



Deepening American understanding of Middle Eastern peoples and cultures

Marco Rubio sees a threat to US national security; we see a champion of American values **Campus Organizer Mahmoud Khalil to Receive 2025 AMEU Mahoney Award for Service**

MEDIA ALERT ### Aug 22, 2025 (New York) At its Summer meeting, AMEU's Board of Directors named Palestinian organizer/activist Mahmoud Khalil as the 2025 recipient of the AMEU / John and Sharon Mahoney Award for Service. The announcement was made by AMEU's Board president Don Wagner and was unanimously approved by AMEU's Board of Directors. Khalil was selected from nearly two dozen nominations and will receive the award in September, including a \$5000 honorarium.

On March 8, 2025, Mahmoud Khalil became the face of nationwide protests for Gaza when, returning home from a Ramadan Iftar, he was seized by masked security personnel inside his Columbia University housing in New York. His American wife Dr. Noor Abdalla presented his Greencard but was made to stand aside as her husband, who had no criminal record and was charged with no crime, was zip-tied and taken away in an unmarked car. Two days later he awoke in a detention cell in Louisiana, where he remained for over three months. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Attorney General Pam Bondi and Homeland Security Tsar Tom Homan tied themselves in knots, invoking Cold War law in their attempts to describe the 30-year old as a threat to US national security. Khalil was kept in an Arkansas cell while his wife gave birth to their first child: a son, Deen.



1 Courtesy Palestine Poster Project Archive

Despite the legions of Jewish students whose interests he had represented during the encampment protests at Columbia University, Mahmoud Khalil's detention was framed on trumped up charges of anti-semitism. Observers quickly recognized the intimidation tactic as illegal under US law, and a naked salvo aimed at the rule of law and its most basic tenet, due process.

Even from his isolation in a Louisiana backwater, Khalil stood firm, patiently asserting his Constitutional protections. When Secretary of State Rubio acknowledged that he though he hadn't broken the law, but should nevertheless be deported for beliefs that ran counter to U.S. foreign policy interests, he replied *"My beliefs are not wanting my tax money or tuition going toward investments in weapons manufacturers for a genocide. It's as simple as that."* Since his release on bail, he has raised a countersuit against the administration.

The Mahoney Award was established by the AMEU Board in 2022 to recognize and celebrate exceptional contributions to improving American understanding of the Middle East, its peoples, histories, and cultures. It is named in honor of AMEU Board member John F. Mahoney, who died at age 89, shortly before the announcement was made. AMEU President Don Wagner remarked, *"After careful deliberation of over 20 deserving candidates, Mahmoud Khalil rose to the top as a Palestinian who captured the spirit of the Mahoney Award with his courageous stand against Israel's genocide in Gaza and decrying the U.S. government's underwriting the erasure of his people day after day."* Mahmoud Khalil joins past awardees such as filmmaker Julia Bacha ("Boycott"), graphic artist/illustrator Shirien Creates, and Hebrew University feminist scholar, Dr. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian as testament to John's tireless pursuit of peace and justice.

This year's selection committee included AMEU board members Darrel Meyers, Alice Rothchild, Sam Bahour, and Chair Don Wagner. Public members of the committee included Rania Salem of Palestinian Community Network; David Wildman, who represents the United Methodist Church at the United Nations; and Maeve Collins, representing the Mahoney family.

*Additional information is available at www.ameu.org, and email inquiries may be sent to mahoneyaward@ameu.org.
 AMEU is a 501(c)3 charitable non-profit organization established in 1968.*