

# MIT faces federal lawsuit for antisemitism

## Professor of Linguistics Michel DeGraff is also named as a defendant in the lawsuit

By Boheng Cao and Vivian Hir  
EDITORS

On June 25, Will Sussman, a former MIT PhD student; Lior Alon, an instructor in the Department of Mathematics; and The Louis D. Brandeis Center Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism filed a lawsuit against MIT and Professor of Linguistics Michel DeGraff, accusing them of antisemitism.

According to the complaint, the MIT administration fostered a “climate of terror” for its “failure to act reasonably” during the pro-Palestine encampments in 2024, refusal to “investigate [Sussman’s] claims of anti-Jewish discrimination,” and in-

adequate sanctions against DeGraff. The plaintiffs will request a jury trial.

In an email to *The Tech*, MIT spokesperson Sarah McDonnell wrote that MIT will be a defendant in the lawsuit. She emphasized that “MIT rejects antisemitism,” citing a transcript of a President Kornbluth video from Nov. 14, 2023: “Antisemitism is real, and it is rising in the world. We cannot let it poison our community.”

Lior Alon

In the lawsuit, Alon reported that demonstrators called for an “intifada” and for a free Palestine “from the river to the sea” in the early days of the 2023 Israel-Gaza war. Meaning “shaking off” or “rebellion” in

Arabic, “intifada” refers to two Palestinian uprisings against Israel in the late 1980s and the early 2000s that involved non-violent civil disobedience and terrorist attacks. Both intifadas were violently suppressed by Israel.

The phrase “from the river to the sea” refers to the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea formerly occupied by British Mandatory Palestine — a phrase that has been used by both Palestinians and Israelis to demand the establishment of a single state in the region. Many pro-Palestine demonstrators consider their use of the slogan a call for peaceful coexistence,



COLIN CLARK—THE TECH

**Kresge Oval at MIT on July 7, 2025.** The 2024 pro-Palestinian encampments were held on the lawn.

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# VPF removed access to the Brown Book in early June

## The Brown Book is a report of sponsored research activity



COLIN CLARK—THE TECH

One of the many entrances to MIT in Building 7.

By Boheng Cao  
COPY CO-CHIEF

In early June, the Office of the Vice President of Finance (VPF) deleted the Report of Sponsored Research Activity, or Brown Book, from their website. The exact date of the deletion could not be verified. According to the VPF, future issues of the Brown Book will also be discontinued. The Brown Book listed the fiscal contributions of primary and direct research sponsors such as universities, military organizations, government institutions, private businesses, and nonprofits, along with the faculty recipients of these sponsorships.

In a statement from MIT spokesperson Kimberly Allen, the VPF said that the Brown Book’s removal aligns MIT’s financial reporting with “typical practice,” retaining the Institute’s “compliance” with federal requirements.” The VPF noted that past Brown Book issues would still be available in the Distinctive Collections archives under the Records Management Program.

On behalf of the VPF, Allen also stated that paid researchers will be able to request the sources of their own funding from their principal investigators (PIs). Furthermore, researchers requesting sources to their funding could refer to lab or per-

sonal websites, should these websites choose to disclose funding, or to the funding acknowledgements in papers. MIT Departments, Labs, and Centers are required to retain sponsor records for four financial years after the termination of a sponsorship, but are not obliged to publish them.

Skipper Lynch ’26, a member of MIT Divest — an organization which seeks to divest the Institute’s endowment from fossil fuels — was critical of the change. Lynch wrote that the Brown Book, along with other disclosure processes, is “an essential tool in holding fossil fuel companies accountable for their greenwashing and ensuring the credibility of Institute research.” They referenced a 2022 Nature Climate Change report, which found that compared to less fossil-dependent research centers, fossil-funded centers such as those at MIT, Columbia, and Stanford tend to express more favorable views towards natural gas compared to renewable energy in tweets and reports.

Aaliya Hussain ’25, a former member of MIT Divest and the Coalition Against Apartheid (a pro-Palestinian student group that was suspended from MIT in 2024), drew a comparison to the Media Lab’s concealment of its financial associations with Jeffrey Epstein that culminated in the resignation of former Media Lab Director Joi Ito amidst major scandal. Hussain

urged MIT to follow the example of the Vietnam War-era MIT Pounds Panel, which condemned MIT’s “imbalance” towards military sponsorships and recommended “intimate involvement of faculty and students” in “non-academic public service.” Hussain said that the Panel, while flawed, “represented a far more honest and open approach to research sponsorship controversies.”

Kyle Williams ’27 used the Brown Book to inform his 24.134 (Experimental Ethics) project and Tech article about pro-Palestinian protests at MIT. He stated that he was neither “surprised nor shocked” about the removal.

Williams also drew a parallel between the VPF’s decision and the Trump administration’s takedown of federal datasets. “Erasure is an all too common tactic of institutions,” Williams said.

## IN SHORT

The last day to petition for the August or September Advanced Standing Exams (ASE) is Thursday, July 10.

MIT Pridefest will be held at Kendall Square on Friday, July 11 from 4-7 p.m.

The deadline for PhD students to submit an application, signed by advisor and department, to the Office of Graduate Education for fall term non-resident status is Tuesday, July 15.

The last day to submit advanced degree thesis title for September degrees is Friday, July 18.

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# UN Special Rapporteur accuses MIT in report regarding Palestine

## Report names MIT and other universities for “partnering with Israeli institutions”

By Geoffrey Enwere  
MANAGING EDITOR

On July 3, United Nations special rapporteur Francesca Albanese presented a report to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) detailing the involvement of international institutions, including MIT, in supporting the Israeli military throughout its 21-month operation in Gaza.

Special rapporteurs, who are independent experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council, have a mandate to advise and report on specific circumstances. Albanese, an Italian legal scholar serving as special rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories since 2022, warned of “mass ethnic cleansing” after Israel invaded Gaza following Hamas’s attack on Oct. 7, 2023. Last year, Albanese offered an expert opinion to the United Nations, stating that there were “reasonable grounds” to believe Israel was committing genocide in Gaza. She argued that Israel effectively labeled all Gazans and their infrastructure as terrorism-supporting, turning every-

thing and everyone into legitimate targets.

Her report also includes a section on academic institutions, titled “Knowledge production and violation legitimization.” In this section, Albanese points to MIT, the Technical University of Munich, and the University of Edinburgh as examples of universities that “partner with Israeli institutions in areas directly harming Palestinians.” She asserts that partnerships with research bodies such as MIT have contributed to the development of automated weaponry and swarm flight for Israeli drones, which have become “omnipresent killing machines in the skies of Gaza.”

Albanese elaborates on MIT’s connections to the Israeli military by describing how the Institute’s labs “conduct weapons and surveillance research funded by the Israeli Ministry of Defense — the only foreign military financing research at the Institute.” She highlights projects on “drone swarm control — a distinct feature of the Israeli assault on

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COLIN CLARK—THE TECH

The Great Dome at MIT on May 3, 2025.

## LORDE'S VIRGIN

and the emotions, good and bad, it evokes.

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## PROF. ALEX BYRNE UNDER CRITICISM

for a report he co-wrote. NEWS, p. 3

## BROAD INSTITUTE LAYOFFS

due to NIH funding cuts. NEWS, p. 4



## DR. DANLEI CHEN

in the first feature of **Meet the Minds**. SCIENCE, p. 6

## COFFEE CUPS? TOPOLOGY?

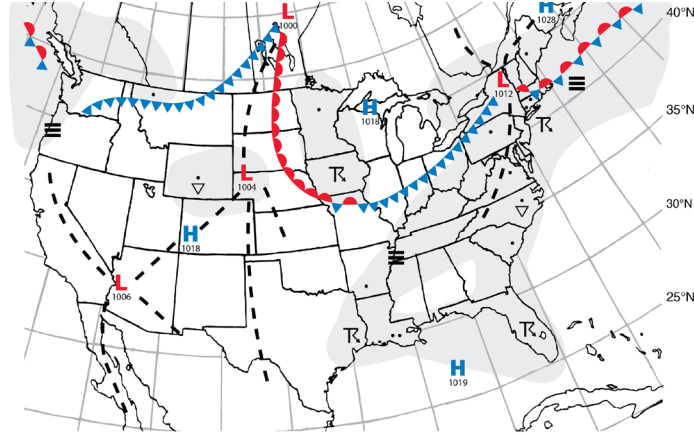
xxcd. ENTERTAINMENT, p. 7

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WEATHER FORECAST



Weather Systems	Weather Fronts	Precipitation Symbols	Other Symbols
High Pressure	Trough	Snow	Fog
Low Pressure	Warm Front	Rain	Thunderstorm
Hurricane	Cold Front	Light	Haze
	Stationary Front	Moderate	<div>Compiled by MIT Meteorology Staff and The Tech</div>
		Heavy	

# Cooler temperatures in store for the weekend

By Conrad Straden  
METEOROLOGIST

After an unsettled week with plenty of rain, the weekend is shaping up to be pretty nice. High 70s with a mix of sun and clouds will make it nice to head outside without it being too hot. It will be a bit humid, but a gentle sea breeze will offer some relief if it can penetrate through Boston. Next week warms up again with temperatures running in the mid to upper 80s.

## JULY 10

SITUATION FOR NOON (ET)

### Extended Forecast

**Today:** Rain. Showers. High around 72°F (22°C). North-east winds 5-10 mph, gusting to 20 mph.

**Tonight:** Overcast. Low around 65°F (18°C). North-east winds 2-6 mph.

**Friday:** Partly Cloudy. High around 78°F (26°C). South-east winds 4-8 mph.

**Saturday:** Mix of Sun and Clouds. High around 78°F (26°C) and overnight low around 67°F (19°C). East winds 5-10 mph, gusting to 20 mph.

**Sunday:** Mostly Sunny. High around 80°F (27°C) and overnight low around 67°F (19°C).

# Complaint claims MIT failed to stop antisemitism

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whereas some Jews and Israelis see it as a call for Israel’s destruction.

Alon, who interpreted these chants as threats, emailed President Kornbluth but said that he failed to get a substantive response. Alon also reported that pro-Palestine demonstrators prevented him from entering and exiting the encampment, which he attributed to his Israeli and Jewish identity.

Alon reported feeling increasingly ostracized from his colleagues who hold pro-Palestinian views. He withdrew his children from MIT’s daycare and began to fear for his safety. The lawsuit states that DeGraff disclosed Alon’s personal information on social media, including his Israeli military history, and filmed Alon in the encampment as he sang the Israeli national anthem “Hatikvah.” The lawsuit cites the online circulation of these videos as a cause of “unwarranted hostility” towards Alon, who says he was confronted by strangers in public places.

Alon was also mentioned in DeGraff’s article in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, “MIT’s Orwellian language masks its stance on Gaza protests,” which claimed that Alon “participated in well-rehearsed propaganda that erases the anti-Zionist Jewish students and misrepresents them, along with their non-Jewish comrades, as violent and antisemitic.” Alon holds that these claims are false and that he did not make such statements. Furthermore, Alon believes that DeGraff wrote a “damaging” portrayal of his call for help in the encampment, describing Alon as “mocking his own ‘fear’” by “sarcastically” shouting that he felt unsafe.

