

Clinical Legal Educators Condemn Political Attack on Professor Ramzi Kassem and CLEAR

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We are now in the midst of a coordinated and escalating campaign against academic freedom, legal education, and the ethical practice of law from the highest echelons of domestic power and influence. The latest deeply troubling example is the attack on Professor Ramzi Kassem, a tenured law professor and clinician at the City University of New York (CUNY) School of Law, who has been singled out by members of Congress for his speech, advocacy, and zealous representation of clients.

During a July 2025 hearing of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, elected officials criticized Professor Kassem's representation of Mahmoud Khalil and called for CUNY to fire him for his constitutionally protected legal work. Such attacks demonstrate a disregard for foundational principles of legal representation and academic freedom, and undermine the vital work lawyers do to protect their clients—particularly those without resources or political power.

Professor Kassem founded the Creating Law Enforcement Accountability & Responsibility (CLEAR) project at CUNY in 2009. CLEAR works with clients, communities and movements targeted by government policies and practices in the name of national security. Through direct representation, strategic litigation, public education, and support for organizing and movement building, CLEAR trains law students to challenge incarceration, coercive law enforcement tactics, surveillance, and violations of civil liberties. This work exemplifies the mission of clinical legal education: to train lawyers through hands-on legal advocacy in service of communities with unmet legal needs.

Legislative pressure to punish a law professor for their work—standing up to government overreach, defending clients targeted for exercising their free speech rights, and teaching students to do the same—attacks the integrity of legal education and the rule of law. We have previously criticized this House Committee's attempts to compel production of protected information about the operation of and curricular choices made by Northwestern Pritzker School of Law's Bluhm Legal Clinic. We reiterate our concerns here. Experiential faculty must be free to select clients and cases, speak on matters of public concern, and design curriculum without fear of political reprisal. These freedoms are not optional. They are constitutional guarantees and professional imperatives.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the attacks on Professor Kassem and CLEAR. We stand in unwavering solidarity with Professor Kassem, CUNY School of Law, and all experiential educators and law students carrying out the essential work of justice. At this moment, law school administrators, clinics, and legal educators must meet repression with resolve. Our collective defense is not just a right; it is a professional obligation.

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