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# Harvard Employee Fired Following Online Heated Exchange With Jewish Student



The Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations is located at 2 Divinity Ave. An EALC administrator was terminated after an exchange with a student over the defacing of posters displaying Israeli hostages. By [Ryan N. Gajarawala](#)

By [Michelle N. Amponsah](#) and [Joyce E. Kim](#), Crimson Staff Writers

3 days ago

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Harvard terminated the employment of Gustavo “Gus” Espada ’96, a staff member in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, following an online exchange with a Harvard student over the defacing of posters displaying Israeli hostages.

In an email obtained by The Crimson, EALC department chair David L. Howell wrote to department members that Espada would not be returning to his post.

Espada’s removal comes months after a January exchange with Harvard Divinity School student Shabbos “Alexander” Kestenbaum — who denounced on X the **defacing of campus posters** that displayed the names and faces of Israeli hostages — in which Espada challenged Kestenbaum to a debate on Israel’s role in 9/11.

“I invite you to debate me today at the Cambridge Street overpass 12-1, don’t miss it!” Espada wrote in a Jan. 25 email to Kestenbaum.

Howell and Faculty of Arts and Sciences spokesperson Holly J. Jensen declined to comment on Espada’s removal. Espada did not respond to requests for comment on Friday.

According to Espada, he was terminated on April 23 after working for the University for more than 26 years as the financial and systems coordinator for the EALC department.

Espada has long **been known** for his conspiracy theories about 9/11. He has also repeatedly posted on X and Tiktok about the war in Gaza and promoted false claims about Israel’s role in 9/11.

Later on Jan. 25, the same day he emailed Kestenbaum, Espada posted a TikTok video speaking in Spanish and waving a toy machete. The video includes a screenshot of Kestenbaum’s X post.

Kestenbaum said he **reported Espada** to both Harvard University Police Department and the Cambridge Police Department and was advised to file a restraining order against Espada in Cambridge District Court.

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Kestenbaum wrote in a statement to The Crimson on Thursday evening that “it is frightening that a Jewish student would need private armed security as a result of a Harvard employee’s repeated threats, while the University does nothing about it for months.”

Kestenbaum is one of six Jewish students who **sued Harvard** in January for its alleged failure to address antisemitism. In April, Harvard filed a **motion to dismiss** the lawsuit, which is currently awaiting a ruling.

Espada wrote in a series of April 23 posts on X announcing his removal that “in the last few months,” he has been “exposing the double standards governing campus activism that favor outside Zionist groups’ privileges over those of the actual Harvard community.”

“Alexander Shabbos Kestenbaum, the student suing Harvard for antisemitism, has made a number of false allegations about me and about activism at Harvard that I will be enumerating,” he added.

In his email to the EALC department announcing that Espada had been removed from his post, Howell wrote that “we will be searching for a new staff member to take his role as soon as possible.”

“I cannot say anything more, except that I wish him the best, as indeed we all do,” he wrote.

As of Thursday evening, Espada’s profile remained on the EALC department’s website before it was removed Friday.

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