In June 2024, Alon emailed President Kornbluth about his experiences with “antisemitic harassment and defamation” by DeGraff, requesting the MIT administration to take down DeGraff’s posts. The administration did not respond to his requests. Alon stated that MIT’s “antisemitic atmosphere” has negatively impacted his mental health and career, ascribing his inability to receive a tenure-track offer to “antisemitic public exposure.”

**William Sussman**  
Sussman dropped out of MIT in Jan. 2025, claiming that he experienced “ex-

treme and intolerable” antisemitic harassment by DeGraff. He is now an associate at the Manhattan Institute, a conservative think tank. On Nov. 9, 2024, Sussman posted on X to express his concerns about one of DeGraff’s Instagram posts, which condemned the Zionist “mind infection” and its relationship with particular “Jewish student life organizations” such as Hillel and Chabad. Both groups have voiced support for the Israeli community in the wake of the October 7th attacks.

In response, DeGraff posted messages on X, tagging Sussman’s account. Sussman emailed DeGraff and copied senior administrators at MIT asking to be left alone, resulting in subsequent X posts regarding Sussman by DeGraff. The post stated that Sussman’s actions had “triggered against me racist insults; accusations of plagiarism, lies & antisemitism; incitement to violence; threats, etc. Now Will has asked that I ‘cease & desist.’”

Sussman emailed again his request to be left alone, prompting a prolonged argument over email in which senior administrators reportedly failed to intervene.

The alleged harassment caused Sussman to file an Institute Discrimination and Harassment Response (IDHR) complaint in November 2024. Per Sussman, IDHR did not find antisemitic discrimination or harassment in DeGraff’s social media posts and emails about Sussman. The case was redirected to MIT Human Resources (HR). Sussman then sent an appeal to IDHR in December 2024. He says that IDHR again responded that the case was not subject to appeal because they did not consider DeGraff’s conduct to be antisemitic. Sussman dropped out of MIT’s PhD program shortly after receiving this decision.

**Robin Pick, Esq.**  
Robin Pick, a Senior Counsel from the Brandeis Center, is representing Sussman and Alon in the lawsuit. A civil rights attorney by training, Pick stated that “Title VI’s protection against discrimination based on national origin extends to Jews based on their shared ancestry and ethnicity.” Pick acknowledges that “there are many Jews who are not

religious,” but emphasized that “they are still Jews and being Jewish is a core part of their identity.”

Pick maintained that many Jews view Israel as an important part of their Jewish identity, “regardless of their opinions on the policies of the Israeli government.” She argued that the calls for intifada at MIT reminded Israelis of the First and Second Intifadas they lived through that was “an atmosphere of terror.” During the Intifadas, violent attacks such as suicide bombings happened in Israel. “When they heard calls for ‘intifada’ on their own campus, these were not just words to them,” Pick wrote in a statement to *The Tech*. “They heard a call to murder all Jews — anywhere in the world — including on the MIT campus.”

Pick contended that the antisemitic environment at MIT has caused many Israelis and Jews to “live in fear,” affecting their mental health and professional lives. She asserted that the MIT administration ignored those who needed help and failed to enforce policies, which “normalized antisemitism” on campus. She cited DeGraff’s actions and recent events, such as stickers with the slogan “you can’t deport the intifada” posted around campus, as examples of harassment and targeting towards Jews. “MIT must uphold its legal obligations under Title VI, not only for Jews and Israelis, but to keep the entire campus safe,” Pick wrote.

**Michel DeGraff**  
In a statement obtained by *The Tech*, DeGraff called Alon’s allegations baseless, citing an Oct. 25, 2023 Fox News interview in which Alon described pro-Palestinian student protesters as “pro-Hamas.” According to DeGraff, his claims in *Le Monde Diplomatique* were supported by Alon’s comment that pro-Palestine protesters engaged in “clear concrete call[s] for terror acts.” DeGraff denies that his article was a “smear campaign” against Alon.

DeGraff contended that the phrase “mind infection,” which he used to describe Sussman’s rhetoric, originates in the work of Israeli philologist Professor Nurit Peled-Elhanan. A peace activist, Peled-Elhanan’s work focuses on fostering dialogue between Israelis and

Palestinians. DeGraff said that his Instagram post was about anti-Palestinian bias in the Israeli education system, which Peled-Elhanan studies, and that the post did not constitute “antisemitism” nor “harassment.”

In his statement, DeGraff stressed his views on the distinctions between Zionism and Judaism, arguing that the plaintiffs’ “conflation” of the terms is “one of the most lethal linguistic trumperies in the settler-colonial Zionist arsenal.” DeGraff said that “there are Jews of many persuasions, both Zionists and anti-Zionists,” adding that “Christian Zionism predates Jewish Zionism.” He also argued that Jewish students were “among the most active” members of the pro-Palestine encampment, noting that they organized a Passover Seder with other demonstrators.

Like the plaintiffs, DeGraff criticized MIT leadership for its failure to address antisemitism. However, he believes that the administration’s shortcomings lie mostly in its neglect of anti-Zionist Jewish students and organizations such as Jews for Collective Liberation (JCL). “Antisemitism, on a par with any other kind of hate, including anti-Palestinian racism, has no place at MIT or anywhere else,” DeGraff said.

In his statement, DeGraff said that anti-Zionist Jewish students “feel excluded and vilified” when President Kornbluth’s May 2024 letter “referred to ‘our Israeli and Jewish students’ being supported by a counter-protest” against the encampment. He claimed that a “narrow ‘us-vs-them’ categorization of who counts as ‘Jewish’ fractures the Jewish community and is “antisemitic.”

DeGraff stated that he has repeatedly faced disciplinary action from MIT. He views this discipline as “retaliation for my insisting to teach about Palestine and Israel and my advocating for my academic freedom and my freedom of expression.” DeGraff reports that his salaries for the 2024–2025 and 2025–2026 school years have been “frozen, without pay raise.”

DeGraff asserts that this lawsuit is the latest in a “pattern of intimidation” against his beliefs. As an example, DeGraff pointed to the repeated rejection of his proposed special seminar on the language of decolonization in Palestine, Israel, and Haiti.

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# Report mentions MIT’s various ties to Israel

Palestine, from Page 1

Gaza since October 2023” as well as “pursuit algorithms and underwater surveillance.”

She also notes the Institute’s management of a Lockheed Martin seed fund from 2019 to 2024 that facilitated student collaborations with Israeli teams. Furthermore, Albanese highlighted the fact that Elbit Systems, an Israeli military technology company and defense contractor, was a member of the Institute’s Industrial Liaison Program (ILP) from 2017 to 2025, connecting the company to MIT research and personnel.

Albanese later recognizes “the vital work of students and staff in holding universities to account” and describes how their contribution “casts a new light on global crack-downs on campus protesters.” She then suggests that “shielding Israel and protecting institutional financial interests appears a more prob-

able motivation than fighting alleged antisemitism.”

Her sources include “No More MIT Research for Israel’s Ministry of Defense,” which was published in MIT Faculty Newsletter by MIT Graduate Students for Palestine; “MIT Science For Genocide”, a document by the MIT Coalition for Palestine; and MIT’s 2023 Uniform Guidance Audit Report. For specific examples of research conducted with Institute labs, Albanese cites papers by Aerospace Engineering Professor Eyat Modiano and Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Professor Daniela Rus, who is the director of MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL).

Albanese’s reports have faced strong criticism. Israel has denied allegations of genocide in Gaza — allegations which are currently under investigation by the International Criminal Court of Justice (ICC) and which have been supported by mul-

ti-ple scholars of genocide. The country maintains that its actions are conducted in justifiable self-defense in response to the October 7 attack, during which Hamas killed over 1,200 civilians and military personnel while taking another 251 more as hostages. Israel and the U.S. boycotted the UN Human Rights Council earlier this year, with Israel’s Foreign Minister accusing the body of antisemitism.

“The United States once again expressed its grave concerns to UN Secretary-General António Guterres about the continued activities of Francesca Albanese,” said the United States Mission to the United Nations in a statement. The Mission then called upon the Secretary-General to condemn Albanese’s actions and call for her dismissal, warning that failure to do so “would not only discredit the United Nations but would also require significant ac-

tions in response to Ms. Albanese’s misconduct.”

The statement claims Albanese has intensified her long-standing antisemitic and anti-Israel views by sending “threatening” letters to numerous international organizations and major American corporations. Her reports, they contend, present weak legal arguments for unsubstantiated accusations of gross human rights violations, apartheid, and genocide, amounting to an unacceptable attack on the American and global economies.

MIT spokesperson Kimberly Allen told *The Tech* in a statement that MIT faculty and researchers frequently collaborate with scientists and organizations abroad, including those in Israel, and always follow the required due diligence for international projects. “MIT strongly supports the principles of academic freedom that enable our faculty to engage with a wide array of partners

in the pursuit of knowledge,” Allen wrote.

In a statement to *The Tech*, Coalition for Palestine (C4P) member and MIT postdoc Mila Halgren PhD ’25 said that Albanese’s report “confirms what MIT students of conscience have been saying for nearly two years.” C4P’s statement called for MIT to immediately cut all ties with the Israeli military, including ending IMOD-funded research and relationships with companies like Maersk and Caterpillar. The statement also demanded a full apology and pardon from President Kornbluth and MIT Corporation Chair Mark Gorenberg ’76 for all students disciplined because of their pro-Palestine activism. “Because MIT is precedent-setting in its collaboration with an occupying force, we believe that MIT deserves a precedent-setting response,” Halgren said. “It is time for private institutions, even those in higher education, to be held to account.”

## Over 200 sign letter criticizing Professor Alex Byrne *Byrne disclosed co-writing a HHS report in May about gender dysphoria treatment for minors*

By Vivian Hir  
NEWS EDITOR

On June 26, Professor of Philosophy Alex Byrne wrote a *Washington Post* op-ed disclosing his co-authorship of a previously anonymous Department of Human and Health Services (HHS) report on pediatric gender dysphoria treatment published this past May. In the op-ed, Byrne argued that the American medical establishment should reevaluate gender-affirming care for minors, stating, “Medical transition for minors is not empirically or ethically justified.”

The recent news has stirred controversy within MIT and other academic communities. As of time of publication, over 200 people — including MIT affiliates, those from other institutions, and anonymous signatories — have signed an open letter titled “Dear Professor Byrne,” which criticizes Byrne for contributing to the report. The open letter, authored by an unnamed “concerned colleague,” alleges that Byrne’s language harms the transgender community and condemns him for working with the Trump administration via his co-authorship.

Furthermore, the statement’s authors argue that Byrne failed to adhere to academic professional ethics by feigning knowledge outside his field of study. “Given your lack of the requisite expertise, we believe it is inappropriate for you to engage in the shaping of national medical policy on gender-affirming care for trans youth,” the authors wrote. Byrne is an academic who studies the philosophy of sex and gender. In 2023, he published *Trouble With Gender*, a book that argues against the “recent gender revolution,” specifically the rise in using gender identity terms such as cisgender and transgender in place of sex. Critics have called the work to not be inclusive of trans people.

The HHS report was produced in response to a Jan. 28 executive order titled “Protecting Children from Chemical and Surgical Mutilation,” which directed the department to review gender dysphoria treatment protocols for minors and publish its

findings within 90 days. The order described gender-affirming care for minors as “destructive” and stated that medical guidance from the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) was based on “junk science.” According to the report’s press release, the names of the authors were withheld to “help maintain the integrity of the process.”

