

‘She Was Too Vocal’: Outrage Grows over AP Journalist Fired for Pro-Palestine Views

Emily Wilder, who graduated from Stanford University last year, says the Associated Press fired her after a right-wing campaign highlighted her college activism

By [Middle East Eye](#)

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The Associated Press news agency has faced fierce criticism from journalists and academics for sacking a newly graduated news associate over her pro-Palestinian activism while at university.

Emily Wilder, a Jewish American who graduated from Stanford University last year, started her position at AP on 3 May. Just 16 days later, she was fired.

Wilder was told that her dismissal, announced in [an AP staff memo](#) that has been widely shared online, was over a violation of the company’s social media policy.

Speaking to Middle East Eye, the news agency confirmed that she was dismissed for violations of AP’s social media policy, stating that the violations had occurred “during her time at AP”.

While the agency did not explain which posts in question may have violated the policy – just that she had “showed clear bias” – Wilder has said that she is certain it was the opinions she shared on Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territory that led to her sacking.

On Sunday, Wilder posted on Twitter a critique of the language used within mainstream media when covering issues related to Israel and Palestine.

“‘Objectivity’ feels fickle when the basic terms we use to report news implicitly stake a claim,” [she wrote](#). “Using ‘israel’ but never ‘palestine,’ or ‘war’ but not ‘siege and occupation’ are political choices – yet media make those exact choices all the time without being flagged as biased.”

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— emily wilder (@vv1lder) [May 16, 2021](#)

The discussion over the problematic language used to cover events in Israel and Palestine is one that Middle East Eye has [covered extensively in recent weeks](#).

But the day after Wilder made that post, a group named the Stanford College Republicans began sharing screenshots of other posts in which the then-college student had criticised Israel’s occupation and related policies, as well as a picture of Wilder taking part in a pro-Palestine protest in New York City.

While at Stanford from 2016-2020, Wilder was a leader in Jewish Voice for Peace and Students for Justice in Palestine, an organization with ties to Hamas affiliates, and which is notorious for inflicting acts of intimidation and violence against pro-Israel students.

— Stanford College Republicans (@Stanford_GOP) [May 18, 2021](#)

The group also accused Wilder of being “a leader” of pro-Palestinian groups, Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) and Students for Justice in Palestine - a group which they claimed without evidence had links to Hamas - during her time at Stanford between 2016 and 2020.

The attention to her previous posts quickly grew, as critical stories about Wilder’s hiring were published online by right-wing sites, including Fox News, the Washington Free Beacon and the Federalist.

‘The campaign against me’

In some of the articles, the websites attempted to link Wilder’s hiring to Israel’s recent air strike on a high rise building hosting the Associated Press’s Gaza bureau, as well as several other media offices, including one belonging to MEE.

Appalling. Not less than a week after Israel fired a rocket and destroyed the AP office in Gaza, the [@AP](#) fired a brilliant young writer because conservatives complained she supported justice in Palestine as a college student. <https://t.co/Zdlj6ZeYJU>

— Palestine Legal (@pal_legal) [May 20, 2021](#)

Meanwhile, Wilder, speaking to the Washington Post, said that she was told implicitly that a review of her social media activity was initiated by the AP after her old posts had been publicised by various websites.

“This was a result of the campaign against me,” she said. “To me, it feels like AP folded to the ridiculous demands and cheap bullying of organizations and individuals.”

A spokesperson with the AP, however, told MEE that her dismissal was strictly in the interest of the safety of the agency's other journalists around the world.

"We have this policy so the comments of one person cannot create dangerous conditions for our journalists covering the story," said Lauren Easton, global director of media relations and corporate communications.

"Every AP journalist is responsible for safeguarding our ability to report on this conflict, or any other, with fairness and credibility, and cannot take sides in public forums," she continued.

But Liz Jackson, a senior staff attorney at Palestine Legal, a US-based legal advocacy group, slammed Wilder's sacking as "censorship" with an anti-Palestine bias.

"This epitomizes the censorship endemic to public conversation on Palestine. First the @AP is bombed by Israel, and then, in response to a rightwing cancel campaign, it fires its own reporter because she was too vocal about Palestinian lives as a college student," Jackson said in a post to Twitter on Thursday.

"Emily Wilder has a rich background advocating for freedom as a Jewish Palestine solidarity activist and as a talented reporter covering mass incarceration, policing and social movements. The @AP should reinstate her immediately," she continued.

Scores of other activists, rights groups and journalists have also spoken up against Wilder's sacking.

"Not looking good for the @AP," New York University journalism professor Jay Rosen [tweeted](#), sharing a story about Wilder.

"So let me get this straight. The @AP just fired a young reporter because she was part of Students for Justice in Palestine in college?" AJ+ producer, Dena Takruri [asked](#). "The same AP that just had its office in Gaza bombed by Israel?"

The AP fired a junior reporter over a bad faith tweet thread that ended with this pic.twitter.com/QSGpmlzYZU

— Ryan Mac (@RMac18) [May 20, 2021](#)

Meanwhile, others questioned what the reaction might have been if the issue had been in reverse.

"I know this is trite to say but just f**king imagine what would happen if the AP fired someone for having been a member of a Zionist group in college," journalist Ashley Feinberg [posted](#).

"This is exactly the issue with the rhetoric around 'cancel culture'," Wilder said, speaking to SFGate. "To Republicans, cancel culture is usually seen as teens or young people online advocating that people be held accountable over accusations of racism or whatever it may be.

“But when it comes down to who actually has to deal with the lifelong ramifications of the selective enforcement of cancel culture – specifically over the issue of Israel and Palestine – it’s always the same side.”

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