

Pink Floyd's Roger Waters and Other Prominent Activists to Visit UMass for Panel on Backlash Against Pro-Palestinian Voices

March 29, 2019

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AMHERST, Mass. – Legendary rocker Roger Waters of Pink Floyd fame, who has emerged as one of the world's most prominent advocates for Palestinian human rights, will appear at the [UMass Fine Arts Center](#) on May 4 at 6:30 p.m. for a panel discussion on the increasingly vitriolic debate over U.S. support for Israel.

The panel, "[Not Backing Down: Israel, Free Speech, and the Battle for Palestinian Human Rights](#)," will address recent attacks on Rep. Ilhan Omar and other progressives who have spoken out against Israel's 50-year military occupation of Palestinian land and criticized pro-Israel pressure groups for conflating legitimate criticism of Israeli government policies with "anti-Semitism."

Waters, who has himself been [repeatedly vilified](#) as an "anti-Semite" for his criticisms of Israel's human rights abuses, will be joined on the panel by other progressive activists and journalists who have come under fire and faced death threats for their outspoken criticisms of the occupation.

Confirmed panelists include Linda Sarsour, the Palestinian-American co-founder of the Women's March, who has been branded an "[anti-Semitic terrorist](#)" for her pro-Palestinian activism and was recently [targeted by a private Israeli intelligence firm](#) as part of [a coordinated, U.S.-based campaign](#) to stop her from speaking on American college campuses; Black Lives Matter co-founder [Patriesse Cullors](#), who has likewise been labelled a "terrorist" and an "anti-Semite" for drawing parallels between police violence against black people in the United States and the Israeli military's treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories; Marc Lamont Hill, a professor and political commentator who visited the West Bank with Black Lives Matter in 2015 and was [fired earlier this year by CNN](#) for remarks he made about the occupation; and *Nation* magazine sports editor and author Dave Zirin, a frequent contributor to MSNBC and ESPN who has been called a "[self-hating Jew](#)" for his public criticism of Israeli policy and his [outspoken defense of Ilhan Omar](#) and [NFL players who refused to go on a promotional trip to Israel](#) funded by the Israeli government.

"The vicious smears these five people have been subjected to are part of a systematic effort to change the subject and deflect attention away from the billions of dollars in financial and military aid the U.S. continues to give Israel despite its ongoing violations of international law and Palestinian human rights," said Sut Jhally, a professor of Communication at UMass and the Executive Director of the Northampton-based [Media Education Foundation \(MEF\)](#), which is organizing the event. "The good news is that more and more people – Palestinians, African-Americans, young progressive Jews and Christians alike – are staring down these intimidation tactics, refusing to be silenced, and speaking up for Palestinian human rights regardless of the consequences. This panel is clear evidence of that."

The panel will be moderated by Vijay Prashad, a journalist and historian who appears regularly on *Democracy Now!* and the *Real News Network* and is the author or editor of over 30 books, including *Letters to Palestine: Writers Respond to War and Occupation*.

This event is free and open to the public, but tickets are required. Tickets will be available at the FAC box office the night of the event. But advanced tickets are highly recommended. To get advanced tickets, call 413-545-2511 or 800-999-UMAS, or visit [fineartscenter.com](#). For more information about the event, visit [NotBackingDownUmass.com](#).