In the report, the authors argued that evidence in support of gender-affirming medical care for minors is weak. They also claim that treatments such as puberty blockers and hormones carry significant medical risks, including later sexual dysfunction. Instead, the report recommends psychotherapy, in particular “exploratory therapy,” for treating gender dysphoria in children and adolescents.

LGBTQ+ rights advocates, researchers, and doctors have criticized the report for contradicting the guidance of medical associations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, which supports gender-affirming care for minors. Critics believe that the report attacks trans rights and misrepresents current scientific evidence. On the other hand, conservative groups such as Alliance Defending Freedom and the Center for American Liberty have voiced support for the report’s findings.

Katie Zhou G, a trans PhD student in MIT’s Philosophy Department studying the philosophy of gender, was aware of Byrne’s views before the report. Although Zhou disagreed with him and was concerned about the “harmful effects” of his beliefs, she was willing to consider his academic work on gender as a professor “exercising his right to free and open inquiry.” However, Zhou sees Byrne’s role as a co-author of the HHS report differently. “He is actively shaping national medical policy for trans youth, despite the fact that he is not a medical or community public health expert in this subject area,” Zhou wrote to *The Tech*.

Elle Kirsch G, a queer PhD student in MIT’s Philosophy Department involved in LGBTQ+ advocacy, finds the report’s recom-

mendations for gender-affirming care in minors to be “concerning regardless of authorship,” as they believe that gender-affirming treatment “saves lives.” In their statement, Kirsch raised the question of why Byrne was able to co-author the report, whereas trans activists or academics “who have been fighting for decades” were “not in the position to contribute.”


TransMIT, an affinity group for transgender community members, did not respond to *The Tech*’s request for comment by the time of publication.

In a written statement to *The Tech*, Byrne admitted that he had reservations about being a co-author of the report, as he did not want to be associated with the “cruel and entirely unnecessary language” about transgender people in Trump’s executive orders. However, Byrne ultimately believes that there were benefits in contributing to the report. “An evidence-based accurate report is much better for everyone (especially for young people with gender dysphoria),” Byrne wrote. Overall, he found the report “both objective and well-argued,” citing the *Washington Post* editorial board’s article that considered it a “careful, thorough, and definitely skeptical tour through the subject [of gender-affirming care].”

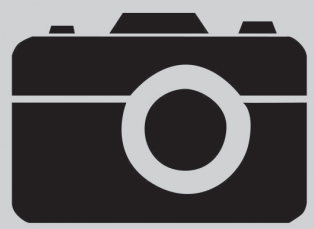
Byrne disagrees with the open letter’s claim that he lacked the “requisite expertise” for the report, stating that his previous work is based on psychology, biology, and sexology. As for his decision to collaborate with the Trump administration, Byrne argues that MIT as a whole ‘collaborates’ with the government, pointing to the Lincoln Lab’s federal funding through sources like the U.S. Air Force.

Byrne believes that the letter is not a “constructive way” to criticize a colleague for “professional ethical lapses” and “errors of judgment.” However, Byrne said that he is open to addressing concerns about the report and talking with people who share different perspectives. “Most claims in philosophy are hotly disputed, so no one should be fazed if another controversy is added,” Byrne wrote.


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# The Broad Institute lays off 75 employees

*The layoffs are a result of a reduced budget due to NIH research funding cuts*

By Vivian Hir  
NEWS EDITOR

On June 26, Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard Director Todd Golub announced in an email to the Broad community that the Institute laid off 75 employees because of anticipated federal research funding cuts. Of the laid-off employees, 53 held administrative roles, and 22 worked in the Data Science Platform (DSP) or the Center for the Development of Therapeutics (CDoT).

The DSP is a technology group that develops data science applications for biomedical research, while the CDoT is a center focused on drug discovery and therapeutics research. Previously, in October 2024, 87 Broad Institute employees were laid off, 75 of whom were in the DSP. 16 CDoT employees were laid off in May 2024.

“We approached this process with utmost concern for those affected,” Senior Media Relations Manager Karen Zusi-Tran wrote in a statement to *The Tech*. “Each of these individuals has made important contributions to Broad, and we are making professional outplacement services available to help position each of them for the next stage of their career.”

The layoffs were announced at the Broad Institute community update meeting on March 25. In

the meeting, Golub stated that the NIH’s proposed 15% indirect cost cap could lead to a loss of \$50 million in research funding. To make up for these cuts, the Institute is reducing personnel and non-personnel costs across various areas, which includes staff reductions. According to Zusi-Tran, the 75 laid-off positions reduced the Institute’s workforce by less than 4%.

In his email, Golub stated that the Institute tried to maximize savings in non-personnel costs to minimize the number of layoffs. In particular, the Institute slashed the food and planned events budget, downsized the annual scientific retreat, and reduced the parking subsidy, among other benefit cuts.

To reduce personnel expenditures, the Broad has limited or frozen salary increases. Altogether, the cost reductions add up to around \$42 million, which is approximately 5% of the annual budget. Golub stated that the executive leadership team does not anticipate more layoffs unless future circumstances become “considerably worse” than expected.

“Broad is now slightly smaller, but our aspiration remains unchanged: to continue to be the flexible, nimble, and catalytic force that the larger biomedical research community relies on,” Golub wrote.



The Richard N. Merkin Building of the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard on June 30, 2025.

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# Virgin is best when Lorde is wide open

Lorde’s fourth album ranges from profound to underwhelming to emphatically bad

★★★★☆

Virgin

Lorde

Universal Music New Zealand and Republic Records

June 27, 2025

By Sabine Chu  
ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR

The release years of Lorde’s albums are always 1 mod 4: the messy, overwhelming afterglow of U.S. presidential elections, 29-day-Februarys, and gymnasts sticking every landing at the Summer Olympics. Her music has always been appropriately verklempt. In 2013, *Pure Heroine* redefined teen angst and braggadocio. 2017’s *Melodrama* did the same for young adult heartbreak. But when the pandemic warped everyone’s psyche, Lorde was no exception: *Solar Power* (2021) was more sigh than snarl, full of acoustic guitars and anodyne paeans to the beach.

*Virgin*, released on June 27, sees the singer return to her roots: big feelings, electronic instrumentals, and the city. This ruinously introspective former child star wants to know what it means to go, to come back, to come clean, to become again. She’s also interested in *coming*: despite the name, *Virgin* is her most explicit album, and its standout tracks are its least safe for work.

Lorde, a.k.a. Ella Marija Lani Yelich-O’Connor, is off birth control and extraordinarily horny (“Hammer”). She’s also grappling with her gender identity (“Man

of the Year”), in recovery from an eating disorder (“Broken Glass”), striving for her mother’s validation (“Favourite Daughter”), single after many years of dating old(er) men (“David”) — and still doing hard drugs (“What Was That”). What, she asks, is the cost of unfucking your life? Can you even do that? Should you even try?

The answering 11-track album is hit-or-miss. At her best, Lorde channels the energy of her first two albums; at her worst, she’s inane in new and unwelcome ways. *Virgin* marks her first album co-produced by Jim-E Stack. Previously, the two collaborated on her 2024 cover of “Take Me to the River,” a fun but forgettable ditty that exactly zero people thought would replace the Talking Heads’ version. Later that year, Stack helped write Charli XCX’s “Girl, so confusing featuring lorde,” the Internet-breaking track that restarted Brat Summer and firmly reintroduced Yelich-O’Connor to the world of electropop.

On *Virgin*, Stack often uses a trick from his work on Caroline Polachek’s mind-melting fantasia “Welcome To My Island”: just letting the woman *sing*. Lorde’s voice, mature at 28, is a wailing, octave-hopping delight, and when she provides her own backing vocals on “Clearblue,” she sounds raw and real, filtered but absent of instrumentals.

At other points, Stack’s light touch feels more like negligence, especially when *Virgin*’s lyrics, usually the highlights of Lorde’s projects, range from profound to underwhelming to emphatically bad. Often, she returns to old standards: Lorde? Warbling about summer to a minimal beat? *Groundbreaking!* (One can’t help but ask: would Jack Antonoff have let her do this?)

Still, this tumultuous cycle might just be part of growing up, and after all, Lorde is a master of the endless loop. You can easily spend hours listening to “Ribbs” or

“Green Light” over and over again — pacing your childhood bedroom, flopping onto the mattress, staring at the ceiling: too far to touch, same as it ever was. Every listen reveals a new flaw in your character, a new reason you should have said yes, a new counterargument to a point made years ago. “I’ll come get my things, but I can’t let go,” Lorde sings. Neither can you.

The best songs on *Virgin* have that *infinite* quality. “What Was That,” the album’s lead single, was released on April 24. According to Last.fm, I’ve listened to it 69 times since. The pulsing beat could’ve come straight out of *Melodrama*; the lyrics are both specific enough to be confessional (“I wear smoke like a wedding veil”) and general enough to be relatable (“I want you just like that”). Listening to it, you itch to dance.

As breakup anthems go, however, “What Was That” is surpassed by “Current Affairs,” a simmering, vulnerable track that calls out to Lorde’s lover, her mother, and the listener. The post-chorus samples Dexta Daps’ song “Morning Love,” a triumphant, explicit ode to intercourse, but Lorde is more cautious: she tells us that she’s “so scared.” Yelich-O’Connor is a human being who makes stupid choices — watching the Pamela Anderson/Tommy Lee sex tape and initially thinking that it’s “pure and true,” or dating a man who blames his bad behavior on the titular “current affairs” — but her admissions of failure make the song more human.

The album’s second-most explicit track, “Clearblue,” named after the pregnancy test, frames intimacy as a way to better conceive of the *self*. Lorde mixes metaphors in an attempt to explain this thesis, but nothing feels contrived. The lover-as-excavator slings his “metal detector” into her “precious treasure” and pushes his “helix... right through” her. Despite a few inanities (“How’s it feel being

this alive?”), Lorde is at her strongest and most honest singing about being “so bare in the throes.”

On the other hand, the lilting “GRWM” is just dumb. When Lorde exults in her status as a “grown woman in a baby tee,” you wonder about the merits on which she claims the first few words — isn’t this song named after a TikTok trend? Am I about to watch her dab her face with concealer to a soothing, AI-generated lofi tune? Like the lowest points of *Solar Power*, the track’s insubstantial lyrics match its boringly airy instrumentals.

Similarly, the lines “In the gym, I’m exorcising / All my demons” in “If She Could See Me Now” are breathtakingly stupid. I’m reminded of Lucy Dacus, another great indie pop artist who put out a somewhat disappointing fourth effort this year. When a good lyricist turns to word-play, whether it’s Dacus asking her lesbian partner to “come out, come out wherever you are” or Lorde smugly announcing that she “lifted [her ex’s] body weight,” you know something is off.

Ultimately, I don’t think it’s a coincidence that my least favorite songs are those where Lorde feels most purportedly empowered. Yelich-O’Connor flatly stating “last year was bad” on “Broken Glass,” then describing the symptoms of her eating disorder, is much more touching than her crowing “2009 me’d be so impressed” on “GRWM.” Deep down, we don’t want our superstars to polish themselves into shiny objects, especially not the ones who become famous for a song that starts “I’ve never seen a diamond in the flesh.” On “Shapeshifter,” where dizzy instrumentals swirl around stream-of-consciousness staccato musings, Lorde tells us, “I’ve been up on the pedestal / But tonight I just wanna fall.” Maybe I’m just another “hot mess in an antique skirt,” but in my mind, there’s nothing more grown than realizing how lost you truly are.

