nyah DeValle, College Student
Omar Abulshohoud, College Student
Omina Nazarzoda, PhD Student in Neuroscience
Pieter Hoekstra, PhD Student in Divinity
Piper Kraske, College Student
Pratiti Deb, PhD Candidate in Physics
Rami Kablawi, Alum
Rana Ghuloom, PhD Student in Comparative Literature
Rebekah Rosenfeld, PhD Student in Divinity
Ruairí O'Mahony, MA Student in the Social Sciences
Saba Johnson, College Student
Sabrina Amrane, MA Student at the CMES
Safia Mahjebin, MDiv Student in Divinity
Safia Singer, Student
Sahar Omer, Student in Law School
Sahar Punjwani, College Student
Sallie Hinkle, College Student
Saloni Jaiswal, Student in Law School
Saman Fazeli, PhD Student in Divinity
Samar Hassan Saleh, Harris School of Public Policy
Sammy Zimmerman, College Student
Samuel Baudinette, PhD Student in Divinity
Sanya Bhartiya, College Student
Sara Smith, College Student
Sarah Levenstam, PhD Student in Divinity

Scott Doolin, PhD Student in Divinity
Shari Boiskin, Graduate Student in Divinity
Silvia (Danny) Moreno, Student in Law School
Sky Yuning, College Student
Symonne Liu, College Student
Ta'Naija Fair, College Student
Tala Malo, College Student
Titas Bose, Graduate Student in SALC
Varun K., PhD Student in Economics
Walter Li, College Student
Warren Wagner, College Student
Will Harding, College Student
Zachary Taylor, PhD Student in Divinity
Zara Salman, College Student
Zyva Sheikh, College Student