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MEET THE MINDS

Connecting the brain and the mind

Dr. Danlei Chen on her work as a postdoc at the Lewis Lab and her role as Corresponding Secretary of the MIT Postdoc Association



PHOTO PROVIDED BY DANLEI CHEN

Dr. Danlei Chen is a postdoc in the Lewis Lab, where she works with innovative technologies to study the brain.

By Veronika Moroz  
SCIENCE EDITOR

When you finish reading this sentence, close your eyes and picture a river.

While you might not be around any bodies of water right now, your brain is still able to recreate the image of one. How this works is one of the many questions that fascinates Dr. Danlei Chen, a Postdoctoral Associate in the Lewis Lab. Dr. Chen, who is also the Corresponding Secretary of the MIT Postdoctoral Association (PDA), sat down with *The Tech* last week to talk about her research and the community she's found through her work.

It "makes me feel purposeful"

Dr. Chen describes herself as "a neuroscientist, a psychologist, and a bit of a programmer." The goal of her research is to develop and utilize new tools to investigate the connection between a human's physical brain and their thoughts and behaviors.

The same prediction abilities that allow your brain to imagine a river also enable your brain to elevate your blood pressure before you stand up so you don't faint, and how you know where to put your pencil to write letters. Scientists like Dr. Chen think these prediction abilities might play a major role in optimizing energy.

"Your brain's primary mission is to try to regulate your body in the most energy ef-

ficient way possible," Dr. Chen said. At the same time, humans are wired with memories, cognition, and sleep. The reasons our brains do these things are not well understood, or even "well-hypothesized."

An international student from China, Dr. Chen first came to the United States as an undergraduate student at the University of Rochester, where she initially planned on majoring in finance and took on multiple finance internships. She recalled feeling like she was missing opportunities for growth. After taking some cognitive science classes, she fell in love with the subject and completed a Bachelors in Brain and Cognitive Science.

"Build[ing] code to record the brain makes me feel purposeful," Dr. Chen stated. It's "my calling that I can do without feeling like I'm doing work. It's kind of like one of my interests, like knitting or playing tennis."

Her primary research focus now is sleep. In the quest to understand why people sleep, researchers often look at the motion of cerebrospinal fluid, a watery substance surrounding the brain and pooling in its cavities. In addition to providing a cushion for the brain, cerebrospinal fluid acts like a sewer system for brain cells.

"We think the brain produces large waves of neural [electrical] signals" to drive cerebrospinal fluid flow while you sleep, she said, carrying waste products out of your brain so that you wake up feeling "refreshed."

This research has the potential to unlock treatments for neurological diseases like Parkinson's or Alzheimer's, where deteriorating tissues increase the size of brain cavities. Just like changing riverbanks may cause a river to bend in some spots and pool in others, tissue decay in Alzheimer's and Parkinson's patients may cause an irregular cerebrospinal fluid flowing pattern. This could lead to a waste buildup that causes "even worse types of tissue damage," Dr. Chen said, accelerating the progress of the disease.

Though understanding what healthy fluid flow looks like isn't necessarily enough to treat these diseases, Dr. Chen stressed that without an understanding of healthy fluid flow, there's little possibility of "understanding the pathology and even having drugs to help people." Describing curiosity-driven scientific discovery and scientific problem-solving as "inseparable" forms of research, she remarked, "I think [scientists] as individuals are contributing in both ways, but the percentage of efforts maybe going to one more than the other."

"They're my people"

Dr. Chen earned her PhD in Psychology and Neuroscience from Northeastern University in 2023, after six years of work, part of which happened during the COVID-19 pandemic. The uncertainty of conducting scientific research during COVID was particularly hard with her family "all the way in China," where all they could do was send "thoughts and prayers."

Despite the challenges, Dr. Chen emphasized, "Things would have been harder if I wasn't doing something that I truly loved." The experience brought her closer to her friends and colleagues and mentors, who "stepped in and checked in" on her.

"That's when I realized that they are not just people that I work with or people that I share a similar interest with, but they're the people around me and they're my people," Dr. Chen recalled. "Without that, I don't think I'd be able to have a good enough well-being in general, or be able to survive in a particularly hard time and by myself in another country."

That sense of community was one of the reasons Dr. Chen ran for Corresponding Secretary of the Postdoc Association (PDA) almost a year ago. As Corresponding Secretary, her job is to foster communication between the PDA officers and the general postdoc population, and also advocate for better salaries, housing opportunities, and postdoc-PI mentorship.

She initially focused on increasing connections between postdocs through fun activities and retreats, but her focus has since shifted. The current budget proposal for the 2026 Fiscal Year on the National Science Foundation (NSF) website features a 91.4% decrease in post doctoral funding, eliminating eight different funding programs.

Their rush to cancel grants and defund scientific projects is especially hard for postdocs, Dr. Chen admitted, "because we see ourselves as future academics."

"The scientists that these cuts are directly impacting have very little to do [with the decision-making]," Dr. Chen said, "even though we're the producers of the science, and we're the makers of these experiments."

The situation is particularly hard for international postdocs, who make up 60 to 70 percent of MIT's postdoc population. Dr. Chen stated, "If we get fired, then there's very little room for us to look for another type of job or in a similar field." With their jobs tied to their working visas, their housing, and their health insurance, MIT's over 900 international postdocs are living one funding cut away from losing the lives they've built in the US.

"MIT is really great because they created this type of welcoming environment for us, and that is honestly quite unique, even in the top-tier universities in America," Dr. Chen said. But now, she knows postdocs who have lost their funding and have left the country. They may even leave their fields for good.

"That's really just a loss," Dr. Chen stated, "not just for the school or for this country, but as an international community with a very similar mission."

Shouldering the burden

Though her work schedule is relatively "flexible," in the summer, she comes to the lab often so that she can be a mentor for undergraduate researchers. She also gives reports and runs meetings. She runs experiments and helps with other people's experiments, including nightly ones from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. where she can analyze the subjects' brain waves while they sleep.

For the rest of the time, Dr. Chen writes code to analyze her data and brainstorms new research questions, which "can happen anywhere," from her home office to her lab to even on airplanes.

The work is hard, but it feels harder when "you're not sure whether funding will continue, or whether you can do your next experiment, or whether your employment is safe or not," Dr. Chen admitted, describing the uncertainty as a "layer of burden on your shoulder."

"We do what we can, but we can't really direct the trend, and that makes me feel, honestly, very helpless from time to time," she commented.

Meanwhile, she continues her research, motivated both by her intellectual curiosity and by the relationships she's formed. "This is my community now," she concluded. "There's very little possibility that I will steer away, not from the science, but from the people."

*The Meet the Minds series focuses on creating holistic profiles of scientists at MIT. If you or someone you know is interested in being interviewed about the role your science plays in your life, please reach out to Science Editor Veronika Moroz at tt-science-editors@mit.edu.*

Does your name start with Jo?

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[2658] Coffee Cup Holes

Q:  
HOW MANY HOLES ARE THERE IN A COFFEE CUP?

TOPOLOGIST

ONE.

NORMAL PERSON

IDK, DOES THE OPENING COUNT AS A HOLE?

PHILOSOPHER

TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION, CONSIDER ANOTHER: IF WE DRILL A HOLE IN THE SIDE, HOW MANY HOLES ARE THERE NOW?

CHEMIST

$10^{21}$  IN THE CAFFEINE ALONE

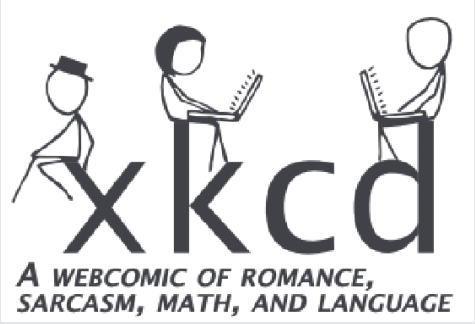
Theoretical physicist: At the Planck length, uncountably many.

[1738] Moon Shapes

INTERPRETING THE SHAPE OF THE MOON IN ART

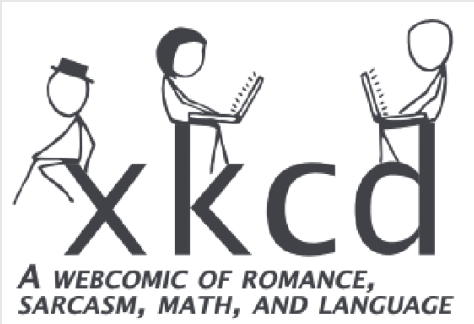
SHAPE	NORMAL?
	✓
	✓
	✓
	✗ NOT POSSIBLE AT NIGHT
	✗
	✗
	✗
	✓ LOOKS OK
	✗ THERE'S EITHER A HOLE IN THE MOON OR A NUCLEAR WAR ON ITS SURFACE

Whenever I see a picture of the moon where the points go more than halfway around, I assume it's being eclipsed by one of those Independence Day ships and interpret the rest of the image in light of that.



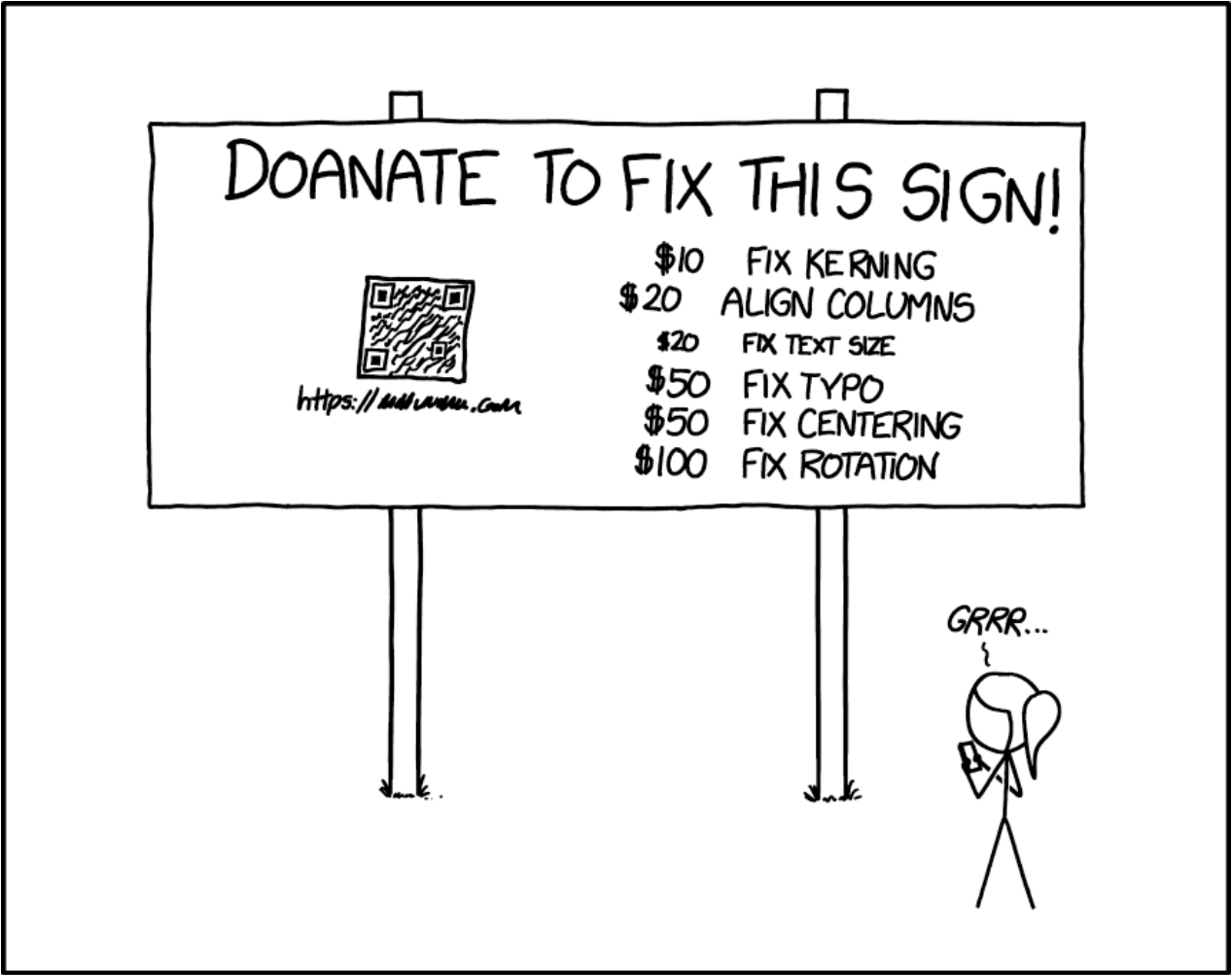
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by Randall Munroe

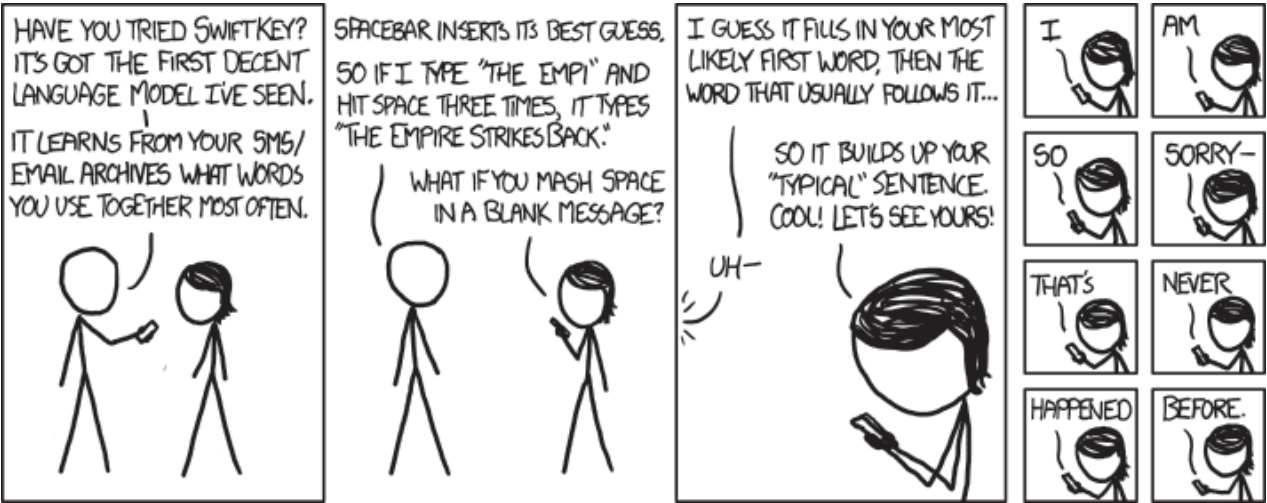
[3113] Fix This Sign



MY NEW COMPANY'S BUSINESS MODEL IS  
BASED ON EXTORTING GRAPHIC DESIGNERS.

We're building on our earlier success getting web developers to pay to change the backslashes in our displayed payment URL to forward slashes.

[1068] Swiftkey

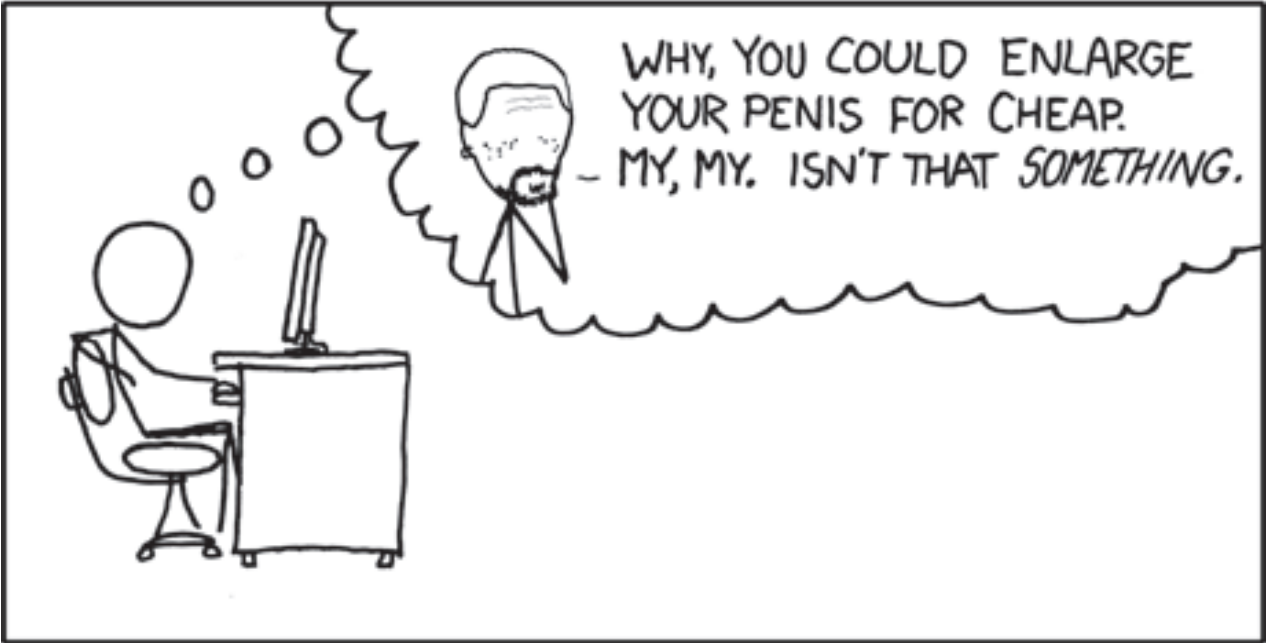


Although the Markov chain-style text model is still rudimentary, it recently gave me "Massachusetts Institute of America" Although I have to admit it sounds prestigious.

[462] Freemanic Paracusia

FREEMANIC PARACUSIA:

A DISORDER WHEREIN YOU HEAR EVERYTHING YOU READ  
IN THE COMFORTING VOICE OF MORGAN FREEMAN.



It's amazing what it does for YouTube comments.



# Yes, It’s Genocide. Time to Back Divestment.

The Tech *should stop publishing pieces that denying the reality of genocide and ongoing mass atrocities against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Instead, it should embrace divestment.*

By Richard Solomon

*In Jabalia camp, a mother collects her daughter’s flesh in a piggy bank, hoping to buy her a plot on a river in a faraway land.*  
-Mosab Abu Toha, from “Under the Rubble”

As a political scientist, I’m troubled by *The Tech’s* decision to publish recent pieces denying the reality of genocide and ongoing mass atrocities against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. A column published on June 12th dismisses the genocide reference in Megha Vemuri’s speech as “bombastic language” that gives no room for pro-Israel students’ own “moral reasoning.” A column published on June 5th alleges that the destruction of homes and civilian infrastructure is “the result of military objectives” because there are Hamas tunnels beneath them, and so it cannot be a genocide. The author then denies that Israeli authorities have blocked the flow of “food, water, fuel, electricity, medicine” into Gaza.

A column on September 5, 2024 devotes extensive attention to denying the genocide, claiming that Israel is not committing a genocide in Gaza because it is not targeting “Palestinians in Jordan, Chile, Saudi Arabia, [and] Egypt” and because the “population of Gaza is growing.” The author makes discredited and misleading claims about the civilian-to-combatant ratio being “2:1” and alleges, against the humanitarian consensus both at the time and since, that Israel “is allowing more than sufficient food into Gaza.” A column on May 30, 2024 similarly claims there is “a ratio of roughly 1 combatant to 1.5 civilians. Given Hamas’ likely inflation of the death count, the real figure could be closer to 1 to 1. Either way, the number would be historically low for modern urban warfare.”

Would *The Tech*, for instance, give a platform to the significant share of Americans who believe that vaccines cause autism, that anthropogenic climate change is a hoax, and that Native Americans no longer exist?

Newspapers are not obliged to give voice to the full range of opinions on an issue. Would *The Tech*, for instance, give a platform to the significant share of Americans who believe that vaccines cause autism, that anthropogenic climate change is a hoax, and that Native Americans no longer exist? I hope not. Holocaust denial and pseudoscience like homeopathy, eugenics, and phrenology remain at the margins of discourse partly because newspapers refuse to platform those ideologies. This is a good thing.

In the case of occupied Palestine, newspapers should represent the truth. The consensus position of genocide scholars is that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. It is the point of departure for the field’s top journal, *Journal of Genocide Research* as well as the president of the International Association for Genocide Scholars. Perhaps surprisingly for some readers, these academic authorities include Jewish and Israeli scholars of genocide: Raz Segal, Shmuel Lederman, Omer Bartov, Debórah Dwork, Barry Trachtenberg, Nitzan Lebovic, William Schabas, Amos Goldberg, Aryeh Neier, and Daniel Blatman. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have both released detailed reports concluding Israel’s actions in Gaza are genocidal, as has the United Nations’ top expert on Palestine, Francesca Albanese. In December 2023, the International Court of Justice ruled 15-2 in *South Africa v. Israel* that the charge of genocide was plausible, and the court issued emergency orders to Israel to avoid the further loss of

Palestinian life and infrastructure, which Israel promptly ignored.

Newspapers have a duty to bear witness to mass atrocities and contribute to their remedy, not to trivialize or deny they are happening.

Evidence for the genocide characterization is overwhelming. Over 21 months, Israeli forces have dropped about 100,000 tons of explosives on the Gaza Strip, a coastal enclave about two-thirds the size of Chicago. It is one of most impoverished places in the world, where 2.2 million people, half of them children, have lived under blockade by air, land, and sea for 18 years. By April 2024, UN rapporteurs reported that Israeli forces have destroyed 80% of the schools, 70% of the housing stock, leveled all 12 universities in Gaza, and damaged or destroyed 31 of the 36 hospitals, along with 195 heritage sites, 13 public libraries, 227 mosques, three churches, and the Central Archives. By January 2025, Israel had reportedly destroyed 92% of all housing units and 88% of Gaza’s infrastructure, including roads, electric grids, and sewage lines. The destruction has since continued: hospitals restored to partial capacity are then bombed again.

The scale and indiscriminate nature of the destruction indicates a manifest intent to erase the presence of Palestinians and render the infrastructure of the Gaza Strip unable to support life. In the words of one IOF commander to his troops, “Before you leave, you burn down the house — every house. This is backed up at the battalion commander level. It’s so that they won’t be able to return.” Or as the director general of one of Israel’s governing parties acknowledged after returning from active duty in Gaza: “Yes, we set fire to houses. To as many as possible. And we are proud of it.” A Palestinian survivor in Beit Lahiya described it thus: “The city has been subjected to massive destruction of buildings and infrastructure, in an attempt to force the remaining residents to leave. There is no food or water, and we currently face a real famine. It’s a genocide against the residents and the displaced people who are sheltering here.” Private contractors are reportedly being paid \$1,500 per house they demolish.

Mass evacuation orders, such as the October 2023 order to 1.1 million Palestinians to leave the north, are another tactic designed to force civilians to flee, often multiple times, under threat of being designated a combatant and killed. As of May 2025, some 70% of Gaza is currently under forced displacement orders or ‘no-go’ zones. As one soldier admitted last year “it’s permissible to shoot everyone [in there], a young girl, an old woman.” Palestinian survivors describe hellish conditions of trying to flee the tanks and airstrikes: “It felt like the entire city was dying.” According to another Israeli officer, “the idea is ultimately to push everyone into Al-Mawasi and turn a single neighborhood into the home of two million people, fenced in and controlled by the military, with access only through checkpoints, and the only place where humanitarian aid is brought in... The army doesn’t use the words ‘ghetto’ or ‘ethnic cleansing’ [but] it’s a *de facto* ghetto.”

This campaign to inflict conditions of life intended to bring about the ethnic or national group’s physical destruction is reinforced by the humanitarian siege on Gaza, which cut off water, food, gas, medicine, and has led to well-documented starvation. The siege was imposed at its most extreme levels first in October 2023 and ratcheted again in March 2025. In between, Israel has also severely restricted supplies. Most electricity has been cut, and the army has turned aid distribution points into what one soldier calls “a killing field” where senior commanders give orders to fire into unarmed crowds:

“They’re treated like a hostile force — no crowd-control measures, no tear gas — just live fire with everything imaginable: heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, mortars.” On February 28, 2024, Israel committed the “flour massacre” when at least 118 Palestinians were killed and 760 injured after Israeli forces opened fire while the Palestinians were seeking food from aid trucks. Last week, on June 17, 2025 Israeli tanks opened fire into a crowd trying to get aid from trucks, killing at least 59 people.

These are not isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern of conduct by the Israeli government to induce famine and disease epidemics: the destruction of agricultural lands that could feed the population, the criminalization and defunding of the U.N. Relief and Works Agency, routine targeting of bakeries, food kitchens and aid convoys, closures of the northern Erez, Al-Muntar, Rafah and Kerem Shalom border crossing, cascading logistic and permitting bottlenecks, and the creation of new ‘aid sites’ run by U.S. mercenaries, which witnesses describe as the “hunger games” and soldiers describe as a “red light, green light” with machine guns. The horrors of this starvation campaign have been recounted in detail by Palestinians themselves as well as scholars of famine.

Newspapers have a duty to bear witness to mass atrocities and contribute to their remedy, not to trivialize or deny they are happening. As the poet Mosab Abu Toha wrote recently about his companion, “what Sabir wants is food, medicine, diapers, and a decent home rather than a tent. He wants what all Palestinians want — not to line up for aid packages, not to fight over flour, but to eat the foods that our own hands grow.” The alternative to this humanizing endeavor is that the public develops a warped view of reality or becomes increasingly jaded to mass violence. As one Israeli lawmaker Zvi Sukkot bragged recently, “tonight we killed nearly 100 people in Gaza, and no one cares. Because everyone has become used to the fact that 100 Palestinians can be killed in a single night.” In the words of an Israeli soldier, “Gaza doesn’t interest anyone anymore... The loss of human life means nothing.” A grieving father Jabir Abu Leila who survived the executions in Gaza’s north repeated this sentiment: “My sons died, and the majority of the people died. No one cares about our death. No one cares about ending this genocide. What is our fault?”

Genocide is a crime of intent. It is revealed not simply by the pattern of conduct by Israeli forces but by the stated desires of Israeli officials. Expressions are made at all levels of the Israeli government advocating for the destruction of Gaza, its starvation, the annihilation of its people and their memory, their collective guilt and sub-human nature, the coercion of people into fleeing without the possibility of return, and Gaza’s eventual repopulation by Israeli Jewish settlers. This includes statements made by the Israeli President, Prime Minister, both Defense Ministers, Ministers of National Security, Finance, Energy, Settlements, and other members of cabinet. It includes parliament lawmakers and major opinion shapers in the press and television.

On military policy, intent to destroy Gaza is vocalized by the Commander-in-

Chief of the IDF, the Army Spokesman, the Chief of the Military Rabbinate, as well as scores of field commanders and soldiers. For instance, one Brigadier General Yehuda Vach says that “there are no innocents in Gaza... Every woman is a scout, or a man in disguise.” Making good on that policy, he attempted to drive out 250,000 Palestinians from the north and set-up “kill zones” in the Netzarim corridor, where anyone can be labeled a terrorist and killed. In the words of Major General Giora Eiland, former head of the Israeli National Security Council and adviser to the defense minister, the goal of the war is “to create conditions where life in Gaza becomes unsustainable” so that “Gaza will become a place where no human being can exist.”

This expressed intent, which shapes the evolving pattern of state violence, represents the Israeli populace. According to recent polling, about 80% of Israeli Jews believe that Palestinians from Gaza should be ‘transferred’ to other countries, and about half believe that the Israeli army should “kill all its inhabitants.” The recent proposal by President Trump to kill or expel all Palestinians in Gaza to make room for beach resorts has undoubtedly added fuel to these desires. As Netanyahu flatly stated in May 2025, “We are demolishing more and more houses, they have nowhere to return to...The only logical outcome would be the desire of the Gazans to emigrate abroad. Our main problem is finding countries willing to receive them.” As the war deepens, the prospect of further war-time radicalization within the Israeli military apparatus concerns me deeply. Those students of history may recall that the stories of the Holocaust and Armenian genocide get much darker after Operation Barbarossa and the loss of Sarikamish respectively.

No two genocides are completely alike, but the Holocaust can teach us lessons about the nature of genocide relevant to the present.

But one does not have to look to history to understand the horrors Palestinians face now. I will give you examples from my own small witness. I saw the black charred body of a young man trembling in agony and shock, who had taken shelter at a school that was hit by Israeli airstrikes. I watched displaced children gather leftover pasta shells in the dirt to fill their empty bellies. I then watched a tearful Palestinian father describe surviving a massacre at an aid site in Khan Younis. Another child from Rafah shared about his own mother who was martyred searching for a sack of flour: “either aid comes with dignity or we don’t want it. My mother was martyred. Before her, my brother was killed in this war.” On Father’s Day, I saw a young man carrying his dead father on a bike after he was shot trying to secure a bag of flour. I thought of my own father and how deeply I love him, and how distressed I would be to carry his body on my bicycle. On June 16, I saw the bloodied, unconscious bodies of children bombed in a refugee tent.

## OPINION POLICY

### Management

The Opinion department is collectively managed by the Editorial Board of *The Tech*, which consists of the Publisher, Editor-in-Chief, Managing Editor, Executive Editor, and Opinion Editor.

### Editorials

Editorials are the official opinion of *The Tech*. They are written by the Editorial Board.

### Guest Submissions

A Guest Submission, which may be designated as either a Guest Column or a Letter to the Editor, may be written and submitted by any member of the MIT community.

Guest Columns express a particular opinion on campus-relevant matters;

and a Letter to the Editor is an open letter addressed directly to the “Editor,” in reference to a Guest Columns express a particular opinion on campus-relevant matters; and a Letter to the Editor is an open letter addressed directly to the “Editor,” in reference to a particular piece or set of pieces published.

Electronic submissions are encouraged and should be sent to [tt-opinions@mit.edu](mailto:tt-opinions@mit.edu). Hard copy submissions should be addressed to *The Tech*, P.O. Box 391529, Cambridge, Mass. 02139-7029, or sent by interdepartmental mail to Room W20-483. Electronic submissions will be prioritized over hard copy submissions. All submissions are due on Thursday two weeks before the date of publication (i.e. by the publication prior to the target publication).



One day last month, I saw Israeli bulldozers destroy Gaza’s last kidney dialysis center. Then I saw dozens of small corpses litter the ground as Israeli tanks and gunmen fired on starving refugees. I listened to the final words of a paramedic before he was executed. I saw an apartment building destroyed by air to surface missiles, and Israeli bulldozers destroy a house in Khan Younis and a hospital. I saw journalist Wadea Abu al-Saoud hold up a plastic bag with the blood-soaked brains of a human being. I watched an aerial video of a small child dragging an empty water tank as a drone operator pressed the trigger and killed him. I saw images of an emaciated child, skin on bones. I saw a girl’s corpse pulled from the rubble without a skull, and then I watched US mercenaries oversee thousands of starving people running in the dust and fighting over aid packages like the hunger games. This was one day, and it has only become worse. Recently, another 17 were killed in Deir Al-Balah in airstrikes, their entrails littering the street.

It is chillingly common to see confusion about this violence and its scale. I will mention two such confusions and connect it to my own field of political science. One claim published in other places as well as *The Tech* is that the civilian to combatant ratio is low, potentially 1.5:1 or 1:1. As a political scientist, I’d say three things about this. First, Palestinian combatants, as members of an occupied people, have the right in international law to resist their occupiers by force of arms, provided they follow the laws of war. Protocol I to the Geneva Convention is clear about this. Israel has no right to kill them even if they are combatants. It has the right and the duty to accept a ceasefire, end the occupation, and recognize the equal rights of Palestinians.

Second, the fact that tens of thousands of people are being directly killed, even if “only” half or 60% of them are civilians, is still a heinous crime and should not be trivialized, to say nothing of the tens of thousands injured, and the many more dying of malnutrition, disease, and despair. This is especially true when the path to a permanent ceasefire is straightforward and only requires U.S. political commitment. The claim that the civilian casualty rate is “historically low for modern urban warfare” is also not true. In fact, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health records, which have been repeatedly vetted and deemed a reliable baseline by demographers and public health authorities, over 50% of those killed by violent death in Gaza are women or under the age of 18. This is already more than *double* the proportion in almost every other conflict in the 21st century and possibly since the second world war.

The truth is many genocides, especially those in colonial or frontier societies, begin with precipitating events like October 7th.

Third, the claim about ratios is untrue. It is not possible to know precisely how many of the dead were killed during combat. The Ministry of Health in Gaza does not indicate the military status of those killed, and their data of course are known to be vast undercounts of violent deaths because the ministry requires identifiable bodies to be brought to a hospital, and many bodies are unidentifiable, still under rubble, or were buried by families separately. Mortality studies based on phone surveys and Facebook obituaries separately find that the ministry is underestimating violent deaths by 40%. Nevertheless, the most recent release of martyrs documents 55,202 people killed between October 7, 2023 and June 15, 2025. Of those, 17,120 (31%) are children below the age of eighteen, 9,636 (17.5%) are women aged 18-64, and 2,736 (4.9%) are ages 65 and older. What about civilian men aged 18-64? If we assume that civilian men are killed at the same rate as women, then based on 2025 age structure estimates for the Gaza Strip by the U.S. census, 9,690 men or 17.6% of those 55,202 people killed are also civilians. The civilian share comes up to 71%.

However, this equal rate assumption is wrong. Men are more likely to be labeled as targets, more likely to leave shelter in search of food, water, or fuel, and more likely to work in dangerous roles like aid

workers or first responders. Ministry of Health data reinforce this assumption, showing adolescent boys are more likely to be killed than girls the same age, and elderly men are more likely to be killed than women the same age. In fact, if adult civilian men are 1.5 - 2.2x more likely to be killed than adult civilian women, then the list comprises anywhere from 80% - 92% civilians. This is in the ballpark of peer-reviewed epidemiological models, as well as one estimate by Israeli forces themselves which, despite their incentives to downplay mass civilian death, still admitted in May 2025 that 82% of people killed in Gaza since Israel broke the ceasefire were uninvolved in fighting. Israeli forces have reportedly authorized strikes on targets where the “allowed” ratio of collateral damage to combatant is up to 300:1. In many incidents, hundreds of civilians have been killed in massacres where no apparent military activity was taking place.

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Why is Israel doing this? It’s commonly argued that, since Hamas uses a widespread network of tunnels under Gaza’s civilian population, civilian casualties are unintentional consequences of military actions, and therefore not genocidal. Instead of dismissing this claim, we should take it seriously: it can help us understand the nature of mass violence. Students of the Holocaust will note that similar pretexts were offered by the Nazis to justify the destruction of the ghettos of Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine, where Jewish fighting groups had made extensive use of subterranean tunnels and sewers. For instance, the German governor of Warsaw Ludwig Fischer issued a proclamation on May 13, 1943 for the destruction of Warsaw Ghetto, arguing that the “Jewish quarter has thus been turned into a nest for all supporters of the Bolshevik ideology” and that Bolshevism “reveals its true face with typical terrorist attacks against Warsaw.” In the proclamation, he was referring to the recent discovery of 22,000 Polish officers massacred by the Soviets and buried in mass graves in Katyn. The SS commander Jürgen Stroop noted in his journal that the ghetto’s resistance to “voluntary resettlement” reinforced the need to take a heavy hand against the “terrorists.”

No two genocides are completely alike, but the Holocaust can teach us lessons about the nature of genocide relevant to the present. One lesson is that Nazi claims about the Jewish population supporting the Bolshevik Party or approving of Soviet crimes such as the Katyn massacre were lies, similar to the lie that all or even the majority of Gaza’s population supported Hamas on the eve of the October 7 attack or were involved in its planning. The majority of Jews in eastern Europe were not Bolsheviks, and the majority of Bolshevik party members (over 93% of party members) were not Jews. But there was a grain of truth in the Judeo-Bolshevik myth, central to White Russian and later Nazi propaganda, that was exploited in the racial anxieties and siege mentality of the Germans and their accomplices. In a similar way, Palestinian support for Hamas, which is in some places significant, is interpreted in the mind of the Zionist leaders as evidence for the need to oversee a people’s destruction. This destruction is characterized as necessary for Jewish safety.

From our vantage point, the crimes of the Nazis and their accomplices are obvious. The Judeo-Bolshevik propaganda that linked an event like the Katyn massacre to the need to cleanse the ghettos of the supposedly pro-Soviet Jewry seems ludicrous to us because we have no guilt or shame over the events in question. No emotional stake in being innocent. But for those living in Germany in 1943, it was tempting to think that the liquidation of the Ghetto was unpleasant but necessary for public safety. After all, the stereotype of the Soviet-aligned Jew was not a complete hallucination. In the lead-up and aftermath of Jewish emancipation, many Jews in the Pale of Settlement found opportunities for visible political leadership only on the Left, where the promise of participation in revolutionary movements based on universal human values, instead of caste, religion, or ethnicity, held a certain appeal.

Consequently, Jews constituted a quarter of the Bolshevik Party central committee between 1919 and 1921, about a third of the first two Soviet Congresses, half of the Cheka’s office for combating counter-revolution, 15 percent of all “leading” officials of the OGPU (the Cheka’s successor) and

50 percent of its top brass. The first Bolshevik commandants of the Winter Palace and the Moscow Kremlin were Jews, as were the heads of the Soviet delegation at the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, the first party bosses of Moscow and Petrograd, the chairman of the Communist International, the head of the Party Secretariat, and the leader of the Red Army. Jewish names, or names perceived to be Jewish, were prominently associated with the Red Terror: Sverdlov, Yurovsky, Zemliachka, Uritsky. So too with the fathers of communism: Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Kautsky, Zinoviev, etc.

Elsewhere in eastern Europe, Jews were overrepresented in the Polish Communist Party’s central committee (32%), district activists (53.8%), publication apparatus (75%), international department (100%), and Home Secretariat. The short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic (1919) also had conspicuous Jewish leaders like Béla Kun, and German occupiers in Warsaw were correct to a certain degree that many Jews in the ghettos harbored socialist sympathies and that the Jewish and Polish underground did occasionally coordinate with the Soviet front. It is moreover unsurprising that members of the most literate and urbanized minority in the Russian Empire, which had suffered greatly under Tsarist pogroms, would see in the defeat of the Romanovs and the radical promise of equality something worth fighting for. Ambitious members of another minority in their position would have behaved similarly, like the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in the leadup to 1915.

Again, the Judeo-Bolshevik myth was a lie: the vast majority of Cheka and Bolshevik party members were non-Jewish Russians; other minorities like the Latvians overshadowed the Jews in representation within many soviets; Poland’s parliamentary elections in the 1920s indicate that the Jewish share of support for the Communists was less than their share in the population, and Jews in the Soviet leadership did not survive the purges of Joseph Stalin. And yet the status reversals set in motion by the Russian revolution, as well as the unprecedented visibility of Jews in the communist administrations fed into the stereotype of pro-Soviet Jewry as well as the burning resentments of other Eastern Europeans. This shaped the genocidal violence that followed.

Why am I telling you this and what does it have to do with Gaza? By taking the Judeo-Bolshevik myth seriously, we can understand genocide better. Genocide as a crime in international law is haunted by the Holocaust. The Holocaust is the archetype of genocide, and it persists in the popular imagination as a hate crime driven primarily by an irrational racial supremacist ideology. Hollywood cinema, like *Schindler’s List* (1993) or the *Diary of Anne Frank* (1959), reinforces this notion. The objects of its hate crimes are, in Mohammed El-Kurd’s terms, ‘perfect victims’ — passive and agentless. They are also apolitical: Jewish political activity is characterized as a reaction to, and not precursor for, mass perpetrator violence. Thus the Holocaust in its imagined prototype is removed from ‘real’ issues of ‘normal’ ethnic conflict like land, political power, and national security.

For those who believe in the sacredness of all human life, the destruction of Gaza is wrong for the same reason that the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto was wrong.

International law gives weight to that simplistic archetype. The 1951 Genocide Convention, which the American and Soviet delegations crafted to exclude language that could implicate Jim Crow or the Stalinist purges, did not outlaw mass killing on the basis of political identity. It required that genocidal acts target a national, ethnical, racial or religious group “as such,” meaning not for any other reason than their membership in that group. The ‘only reasonable inference’ standard of ICJ jurisprudence — that a pattern of behavior can only be genocidal if genocidal aims are the *only* reasonable inference and not simultaneous with war aims — is a legacy of that restriction. And yet, when I think of depictions of mass atroci-

ties in art, I think of Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica*. The painting commemorates the Nazi aerial bombing of the Basques in 1937 and is perhaps the most famous anti-war artwork in history. However to date, no state power or official has ever been convicted of genocide for carpet bombing cities during war. To do so would have threatened the legitimacy of the victorious Allied powers, who engaged in massive bombing campaigns in Tokyo, Dresden, and Hiroshima, among others.

The Tech has a role to play in the birth of that brighter future.

Consequently, for those genocides that do not appear to fit this unrealistic standard or idealized model of victimhood, or for those settings of mass violence like Gaza where readers are constantly primed by the media to remember the Hamas attack of October 7, the question of genocide can appear to them morally more complex or ‘nuanced’ than the Holocaust. What about Hamas? What about October 7th and the many hundreds of Israeli civilians who were killed on that day? Doesn’t the legitimacy of Israeli security concerns complicate the picture?

The truth is many genocides, especially those in colonial or frontier societies, begin with precipitating events like October 7th. For example, the genocide of the Herero in Namibia began with the Herero massacre of 123-150 German settlers. The genocides of the Yuki in California and the Selk’nam in Tierra del Fuego were preceded by what the white perpetrators considered ‘predatory warfare’ and robbery of settler property. The Rohingya genocide at the hands of the Burmese army and the mass expulsion of a million Rohingya from Rakhine State in 2016-2017 was preceded by deadly attacks by Rohingya insurgents on border guards in October 2016, as well as possible massacres of Hindus, Buddhists, and Mro following the crackdown.

Gaza fits that pattern. A long history of settler expansion and persecution, in this case in the form of the ongoing *Nakba*, culminates in a border raid by native militants. That raid, which can itself be bloody, inflames the ethno-nationalist paranoia and vengeance of the perpetrator group, which uses it as a pretext to inflict callous and overwhelming mass violence. The past 20 years of Holocaust scholarship has actually moved in this analytic direction, toward interpreting the Judeocide within such a framework of political paranoia and ethnic ‘security,’ not just as a mass hate crime based on racial prejudice. For scholars of Palestine, the genocide in Gaza, like the genocides on colonial frontiers, did not start with an instigating event by the natives but is part of a pattern of conflict over land and demography. “The question of genocide,” theorist Patrick Wolfe once wrote, “is never far from discussions of settler colonialism.”

By taking the Judeo-Bolshevik myth seriously, we can understand how the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto after the discovery of the Soviet massacre at Katyn and the ghetto’s embeddedness within the underground resistance made sense as natural and inevitable to many Germans and Poles, the same way the destruction of Gaza after October 7th makes sense as natural and inevitable to many Americans and Israelis. In both cases, the victim’s behavior and the resulting genocidal response are linked in the minds of the perpetrator on the basis of a hysterical and paranoid threat assessment. In no real sense was the Soviet massacre of 22,000 unarmed Polish officers — 8% of whom were Polish Jews — the work of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto, *even if* many were friendly to socialism and the Soviet cause, *even if* they harbored Soviet partisans, *even if* Jews were overrepresented in the Stalinist security directorate, and *even if* some of them were even hiding in the ghetto.

Similarly, in no real sense was the killing of 725 Israeli civilians on October 7th — 9% of whom were Arab Muslims — the work of Palestinians in Gaza, *even if* support for Hamas and its military actions against the occupation is high, and even if there were somehow Hamas tunnels under every hospital, school, and house. For those who believe in the sacredness of all human life, the destruction of Gaza is wrong for the same reason that the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto was wrong. The path forward requires a permanent ceasefire and the release



of all captives, Israeli and Palestinian. It requires the prosecution of the Israeli leadership for crimes against humanity as well as reparations and land reform. In the wake of the Holocaust and South African apartheid, a whole set of mechanisms called transitional justice was pioneered to help traumatized societies recover from mass violence. Why not use it in the Holy Land? To do so, we should first work to end the war so that everyone in Palestine and the diaspora can live freely, in peace and in dignity, with a state that values all human life.

*The Tech* has a role to play in the birth of that brighter future. As MIT students, we should take seriously Noam Chomsky’s invitation that the duty of the intellectual

is to speak the truth and expose lies. How can *The Tech* do this? First, it can decline to publish any more pieces that deny the reality of the genocide. Second, it can report faithfully the struggles of the student movement here, which future generations of students will hopefully be inspired by and will learn about thanks in part to this paper’s reporting. Finally, the Editorial Board can write its own editorial calling for MIT to end its research engagements with the Israeli military and its arms suppliers.

Such a bold position would not go unnoticed. It would follow MIT students’ own recent votes calling for such divestment in the Undergraduate Association, Graduate Student Union, and Graduate Student Council as well as the two other

votes in the Undergraduate Association and GSC calling for solidarity with Palestine solidarity activists. After 21 months of genocide, MIT continues to actively approve and renew sponsorships by the Israeli Ministry of Defense; students can verify that for themselves in the Brown Books and the Kuali Coeus grant-management tracker. In fact, the UN Special Rapporteur for Palestine, Francesca Albanese, recently named MIT in her own report to the Human Rights Council on the issue of institutional complicity.

*The Tech* has taken bold positions before. In 1975 for example, *The Tech* editorial board wrote a bold statement backing the student movement to end MIT’s training program for Iranian nuclear scientists,

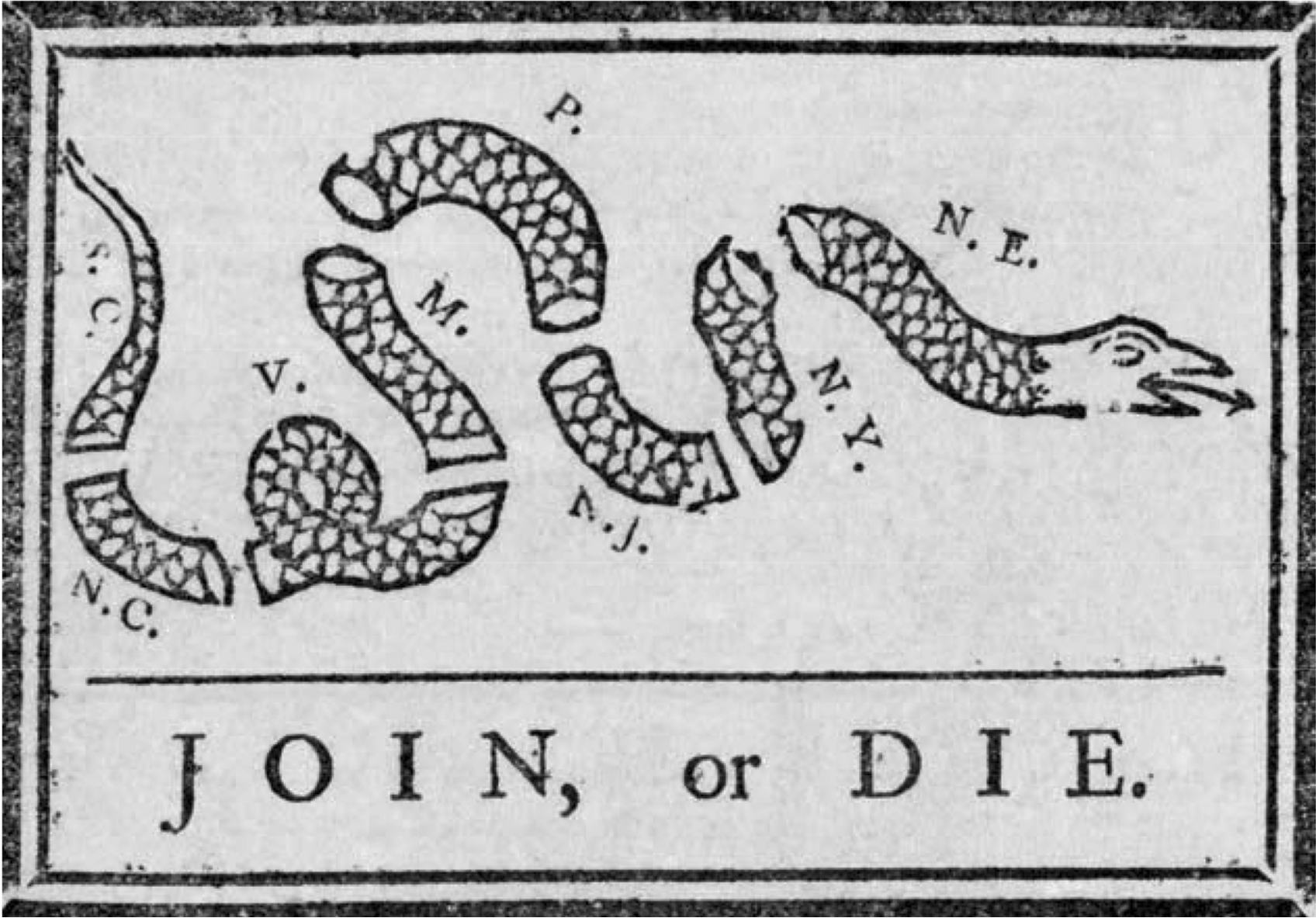
which students considered supportive of the dictatorship of the Shah and harmful for the cause of peace. “The possibility of MIT training engineers to build bombs is not so remote... MIT can try to think of other, less reprehensible ways to make ends meet which will not involve the moral abdication implied by this plan.” Palestinians today endure the iron rain of our bombs, guided by our algorithms, supported by our MIT research, and directed by an MIT alumnus, the butcher Benjamin Netanyahu. We can find less reprehensible ways of making ends meet than aiding and abetting a genocide in Gaza.

*Richard Solomon is a doctoral student in political science and a member of the MIT Coalition for Palestine.*

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# The 5.111 and 8.02 ASEs return to in-person

Chemistry and Physics departments express concerns over LLM usage



COLIN CLARK—THE TECH  
The front door of the Physics Academic Programs Office in 4-315 on June 22, 2025. The Physics Department will offer the 8.02 ASE in-person in IAP 2026.

By Vivian Hir  
NEWS EDITOR

Concerns about the use of large language models (LLMs) on online Advanced Standing Exams (ASE) have caused the Department of Physics and Department of Chemistry to reinstate in-person exams for 8.02 (Physics II) and 5.111 (Principles of Chemical Science), respectively. The 8.02 ASE will not be offered until the end of IAP 2026.

The 5.111 ASE will be held in person on Aug. 25, the first day of Orientation. The departments consulted with the Office of the First Year regarding this decision.

Up until 2019, ASEs were held in-person during Orientation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ASEs were held online in the 2020-2021 academic year. In summer 2020, ASEs and the math diagnostic test required students to use ProctorTrack, a test proctoring software

using webcam video and audio. However, many students saw the software as an invasion of privacy, leading to its discontinuation.

Although MIT returned to in-person classes in the 2021-2022 academic year, every General Institute Requirement (GIR) ASE (5.111, 7.012, 8.01, 8.02, 18.01, and 18.02), along with the 6.100A ASE, have continued to be administered online. On the other hand, higher-level ASEs (5.12, 8.03, 8.04, 18.03,

and 18.06) have returned to an in-person format and happen on Registration Day.

Chemistry Department Head Troy Van Voorhis stated that the department began considering an in-person 5.111 exam last summer. This change was partially due to concerns over the distribution of exam questions through online mediums such as screenshots. “For an online ASE, we must assume that 100% of the problems are ‘out there’ online, which can complicate the process of setting up a fair ASE in future years,” Van Voorhis wrote in a statement to *The Tech*. The department was also concerned by the potential use of LLMs, such as ChatGPT, on the exam.

Shannon Larkin, the Academic Administrator for the Physics Department, also mentioned LLM usage as a primary reason for the department’s choice to delay the in-person 8.02 ASE to IAP 2026. The department has found LLMs “increasingly able” to solve problems from 8.01 and 8.02 over multiple tests. “We have been seeing responses to [exam] problems that indicate usage [of LLMs], although it is difficult to prove,” Larkin wrote in an email to *The Tech*. The department did not use LLM detection software for recent online ASEs.

Larkin stated that the department “would have preferred” to offer both the 8.01 and 8.02 ASE in person during Orientation, but the schedule was too full to do so. They decided to offer the 8.01 ASE online so incoming first-year students could obtain credit, while moving the 8.02 ASE to the end of IAP 2026. “We strive to do our best

to both accommodate students wishing to take the test while at the same time acknowledging that the temptation to cheat on a high-stakes exam is ever-present,” Larkin wrote.

Other departments (Biology, EECS, and Mathematics) will hold their ASEs online from late July to early August before the start of the 2025-2026 academic year.

The Department of Biology plans to continue offering the 7.012 ASE online. Biology Department Head Amy Keating stated that the department has not noticed a change in student performance on the biology ASE and does not currently plan to change the exam’s format.

Although the Mathematics Department plans to hold the 18.01 and 18.02 ASE exams online this summer, Associate Department Head William Minicozzi shared that the department will look into the performance of LLMs on the ASEs and changes in student performance. “This is part of a larger issue about assessments in general,” Minicozzi wrote. “The LLMs are constantly evolving and our policies will be evolving as well.”

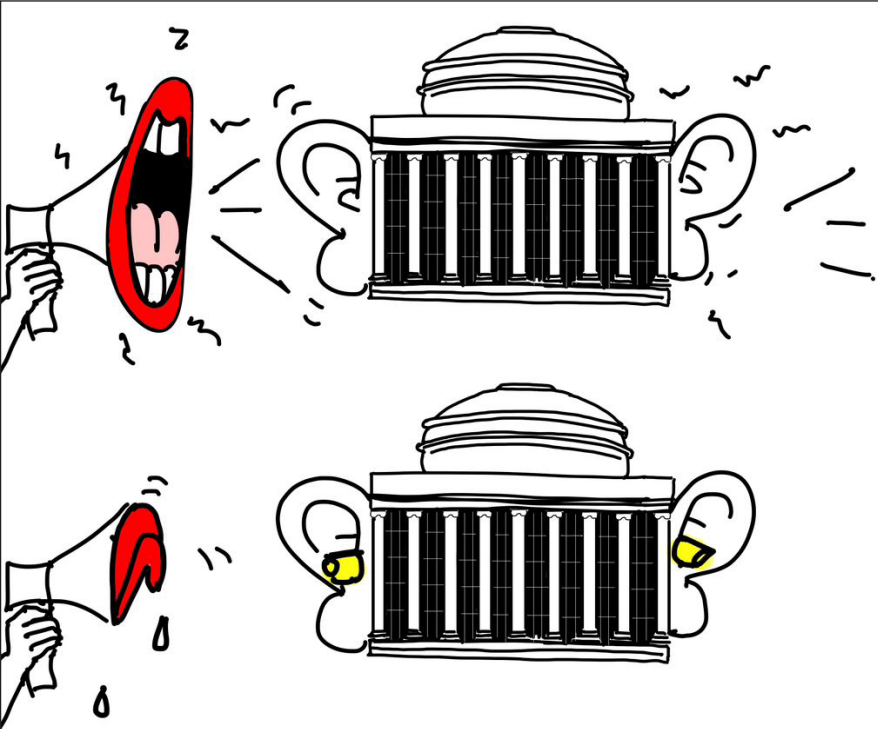
On the other hand, the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) has discussed plans for the return of an in-person 6.100 ASE, but no changes have been made yet. According to Senior Instructor Ana Bell, the pass rates of tests up to spring 2025 are “comparable at first glance,” but statistical analyses have not been conducted to confirm any significant differences.

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